UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF RESILIENCE IN CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

RUTH M. BOYD
Norman, Oklahoma
2012

Downloaded from SHAREOK. Persistent Handle URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11244/319309

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF RESILIENCE

IN CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

_____
Dr. William Frick, Chair

_____
Dr. John Chiodo

_____
Dr. Jeffrey Maiden

_____
Dr. Lawrence Rossow

_____
Dr. Courtney Vaughn

© Copyright by RUTH M. BOYD 2012
All Rights Reserved.

Dedication Page

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Robert and Mildred Maynard. My dad was the father that every girl deserves, one who provided all of the love and protective factors necessary for resilience. My mother, in the years since my father's death, has been a model of resilience, approaching this new chapter of her life with faith, hope, and optimism.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Dr. William Frick and the members of my committee: Dr. John Chiodo, Dr. Jeffrey Maiden, Dr. Lawrence Rossow, and Dr. Courtney Vaughn. Each of you inspired me with your unique perspectives and your distinctive teaching styles. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, nurturing my progress, and facilitating this project.

Additional thanks go to my mentor, Dr. Henrietta Mann. I have drawn upon your wisdom, patience, and leadership throughout this process. I am blessed to have you in my life.

I sincerely appreciate the administration of Southwestern Oklahoma State University and my wonderful teaching colleagues. Your support enabled me to be successful in this endeavor. I'm fortunate to work with caring educators who are student-centered and who embrace life-long learning.

I cherish the support of friends and church family but, as always, my greatest cheering section is that of my husband, Allen, and our sons, Blaine and Brady. Our family is, and always will be, my greatest treasure; we share abundant adventures, bountiful laughter, and much love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction…… 1
Bicultural Efficacy and Resilience…….. 2
Statement of the Problem…… 5
Historical Background to the Problem……. 6
Research Questions …….. 20
Assumptions of the Study…….. 20
Definition of Terms……... 21
Summary…….. 25

Chapter 2 Literature Review…… 27
Transition Theory……. 27
Transitioning and School Belonging…… 28
Transitioning and Quality of Friendships……. 31
Resiliency Theory……. 32
Longitudinal Studies Involving Multiple Risk Factors……. 33
Studies of Individual Resilience…… 35
Resilience in Educational Settings…… 39
Studies of Cultural Resilience…… 42
Conclusion and Restatement of Problem……... 48

Chapter 3 Methodology……. 50
Introduction……... 50
Preparing to Collect Data……... 52
Question Formulation……..……. 52
Literature Review of Prior Research……. 53
Criteria for Participant Selection……... 53
Establishing Contact…….. 55
Outline of Research Procedures……. 56
Questions for the Research Interview…… 58
Collecting Data…….. 59
The Epoche Process……... 60
Bracketing the Question…… 61
Interviews…….. 62
Participant Descriptions/Characteristics …….. 63
Organizing, Analyzing, and Synthesizing Data…… 65
Conclusion……. 67

Chapter 4 Presentation of Data…….. 69
Identification of Meaning Clusters and Themes…… 69
Clusters and Themes…….. 69
Theme 1: Sense of Belonging…… 70
Cluster 1: Sense of Belonging through Tribal Affiliation……. 70

Cluster 2: Sense of Belonging through High School Activities…… 72
Cluster 3: Sense of Belonging through University Activities…… 73
Theme 2: Affectional Ties…… 75
Cluster 1: Affectional Ties of Family……... 75
Cluster 2: Affectional Ties of Inter-generational Bonds…….. 76
Cluster 3: Affectional Ties of High School Faculty……. 78
Cluster 4: Affectional Ties of University Faculty and Staff…… 79
Conclusion…… 81

Chapter 5 Presentation of Data: Textural Descriptions…… 82
Individual Textural Descriptions…….. 82
Mary's Textural Description……. 82
Teri's Textural Description……... 87
Greg's Textural Description…….. 93
Sue's Textural Description…… 98
Linda's Textural Description…… 103
Cara's Textural Description……...109
Sara's Textural Description……... 117
Composite Textural Description…… 122

Chapter 6 Presentation of Data: Structural Descriptions…….. 125
Individual Structural Descriptions…… 125
Mary's Structural Description…….. 125
Teri's Structural Description……. 127
Greg's Structural Description…… 128
Sue's Structural Description…….. 131
Structural Descriptions of Non-traditional Participants……132
Linda's Structural Description……...133
Cara's Structural Description……135
Sara's Structural Description…… 138
Composite Structural Description……..140
Synthesis of Composite Textural and Composite Structural Descriptions… 143

Chapter 7 Reflective Summary and Implications for Future Research……. 146
Reflective Summary…….. 146
Implications……... 153

References……. 157

Appendix A: Interview Protocol and IRB Informed Consent…… 165
Appendix B: Data Matrix Identifying Clusters and Resulting Themes…….171
Appendix C: Data Matrix Identifying Core Structures……. 177

Abstract

This study explored the experience of transitioning from common education to higher education for a group of Cheyenne and Arapaho students. Additional features of resilience were examined as well, which included their persistence in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree. A phenomenological approach was used in order to explore the lived experiences of the purposeful sample of seven Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal members, all students at a public regional university. Data were acquired by qualitative inquiry based on in-depth interviews. Participants ascribed meaning to *what* they experienced through textural themes, including a sense of belonging and affectional ties. Furthermore, participants spoke of *how* they experienced the phenomenon, resulting in structural descriptors of determination, autonomy, self-discipline, and spirituality. Implications for school personnel and teacher preparatory programs are presented, as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The successful completion of a post-secondary degree is a goal of many Americans. Higher education in our society holds social, as well as economic, value. Studies document the correlation between higher education and cultural/family values, the optimistic view of future personal progress of college graduates, and the parallel between parental school levels and the health status of their children (Cohn & Geske, 1992; Porter, 2002; Taylor et al., 2011). Rowley & Hurtado (2002) add that individual benefits of higher education include the tendency for postsecondary students to become more open-minded, more cultured, more rational, more consistent, and less authoritarian. The economic impact of a post-secondary degree has long been documented. The lifetime earnings of individuals holding a baccalaureate degree are almost double what those holding only a high school diploma may earn (Porter, 2002). According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, the lifetime earnings of workers with a least a bachelor's degree is $3.3 million, as compared to $1.6 million for a typical high school graduate (Taylor, et al, 2011). The opportunities offered by higher education may be especially important to breaking the cycle of poverty prevalent in certain ethnic groups. Low socioeconomic status continues to plague American Indians in this country; the National Center for Educational Statistics (2008) reports that American Indians are more likely to live below the national poverty level than other ethnic groups. This corresponds to the continued gap between American Indians and the total population regarding educational

attainment; American Indians are traditionally among the most underrepresented ethnic groups in higher education and have one of the lowest college graduation rates. Recent data show that, in 2002, American Indians represented less than 1% of all students enrolled in college (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

There are relatively few studies which speak directly to this group's experiences in pursuit and persistence in the transition from high school to post-secondary work, although several studies have addressed academic achievement, parental involvement, and parent/child educational expectations in the Hispanic/Latino, African American, and Asian American communities (Anguiano, 2004; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Hao & Bruns, 1998; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Yan, 1999). However, Okagaki, Helling, and Bingham (2009) did determine that Native students tend to view higher education through a pragmatic lens, being particularly interested in how education would directly benefit them in the fulfillment of personal goals and job attainment. With this in mind, four-year institutions and tribal colleges are recognizing the need to attend to their Native populations by designing programs that provide academic support and social/emotional comfort for them (Shirley, 2004). It seems advisable that policy makers should solicit Native students' perspectives on their personal resilience and educational experience in order to design programs that will contribute to their success.

Bicultural Efficacy and Resilience

Theoretically, resilience is a meaningful framework appropriate for giving voice to Native students, because it is a construct that explores circumstances and

situations that contribute to successful consequences in the face of adversity (Greene, Galambos, and Lee, 2003). In order to understand resilience in any sector of society, certain key points are assumed, including the idea that resilience:

> involves a transactional dynamic process of person-environment exchanges, occurs across the life course with individuals, families, and communities experiencing unique paths of development, is enhanced through connection or relatedness with others, is affected by the availability of environmental resources, and is influenced by diversity including ethnicity, race, gender…economic status…and religious affiliation. (Greene, 2002)

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bocker (1990) contend that the American Indian culture traditionally provides a foundation for embracing these assumptions and for fostering resilience, as evidenced by models such as the Circle of Courage, which seeks to empower Native youth by focusing on the attributes of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

While models such as this address fundamental needs from a Native perspective, they also embrace "a philosophy that integrates the best of Western educational thought with the wisdom of indigenous cultures" (Reclaiming Youth International, 2012). Okagaki, Helling, and Bingham (2009) propose that minority students who successfully integrate the two develop "bicultural efficacy…the belief that one can be true to one's ethnic identity and still function effectively in the majority culture"

(p. 159). Specifically, Feinstein, Driving-Hawk, and Baartman (2009) encourage integration between Native frameworks and European perspectives such as Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems (1979). The initial layer of the Ecological System, the microsystem, requires individuals to navigate personal relationships with family, friends, and school, while ensuing layers, such as the mesosystem, requires individuals to manage these nested relationships. The interrelationship between home and school, found in Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem, may particularly impact Native students due to past indignities thrust upon indigenous populations in nineteenth and twentieth-century America. The consequences of past cultural upheaval, such as loss of tribal lands, the abolishment of the nomadic way of life for those who lived on the western plains, and cultural assimilation are transmitted from one generation to the next (Franklin, 2009) and may propel today's Native students into a heightened category of risk in the educational context. Engel (2007) documents how a fragile microsystem in a child's world often leads to a fractured mesosystem between home and school. Family members may become disgruntled when they perceive that students are "rejecting traditional cultural values or thinning the ethnic or traditional ways of his people. Native American youth face an increasingly fragile self-identity in a stressful, rapidly changing world" (Engel, 2007, p. 45).

Statement of the Problem

Among all other barriers to post-secondary educational success, including insufficient parental support, low socio-economic status, and poor academic preparation, the cultural conflict experienced in the mesosystem may be the greatest threat for Native students. Huffman (2001) defines cultural conflict as the "notion of some discrepancy between the values, behaviors, or political/economic power of those of the dominant status and those of the minority status" (p. 2). In his study of American Indian college students, Huffman found that students dealt with cultural conflict by assuming one of four "cultural masks" which he defines as "the process by which a person comes to construct a personal ethnic identity" (p. 7). *Assimilated* students identified with the college mainstream culture and experienced few difficulties in transitioning to campus life, while *marginal* students desired some identification with more traditional Native culture. These marginal students reported feeling pressure from conflicting cultures which made their transition more complicated. *Estranged* students strongly identified with traditional Native culture and had a mistrust of the educational setting; they viewed college as a threat to their ethnic identity, one that required assimilation on their part. Although *transculturated* students also had a strong affiliation with their traditional Native identity, they reportedly felt no pressure to assimilate. Rather, they derived a sense of security and confidence from their tribal affiliation and reported great academic success (Huffman,

2001). In this study, the contexts and structures of academically successful Cheyenne and Arapaho university students were explored. These students shared the resiliency factors that enabled them to transition to higher education and which empower them as they persist in their education.

Historical Background to the Problem

A comprehensive understanding of the past is necessary in order to pursue inclusiveness and multiculturalism in the future. Therefore, it is important to understand the setting in which this study took place. Oklahoma has the second largest American Indian population in the United States, second only to the state of California (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Population density data indicates that the American Indian population is highly concentrated in individual counties of Oklahoma. Nationwide, 187 counties have American Indian population concentrations of eight percent or more; 55 of these (29%) are in Oklahoma (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel, 2012). Oklahoma's native population of over 322,000 includes many tribal affiliations, including Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Kiowa, Pawnee, and the amalgamated tribe, the Cheyenne and Arapaho. To better understand the historical educational experiences of all Native persons in western Oklahoma, this historical narrative focuses on the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe.

The Cheyenne, "The People" or "People Like Us," have their origins in Siberia. They migrated over the ice which once covered the Bering Strait,

through Alaska, through Canada and the Northwest Territories, to the Great Lakes area. The People were populating this territory by the time of Christopher Columbus' arrival on the North American continent (Hinz-Penner, 2007; Mann, 1997). As the Cheyenne journeyed southwestward to the plains, they came into contact with their primary prophet, Sweet Medicine. The Cheyenne believe that the Creator, "The Great One," had "sent Sweet Medicine to The People with four sacred (medicine) arrows and the accompanying ceremony, the Arrow Renewal" (Mann, 1997, p. 2). Sweet Medicine provided the Cheyenne with other gifts of knowledge as well, including a representative government called the Council of Forty-Four, four major laws prohibiting lying, cheating, marrying relatives, and intra-tribal murder, and a value system consisting of love, respect, cooperation, generosity, understanding, humility, and maintenance of the Cheyenne way of life (Mann, 1997). Sweet Medicine prophesied that The People would encounter others that possessed sacred knowledge taught by another oracle and, indeed, the path of the Cheyenne did cross that of the Arapaho tribe, whose principle prophet was Straight Horns or Erect Horns, named for the standing horns on the sacred buffalo hat, which was a holy gift given him from the Creator (Hinz-Penner, 2007; Mann, 1997).

According to Arapaho history, their people were fashioned by the Creator and placed in the center of the earth, and they are reported to have first lived in Canada before moving to the northern plains (Mann, 1997). Ardent spirituality characterized the Arapaho people. They believed that the flat pipe, their spiritual symbol, distinguished them as the chosen people of the Creator and dictated a

peaceable existence for them. Elements of their teachings included respect, patience, kindness, and endurance. The Arapaho spoke a dialect of the Cheyenne's Algonquian-based language, and the tribes merged, increasing both their numbers and their spiritual base. The sacred hat of the Arapaho and the sacred arrows of the Cheyenne provided the basis for the two major tribal ceremonies, the Arrow Renewal and the Sun Dance (Mann, 1997). The Keeper of the Medicine Arrows was the priest associated with the sacred ceremony of the Arrow Renewal, enacted either to keep the tribe safe or as an act of sacrifice or atonement. "The two red arrows were buffalo arrows, for subsistence and safety; the other two were black, 'man arrows,' for securing victories over one's enemies" (Hinz-Penner, 2007, p. 85). This consolidation of the two tribes occurred sometime after 1750. By 1821, the tribe numbered over 200 lodges along the Arkansas River in present-day Colorado (Hinz-Penner, 2007), and the tribal alliance is still maintained today.

The Plains tribes did not write their languages but used visual sketches to tell stories and to record events (Hinz-Penner, 2007). The education of their people was in the tribal oral tradition and began at birth. An infant's mother and female relatives cared for infants, protecting the child from the elements. When strong enough, a child was placed in a cradle board and the childhood education began (Mann, 1997). The tepee itself served as a tool for spiritual education. The tepee's foundation, a tripod, was formed by placing three poles, the first oriented to the east, the second to the south, and the third to the north. After other poles were cast, the last pole, set from the west, was added. In this manner, the four

directions were brought together within the sacred circle of the tepee. The pole on the east symbolized new life; the one on the south represented growth and the search for knowledge; the pole on the west symbolized maturity and goodness; the pole on the north represented wisdom, honor, reverence, and elderliness. The poles tied together at the top symbolized the unification of earth, people, life, and sky. The fire that burned within the center of the sacred circle represented life (Mann, 1997). Thus, the construction of the tepee was a continual reinforcement of tribal ideals and knowledge.

Principal instructors within this society were immediate family members, extended family, and respected elders. The childhood years were spent in observation and imitating behavior after the example modeled by tribal members. Adolescence marked a time for more formal education in such areas as the tribal language, ceremonies, value system, moral code, government, gender roles, and economy, all elements for the preparation of adulthood. The Cheyenne education system had a holistic and well-developed curriculum. Mann (1997) explains:

> Philosophy, history, and language were incorporated into the oral tradition. As the tribe moved over the plains, the young people learned the geography of the land. Courses in biology and science were offered in which the students learned the ways of animals and the uses of plants and herbs. They also had practical courses in mathematics and geometry, learning to count by the number of poles it took to put up a tepee or lodge. Young men learned to survive on the hunt in bachelor survival courses. Young women gathered vegetables, prepared food, and made clothing in

> home economics classes. Education was not separated from life, but was intertwined with it…Whereas curriculum content was specific to Arapahos and to Cheyennes, the oral tradition of instruction prevailed in both tribal groups (p. 15).

As children and youth grew into adulthood, they acquired the education necessary for their physical survival and their spiritual development.

The mid to late 1800's were difficult years for the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe. In an 1830 battle along the Platte River, the Cheyenne were stripped of their most powerful medicine when the sacred arrows were lost in battle to the Pawnee tribe. Tradition states that much of the sorrow the Cheyenne experienced during the ensuing years was attributed to the fact that they were without their strongest medicine (Hinz-Penner, 2007). Western expansionism by settlers resulted in the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 and the Treaty of Fort Wise in 1861, which resulted in the formation of a relatively small reservation in southeastern Colorado. The great Cheyenne peace chief, Black Kettle, understood the power of the United States military and feared an even less favorable settlement for his people. Consequently, he was the first to sign the treaty for the Cheyenne (Hoig, 1980). The resulting Sand Creek reservation in Colorado proved too small for these nomadic hunters and could not sustain the Indians forced to live there. Dog Soldiers, militaristic bands that fought white expansionism, joined the Sioux in raids along the Platte River to express their dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Fort Wise. In retaliation for these raids, Colonel John Chivington attacked the Cheyenne at Sand Creek. The raid was initiated at dawn on the morning of

November 29, 1864, even though the Cheyenne were well within their reservation boundaries. At the time of the attack, Chief Black Kettle flew a large American flag, accompanied by a white flag, on the end of a lodge pole and stood waving it in front of his tepee, but to no avail (Hoig, 1980). The ensuing massacre resulted in the death of 137 tribal members, of whom only 28 were men; the remaining victims were helpless women and children (Mann, 1997). Additionally, Chivington's men destroyed all of the provisions and weapons of the camp, captured several hundred Cheyenne horses and mules, and took two Cheyenne children captive (Hoig, 1980). Although Black Kettle survived, several other Cheyenne chiefs did not. This "marked the end of the recognition of common humanity between the new Americans and the Cheyenne tribe . . .thereafter, they demonized each other and acted accordingly" (Hinz-Penner, 2007, p. 36). However, Chief Black Kettle remained committed to the peace process and to the words of Sweet Medicine:

> You chiefs are peacemakers. Though your son might be killed in front of your tepee, you should take a peace pipe and smoke. Then you would be called an honest chief. You chiefs own the land and the people. If your men, your soldier societies, should be scared and retreat, you are not to step back but take a stand to protect your land and your people. Get out and talk to the people. If strangers come, you are the ones to give presents to them and invitations. When you meet someone, or he comes to your tepee asking for anything, give it to him. Never refuse. Go outside your

> tepee and sing your chief's song, so all the people will know you have done something good. (as quoted in Hoig, 1980, p. 7).

Black Kettle persevered in his vision of lasting peace and prosperity for the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. He joined in the signing of a new treaty at Medicine Lodge in 1867, agreeing to move to a reserve area in the northern part of Indian Territory, near the present-day town of Cheyenne, Oklahoma. The Medicine Lodge Treaty was the last treaty negotiated between the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe and the United States government. The treaty contained fifteen articles regarding federal-tribal relationships. Regarding education, the most significant provision, as it relates to this study, is found in article seven:

> In order to insure the civilization of the tribes entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially by such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservation, and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that for every thirty children between said ages, who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher. The provisions of this article to continue for not less than twenty years (as quoted in Mann, 1997, p. 11).

The words of this treaty defined civilization through education, in the English tradition, as the new relationship between the Cheyenne and Arapaho and the federal government. It also confined future generations of the tribe to the white man's European tradition of education rather that of the oral tradition. Politicians of the day "did not miss the structures" of Native education, "they just failed to respect them" (Noley, 2008, p. 97). And so, "Weary from being pursued doggedly over the plains, and facing certain extinction from starvation, the tribes agreed to formal education in 1867 as a requisite to peace" (Mann, 1997, p. 19). Ironically, the farewell prophecy of Sweet Medicine had warned of the misfortune and cultural disintegration that would occur with the Cheyenne' association with a white-skinned people, and stated that "education would become the means of assimilating Cheyenne children into the white people's society" (as quoted in Mann, 1997, p. 2).

Hopeful for a lasting peace, Black Kettle's band, other Cheyenne, and some Arapaho, camped along the Washita River, in total about fifty lodges, in the frigid weather of an early fall snowstorm in 1868. On the night of November 26, Black Kettle and the other men discussed moving their lodges farther down the river in order to be closer to other tribes for enhanced security. It was decided that the band would move camp the next day. Sadly, it was not to be. In the early dawn of November 27, 1868, two days short of the fourth anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer led the 7th Cavalry from Camp Supply, Indian Territory and rode into the sleeping camp. The surprise attack was in retaliation for raids led by groups of Dog Soldiers, "young

hostiles from the south who were ready to make war against the whites" (Hoig, 1980, p. 85). At battle's end, eleven warriors lay dead, along with nineteen women and children. Among the fatalities were Chief Black Kettle and his wife, Medicine Woman Later. Following the federal government's plan to cripple Indian resistance, Custer ordered the slaughter of the pony, horse, and mule herd, estimated at over 800 animals. Additionally, fifty-three prisoners, women and children, were marched back to Camp Supply. With the destruction of the animal herd and winter provisions, most of the remaining bands of nomadic Cheyenne and Arapaho accepted reservation life.

The Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers, petitioned President Ulysses S. Grant for the humane treatment of the Indians and asked that they be provided with educational and medical care. President Grant subsequently created a new Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation in what is now western Oklahoma by executive order on August 10, 1869. He appointed Brinton Darlington, a devout Quaker, as Indian Agent. On May 3, 1870, the agency was relocated from Camp Supply to the banks of the North Canadian River, northwest of present-day El Reno, Oklahoma. Darlington and other Indian Agents were charged with implementing the government's vision of Indian education, "stripping them of their languages, practices, and beliefs" (King, 2008, p. 426). As documented in the works of Adams (1995) and Mann (1997), the first priority was to teach young Indians to speak English. Tribal languages were to be abolished. Secondly, the Indians would be taught how to work, specifically practical skills and trades that would prepare them for their new way of reservation life. Boys would learn

agricultural skills and girls would learn housekeeping skills. The third priority was to teach the Indian individualism. Philanthropists of the day believed Indians to be savages partly because of the high value placed on the tribal community rather than on individual interests. Merrill Gates, Chairman of the United States Board of Indian Commissioners, stated, "We need to awaken in him wants…the desire for property of his own may become an intense educating force. Discontent with the tepee and the starving rations of the Indian camp in winter is needed to get the Indian out of the blanket and into trousers" (as quoted in Adams, 1995, p. 23). The fourth step in the education of Indians was their conversion to Christianity, as the sentiment of the day was that truly civilized people were only those familiar with the Bible and the teachings of the Gospels. Citizenship training was to be the fifth and final step in Indian schooling. Ironically, this citizenship training included the study of American History; including the idea that westward expansionism was justified. Indian agents eventually complained, however, about the slow acculturation process at reservation schools, blaming family and tribal influence, the "tendency of the children to slough off newly acquired civilized habits in favor of tribal ones" (Adams, 1995, p. 31).

In response to these complaints, the United States government experimented with off-reservation boarding schools in order to facilitate quicker assimilation among Indians. One such experiment actually began with the imprisonment of seventy-two Indian prisoners following the Red River War of 1874. The so-called war was actually a series of skirmishes by small groups of Indian warriors who refused to accept the terms of the treaties which resigned

them to reservations. The group of prisoners, held at Fort Sill, Indian Territory, consisted of thirty-four Cheyenne, two Arapaho, twenty-seven Kiowa, nine Comanche, and one Caddo. Since a military commission could not charge the prisoners, as a state of war did not exist, and fearful of an unfair civilian trial, the decision was made to transfer the prisoners to Fort Marion Prison in St. Augustine, Florida. Captain Richard Henry Pratt was given charge of the prisoners and began the twenty-four day journey southward (Adams, 1995; Mann, 1997; Hinz-Penner, 2007). Upon arriving at Fort Marion, Pratt removed the prisoners' leg irons, cut the Indians' long hair, issued them discarded army uniforms to wear, taught them military drill, and eventually dismissed the white guards in favor of an Indian patrol. Fort Marion was indeed a school, yet one run like a military camp. Indifferent to his charges at first, Pratt began to see himself as a "stern but benevolent father" that would "raise them up from savagery" (Adams, 1995, p. 41). Pratt sought to integrate his wards into the wider community. Obedient prisoners were rewarded with passes to leave the prison and walk along the streets of St. Augustine. Visitors were invited into the prison to witness the so-called transformation. Harriet Beecher Stowe visited the prison in 1877 and wrote about the "bloodthirsty warriors" that had arrived but who now were "docile and eager, with books in hand" (as quoted in Adams, 1995, p. 43). The prisoners endured Pratt's routine and ideology, as well as the curiosity of the white community. Although they were forced to become bicultural, they secretly strived to maintain their tribal identity (Mann, 1997).

In the spring of 1878, upon the completion of their three-year incarceration period, the older prisoners were allowed to return to their homes in the western territories. Captain Pratt received verification that neither the Indian Office nor the United States Army had objections to the younger prisoners receiving additional education (Adams, 1995). When given the option, seventeen former prisoners followed Captain Pratt to his new post as assistant principal at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, near Old Point Comfort, Virginia. Nine Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal members held the distinction of being the first of their tribe to attend this industrial training school (Mann, 1997). Hampton, established as a normal school for African Americans following the Civil War, adhered to the same philosophy of cultural assimilation as did the reservation schools and Fort Marion. No credence was given to education in the oral tradition, as practiced by native tribes and former slaves. Adams (1995) quotes Hampton founder and principal, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, as saying that blacks had emerged from slavery "culturally and morally inferior to whites and only under the benevolent tutelage of whites could they hope to make genuine racial progress" (p. 45). Armstrong and Pratt also continued with the publicity practices established at Fort Marion. New arrivals to Hampton were photographed in "their wild barbarous things. . .showing whence we started" (as quoted in Adams, 1995, p. 47) and later photographed with hair cut short, dressed in uniforms, and marching in drill as a way of documenting the conversion to civilized education.

Upon passage of an army appropriation bill, Capt. Pratt was authorized to recruit 125 students for a new Indian school. Pratt's argument to the Native peace

chiefs was that "the Indians' only defense against the white man was to learn his language and ways" (Adams, 1995, p. 48). Subsequently, Pratt returned from Sioux country with sixty boys and twenty-four girls, gathered thirty-eight boys and fourteen girls from Indian Territory, and persuaded eleven of his original prisoner-students from Fort Marion to leave Hampton to join him. The new institution, Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, was opened November 1, 1879. The assimilation process once again followed the familiar recipe: publicity photographs published, uniforms issued, military drill organized, vocational education and cultural isolation implemented. Between the years 1879 and 1920, twenty-five off-reservation boarding schools, following the Carlisle model of forced assimilation, were opened in the United States. The tenets of cultural pluralism, the idea that minorities may maintain the unique features of their culture while participating within a dominant society and that society itself benefits from this, were nullified with these practices.

Now, almost one-hundred years later, American Indian students still struggle with the concept of cultural pluralism versus acculturation. Shirley (2004) found that the most often cited reason that American Indian students have difficulty in college is due to cultural discontinuity. In his 1997 essay, *"Refuse to Kneel*," Oklahoman, Creek Indian, and Dartmouth graduate Bill Bray stated it this way:

> A Kiowa elder once told me that the victories to be won today are educational…But I was not comfortable or happy in this academic environment…More than any people in North America, Indians can point

> to a piece of the world where home lies, and they can often even trace it back to specific rocks, trees, and bodies of water. The university is not where we point. We cannot adopt academia in the way Euro-Americans can. What can Indians do when the glove is tailored to the white hand, and the white hand is already happily inside it? (p. 25)

The education of American Indian students, and the role that cultural pluralism plays within the educational system, provide the context for this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe factors of resilience that aided American Indian students in their transition to, and persistence in, a post-secondary educational setting. Participants were members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe who shared their perceptions of personal traits, individuals, events, and institutional elements that empowered their journey towards high school graduation and fostered their resilience during the transitional period of the freshman and sophomore years of college. For practical purposes, the intention of this study was to derive meaning from their lived experiences in or to contribute to the understanding of how representatives of high schools and post-secondary schools can work together to facilitate resiliency and academic success among American Indian students. This is particularly relevant to western Oklahoma due to the comparatively large population of American Indians in this state; the 2010 United States Census reports that Oklahoma's American Indian population of 322,616 ranks second in the nation.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Cheyenne and Arapaho university students. The participants described resiliency factors that facilitated their persistence to high school graduation, or their acquisition of a General Education Diploma, and their perseverance as they transitioned to a post-secondary setting. Initially, they described *what* they experienced in these contexts; then subsequently described *how* they experienced these structures. In order to explore the essence of these experiences, I used the following probes as points of inquiry during the interviews.

What are factors of resilience for Cheyenne and Arapaho students?

a. How do participants describe a successful Cheyenne and Arapaho student?
b. What challenges do Cheyenne and Arapaho students experience in public education and when transitioning to higher education?
c. Who or what facilitated this transition?
d. What internal structures promoted personal resilience?

Assumptions of the Study

The primary assumption of any phenomenological exploration is that phenomena are the foundation of human science and the basis for all knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Through phenomenological exploration, the interchange and discussion of personal experiences and perceptions leads to knowledge. Additional assumptions of this study include:

1. Resilience is an ongoing process that may manifest itself at various moments throughout our lives.
2. A description of the lived experiences of individuals may derive meaning about the phenomenon of resilience.
3. The essence of what participants experienced may be described in a textural description of resilience.
4. The meaning of how participants experienced the phenomenon of resilience may be derived from a structural description.
5. The experience of resilience may be clarified by being considered in the reflective processes of a phenomenological study.

Definition of Terms

Since the primary focus of this phenomenological study is to identify factors of resilience among Cheyenne and Arapaho students as they transition from common education to higher education settings, it is necessary to define the meaning of terms used throughout this study.

American Indian

The term American Indian refers to indigenous peoples of the United States. The broader term, "Native American," also includes the native peoples of Canada, Mexico, and South America (Daniel and Ackerman, 2010). The United States Census Bureau (2010) identified 36 principal tribes that are sanctioned to negotiate and make decisions on behalf of individual members, including the Cheyenne, the Cherokee, the Navajo, and the Sioux.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe

The Cheyenne and Arapaho people are a plains' Indian tribe whose final reservation was established by the United States government in what is now western Oklahoma. By definition in the Constitution of the Tsistsistas-Hinonoei (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, 2006), tribal members are each person of one-fourth, or more, degree of blood of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe of Oklahoma.

Educational Success

For the purpose of this investigation, educational success for individual students is defined as those who have successfully completed high school by obtaining either a diploma or General Education Degree (GED) and who have transitioned to the university setting.

Traditional University Student

For the purpose of this study, a traditional university student is one who graduated with a traditional high school diploma and who transitioned immediately to the university setting. In the context of this study, four traditional students were interviewed. The four ranged in age from 18 to 20 years old.

Non-traditional University Student

In relation to this study, a non-traditional university student is one who either graduated with a traditional high school diploma or who completed requirements for a General Education Degree (GED), but for whom the transition to the university setting took several years. In the context of this study, three non-traditional students were interviewed. Each of the three were 29 years of age or older.

Epoche

Epoche is a word of Greek origin, meaning "to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The Epoche is the first step in a phenomenological study that requires the researcher to set aside pre-determined judgments about what is real, to suspend presuppositions (Creswell, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). The phenomena are viewed freshly, in a wide sense, in order to determine the essence of the lived experience.

Phenomenological Reduction

The term *Phenomenological* is defined as the attempt to describe the subjective experiences of those who have experienced the circumstance, situation, or occurrence. *Reduction* is the act of determining the source of the meaning of the phenomenon, "a complete description is given of [the phenomenon's] essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Phenomenological Reduction allows the researcher to arrive at a textural description of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon. Phenomenological Reduction is comprised of several steps: Bracketing the topic, horizonalization, delimited horizons or meanings, identifying invariant qualities and themes, describing individual textural descriptions, and writing the composite textural description.

Bracketing

The focus of the study is placed in brackets so that the researcher may set aside all else and attend exclusively to the topic and research question.

Horizonalization

Horizonalization is the second step in the data analysis of a phenomenological study. Every significant statement made by participants in regard to the topic is listed and is given equal value.

Delimited Horizons or Meanings

Delimited horizons are those that stand out as constant, unvarying qualities experienced and articulated by participants.

Invariant Qualities and Themes

The non-repetitive, non-overlapping components are clustered into themes which are used to form the textural description.

Individual Textural Description

The individual textural descriptions are "what the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). The textural description may contain literal quotations from the participants as examples. An individual textural description is prepared for each participant.

Composite Textural Description

The composite textural description is the compilation of the individual textural descriptions. It provides an inclusive description of *what* the group experienced as a whole.

Imaginative Variation

The imaginative variation phase is a time of reflection for the researcher. Many possibilities may be examined in order to derive structural themes for the textural

descriptions. Imaginative variation may include "structures of time. . .causality, and relationship to self and to others" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99)

Individual Structural Description

"How" the experience happened is conveyed in the structural description. In the structural description, "the inquirer reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). An individual structural description is prepared for each participant.

Composite Structural Description

The composite structural description is the compilation of the individual structural descriptions. It provides an inclusive description of *how* the group experienced events as a whole.

Composite Description

The composite description is the final, concluding paragraph of a phenomenological study. It incorporates both the textural and the structural descriptions that "tell the reader 'what' the participants experienced with the phenomenon and 'how' they experienced it" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159).

Summary

This study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One outlines the purpose, significance, and historical background regarding this investigation of educational resiliency and the transition to higher education for American Indian students. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature applicable to transition theory related to secondary to postsecondary schooling, resiliency theory, and American Indian success in higher education. Chapter Three discusses the

methodology of the study. Chapter Four presents the interview data and identifies meaning clusters and themes, Chapter Five presents the interview data in the form of textural descriptions while Chapter Six presents the interview data in the form of structural descriptions. Chapter Seven is a reflective summary of the study and discusses implications for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This qualitative study examined the lived experience of seven Cheyenne and Arapaho university students attending a regional institution in western Oklahoma. Participants were asked questions pertaining to their resiliency through high school and in their transition to the university setting. The following literature is applicable to this study because some research focuses on a four-year span, the junior year of high school to the sophomore year of college, identified as an important transition point for students. Other research examines how friendships and a sense of belonging are cultivated during this transition phase. This chapter ends with a review of research dealing with resiliency identified in various contexts, including longitudinal studies, individual studies, educational studies, and cultural studies. This chapter provides a summative background to the research regarding transition theory related to secondary to postsecondary schooling and resiliency theory that seeks to explain the psychological construct of resilience (particularly in children and youth) within challenging life contexts and circumstances.

Transition Theory

An important developmental period for young adults is the four years encompassing the junior and senior years of high school and the freshman and sophomore years of college. This is a time of great psychological and physical transition for many. Changes in living arrangements, social networks, academic surroundings, and the ensuing responsibilities of young adulthood are challenging

and life-altering. Often, students must negotiate the transition to the university setting without high school support groups such as friends, family, school counselors, and teachers. Reflecting upon Bronfenbrenner's and Tinto's views on college freshman and attrition, Freeman, Anderman and Jenson (2007) summarize:

> Recent high school graduates headed to college in the United States undergo what Bronfenbrenner (1979) deemed an ecological transition, in which incoming freshmen are faced with negotiating new roles in their new academic contexts…Tinto's (1987) academic and social integration model of college student attrition suggested that successful adjustment to college rests on managing both academic and social aspects of the new environment. (p. 2)

Since approximately one third of entering college students leave higher education during their first year, a better understanding of what factors may advance adjustment and transition to the university setting is needed (Pittman and Richmond, 2008). Two identified elements that may facilitate understanding of how young adults fare during their initial years in college are the students' sense of university belonging and the quality of students' friendships (Pittman and Richmond, 2008).

Transitioning and School Belonging

School belonging is defined as "connectedness to one's school or perceived school membership" and goes beyond an individual's sense of simply 'fitting in'; it includes a "sense of commitment to the institution, individual

commitment to work in this setting, and a sense of one's abilities being recognized by others" (Pittman & Richmond, 2008, p. 344). The Wingspread Declaration on School Connections reinforces the premise that a sense of belonging is critical for student success. The Declaration states that "increased student connection to school promotes educational motivation, classroom engagement, [and] improved school attendance…across racial, ethnic, and income groups" (Wingspread Conference, 2004, p. 233).

School belonging is relational in nature. The relationships forged between teachers and students are the fundamental way in which students develop positive interactions and become engaged in their setting (Tseng and Seidman, 2007). Relationships are a component of the social processes which ultimately impact student achievement. Accordingly, a summary of studies conducted with public school students is provided by Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen (2007):

> Several researchers (Goodenow, 1993b; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996) documented associations between students' sense of class or school belonging and a range of motivational variables. Goodenow, alone and also with Grady, found positive relationships between middle school students' perceptions of belonging and a general measure of academic motivation. In a similar fashion, Solomon et al. found that… students' sense of community, a construct that included the sense of belonging, was positively associated with their academic motivation. (p. 204)

Students well beyond the elementary, middle school, and high school years need a sense of school belonging. In the university context, school belonging is a more global perception for beginning college students, a feeling that they belong to this new, larger campus community. New students who have this sense of connection tend to experience less stress, have increased perceived self-efficacy and academic motivation, and have a more positive adjustment to post-secondary life (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen (2007).

The need for a sense of belonging extends to the sophomore year of college as well. Tobolowsky (2008) states, "Excluding the first year, more students drop out of higher education in the second year than any other year of college" (p. 61). In her research, Tobolowsky identifies a common goal among colleges and universities, the development of a sense of community for students. This goal is supported by the work of Tseng and Seidman (2007), as they found that enhanced settings lend themselves to this sense of community, promoting a sense of "physical and psychological safety, supportive relationships…opportunities for belonging…and support for efficacy and mattering" (p. 218). In an effort to promote setting-level change, institutional strategies include offering newsletters, websites, and brochures directed at the sophomore students, detailing information on campus events and university deadlines applicable to them (Tobolowsky, 2008). Other universities offer sophomore retreats, class trips, career/major counseling, and other initiatives to foster a shared sense of identity and belongingness. Researchers such as Pritchard, Wilson, and Yamnitz (2007) call upon university administrators to

investigate further ideas to foster positive adjustment and to alleviate negative experiences for freshmen and sophomore college students.

Transitioning and Quality of Friendships

Just as college freshmen explore their new environment and work to find a sense of belonging, they seek new friendships with college peers. The transition to social competence during the first two years of college, including the development of quality friendships and peer support, contribute to higher academic performance and reduced levels of anxiety among freshmen and sophomores (Pittman and Richmond, 2008). Quality friendships are defined as those that are high in trust and in communication, those that lower internal problem behaviors such as alienation, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, they provide "social support, assistance in coping with difficult situations, and the opportunity to engage in social activities" (Pittman and Richmond, 2008, p. 356). Kelly, Kendrick, and Newgent (2007) discuss the theory that socialization is a dominant force in influencing dropout decisions and that peers seemed to have a much greater influence on the attitudes of other students than do faculty members and university officials.

Many universities foster the development of quality friendships by offering social networks among students, such as peer advising, peer support groups and social support groups (Pittman and Richmond, 2008; Pritchard, Wilson, and Yamnitz, 2007). Farquhar (2000) suggests devoting the first six weeks on campus to developing a "social cushion…a new network of contacts with whom students can talk things over when the inevitable difficulties arise" (p.

5). He argues that friendships that cultivate these coping life skills are at least as important as academic skills to novice students. Once the "social cushion" is in place students may look to university programs designed for assisting them with developing healthy peer relationships within their major fields, including curricular learning communities, service learning projects, and lecture series (Tobolowsky, 2008).

Resiliency Theory

Resilience is a psychological construct and manifests itself as the conclusive ability of people to cope with stress; the ability to "bounce back" from adversity. Oftentimes, the study of resilience may be couched in the context of a disadvantaged environment, such as poverty, low socioeconomic status, dysfunctional family units, or health-related issues, resulting in a risk-based problem-prevention approach in both policy and practice (Brown & Brown, 2006). Empirical studies of resilience often take on a multidisciplinary approach because the topic is of interest to a diverse group, including psychologists, pediatricians, public policy makers, social workers, and educators. Resiliency is not a fixed or concrete concept; "It's the going back and forth from vulnerability to resiliency that's actually the essence of the phenomenon" (Werner, 1996, p. 19). Multiple studies of resilience can be found in the fields of psychology and education. The reviewed literature in this study will be classified in the following subsets: 1) longitudinal studies involving multiple risk factors; 2) studies of individual resilience; 3) studies regarding educational settings; and 4) studies of cultural resilience.

Longitudinal Studies Involving Multiple Risk Factors

One of the most in-depth longitudinal studies, involving a cohort of youth born in 1955 on the island of Kauai, documented the aggregate effects of prenatal stress, chronic poverty, and a marginal care giving environment on child development (Werner and Smith, 1977). Data from participants and their families were collected at birth, during the postpartum period, and at ages 1, 2, 10, 18, 32, and 40 years. Subsequent to the Kauai Longitudinal Study, Werner (2005) reviewed large-scale studies of resilience in the United States including the Minnesota Parent-Child Project, begun in 1975, Project Competence, begun in 1977, The Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage, begun in 1971, The Hetherington and Clingempeel Study of Divorce and Remarriage, begun in 1980, The Rochester Longitudinal Study, begun in 1970, A Study of Child Rearing and Child Development in Normal Families and Families with Affective Disorders, begun in 1980, A Longitudinal Study of the Consequences of Child Abuse, begun in 1974, The Virginia Longitudinal Study of Child Maltreatment, begun in 1986, and the Chicago Longitudinal Study, begun in 1983. In totality, these studies followed children with multiple risk factors over the course of their infancy and childhood into adolescence and adulthood. Werner (2005) summarized the results from these U. S. studies in relation to the findings from international studies from Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. She found that individual attributes of children that were associated with successful endurance of stressful situations included "good communication and problem-solving skills, including the ability to recruit

substitute caregivers…they had a talent or special skill that was valued by their peers, and they had faith that their actions could make a positive difference in their lives" (Werner, 2005, p. 95).

Resilient children also accessed external resources in order to successfully manage stressors. Chief among these family and community resources were "affectional ties that encouraged trust, autonomy, and initiative" (Werner, 2005, p. 96). Resilient children were found to be adept at developing these relationships with extended family members and community members whenever immediate family support was lacking. Positive role models included supportive grandparents and teachers, friends, and mentors (Werner, 2005). Longitudinal studies have documented the journey from vulnerability of high-risk children to their resilience as adults. The predictors of resilience that have emerged from multiple studies strengthened the conclusion that they are inclusive across different contexts.

Over time, repeated connections between individual attributes, external sources of support, and opportunities at major life transitions, such as high school graduation, post-secondary schooling, career entry, voluntary military service, and marriage, increased children's competence and efficacy, enabling troubled individuals to rebound as young adults. For instance, at age 18, Kauai youth "believed that events happened to them as a result of fate or other factors beyond their control" and typically scored low in such areas as self-assurance, responsibility, achievement potential, and intellectual efficiency (Werner and Smith, 1977, p. 100). Personal problems persisted as participants reported low

self-esteem. However, the same participants who reported multiple sources of emotional support throughout childhood and adolescence reported fewer stressors and greater self-efficacy and adaptation at age 40 (Werner, 2005). At least one-third reported that they had received some sort of positive intervention from their community over the turbulent years, whether through counseling services, supportive academic environments, or family encouragement. Within the context of those whom participants might spontaneously turn to for help, peer friends ranked first. Parents and older friends were rated next in the hierarchy of helpfulness, while professionals, whether teachers, counselors, ministers, or social workers, ranked lower as sources of help.

Studies of Individual Resilience

Individual resilience is not a construct that can be directly measured. Rather, individual resilience is a supposition or inference drawn when examining environmental risk and positive personal responsiveness. Werner (1996) refers to it as the "interplay of individual, environmental, and situational factors" (p. 19) and identifies protective factors promoting individual resilience at different stages of life. In early childhood, the presence of an emotionally stable, competent caregiver is essential. It doesn't seem to matter if this nurturing comes from substitute parents, such as grandparents, older siblings, or mentors, but a close bond with a caring adult is critical. In middle childhood, building competency, problem-solving skills, and interaction with concerned teachers and responsible friends are key protective factors. Werner (1996) specifically identified cognitive competence, such as the development of basic reading skills, as being particularly

paramount at this stage. In adolescence, building self-esteem, an internal locus of control, and providing a sense of meaning are predominant predictors of resilience. In adulthood, the support of a close friend or mate and personal competence are the most important factors (Werner and Smith, 2001).

Two protective buffers, which seem to transcend gender, age, ethnicity, and other constructs, are what psychologists have termed "required helpfulness" and faith (Werner, 1996). By the time children get to middle childhood, they have learned to give something back to their family or neighborhood. This "giving back" is the definition of required helpfulness. Werner (1996) defines it as being part of a family, whether extended or single parent, in which the child's input matters, where the child contributes to the household, such as by caring for younger siblings or for an elder. This characteristic seems to carry over to adult lives as well. No matter the context in which a person lives, amidst extreme poverty or other stressors, resilient adults seem to contribute something to their community as volunteers in church, school, and other activities. Werner (1996) suggests incorporating required helpfulness into service learning programs for children as young as five-years old in order to foster individual resilience. One of the major findings of the Kauai Longitudinal Study was the importance of faith among resilient individuals. Faith was not confined to particular denominations, as the cohort held faith traditions ranging from Buddhism, Catholicism, mainstream Protestant denominations, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses, but was identified as a belief that life made sense and that the experience of pain could indeed be transformational (Werner and Smith, 1992). Participants were

quoted as saying, “What has helped me most in difficult times is believing in God, knowing he’d never do anything deliberately to hurt me”; “I am not active in the church, but I am a believing person. I believe there is a reason for pain and suffering”; and “I know I have *mana* (the Hawaiian spirit). I respect it in myself, and its effects have shown throughout my life” (Werner and Smith, 1992, p. 71). Werner (1996) further explains that children as young as the age of ten could actually verbalize their understanding of faith and that this faith enabled them to confront and forgive errant caregivers.

In his review of resilience theory literature, VanBreda (2001) summarizes three ways in which resilient individuals cope with stressors. The first strategy is to change the situation out of which vulnerability arises. This is not easily done, however. Even if an individual can accurately identify the situation causing stress, many circumstances, such as poverty and family discord, cannot feasibly be changed. A second coping strategy is to focus on the emotional aftermath of stressful events through basic stress management responses such as exercise and relaxation techniques. But the most common method of coping used by resilient individuals is to “concentrate on less stressful aspects of the situation, and reducing the relative importance of the stressful situation in relation to one’s overall life situation” (VanBreda, 2001, p. 7). This idea is reinforced by Zucker, Donovan, Masten, Mattson, and Moss (2009) in their findings of lower levels of impulsivity and aggressiveness among children being raised in high-adversity family environments, demonstrating their resiliency to focus on protective factors in their lives rather than on the risk.

Children and adults alike are continually establishing sources of resilience. It is an ongoing process of developing self-awareness and trust. Grotberg (1995) identifies three sources of resilience from which individuals draw. She labels them: I HAVE, I AM, I CAN and provides the following descriptions:

> I [have]: [p]eople around me I trust and who love me, no matter what; [p]eople who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble; [p]eople who show me how to do things right by the way they do things; [p]eople who want me to learn to do things on my own; [p]eople who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn.
>
> I [am]: [a]person people can like and love; [g]lad to do nice things for others and show my concern; [r]espectful of myself and others; [w]illing to be responsible for what I do; [s]ure things will be all right.
>
> I [can]: [t]alk to others about things that frighten me or bother me; [f]ind ways to solve problems that I face; [c]ontrol myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous; [f]igure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action; [f]ind someone to help me when I need it. (pp. 1-2)

These determinants need not all be present at one time in order for an individual to be resilient, but individuals typically need more than one. People may also use these sources in varying combinations in order to be successfully resilient. Grotberg (1995) further reminds us that individuals are not independent of their setting. The sources of resilience can be found in the contexts of the larger community, such as the school, the family, and the cultural context.

Resilience in Educational Settings

Resiliency can be identified by four attributes: social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future (Benard, 1993; Berliner & Benard, 1995; Brown & Brown, 2006; Krovetz, 1999). According to these researchers, social competence involves the ability to establish positive relationships with both adults and peers, maintain a sense of humor, and communicate compassion and empathy. Problem-solving skills include the ability to think reflectively and to seek alternative and creative solutions to conflict. Two attributes particularly important within the development of problem-solving skills are 1) planning, which enables students to see themselves in control, and 2) resourcefulness, students' ability in seeking help from others. Autonomy is the sense of identity, the ability to act independently, the ability to exert control over one's own environment, and to avoid others who are engaged in risky behaviors. This is particularly important to individuals trying to succeed in an educational setting, prompting the call for schools to encourage students to use their personal strengths in daily activities to "promote educational attainment and social and moral development" (Brown & Brown, 2006, p. 27). A sense of purpose involves optimism, goal setting, aspirations for personal and educational achievement, hopefulness, and a sense of a bright future (Benard 1993; Berliner & Benard, 1995; Brown & Brown, 2006; Krovetz, 1999).

Resilient students are adept at finding support from friends, family members, community connections, and school. Environmental factors found in these supportive relationships include a caring environment, positive expectations,

and participation (Benard, 1993; Berliner & Benard, 1995; Krovetz, 1999). First and foremost, caring environments provide for the basic needs of individuals. Educators help families meet basic survival needs every day by making referrals to social agencies, and the school serves as a protective shield to help children withstand a stressful world (Benard, 1997; Garmezy, 1991). The level of caring and support within a school is positively correlated to positive outcomes for young adults, particularly those in underrepresented and underserved groups (Benard, 1993; Hopson, 2009). Key elements within caring environments are trust, compassion, respectfulness, and kindness. Particularly important is at least one adult who "knows the child well and cares deeply about the well-being of that child" (Krovetz, 1999, p. 122). Benard (1993) summarizes how a single caring individual can make a difference for a child or youth:

> For the resilient youngster a special teacher was not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification. At a time when the traditional structures of caring have deteriorated, school must become places where teachers and students live together, talk with each other, and take delight in each other's company. The number of student references to wanting caring teachers is so great that we believe it speaks to the quiet desperation and loneliness of many adolescents in today's society. (p. 45)

Teachers who are student-centered set positive expectations. They "recognize students' strengths, mirror them, and help students see where they are strong" (Benard, 1997, p. 3). Expectations are explicitly articulated and, most

importantly, support is given so that students can meet the expectations. One way in which expectations are communicated is through teacher behavior and attitudes. Teachers who "play to the strengths of each child" are highly motivating, especially to students "who receive the opposite message from their families and communities" (Benard, 1993, p. 46). A varied curriculum, one that provides opportunities for success in academics, the arts, sports, and community service sends the message that individuals have unique strengths and that all are valued. Benard (1993) found schools that use multiple assessments in their evaluation of students are most successful in conveying high expectations for all. Authentic assessments, especially those that "promote self reflection…validate the different types of intelligences…and learning styles of children" (p. 47). Later work by Hopson (2009), calls for schooling, in the broadest sense, to be culturally responsive and relevant, stating that "a culturally relevant/responsive teaching and pedagogy orientation helps teachers attend to the needs of each learner…especially for ethnically…diverse students" (p. 433).

Student participation, the ability to express opinions, make choices, work cooperatively, and have meaningful involvement with others at the family, school, and civic levels, fosters resiliency (Benard, 1993; Berliner & Benard, 1995; Krovetz, 1999). Resiliency in children and youth is a natural outcome in educational settings that have high expectations for students. Participation is a fundamental human need, like caring and support, the "need to have control over one's life" (Benard, 1993, p. 47). Benard (1993) gives instructional examples that teachers may implement such as:

> giving students more opportunity to respond to questions, asking their opinions on issues, asking questions that encourage critical, reflective thinking, making learning more hands-on, involving students in curriculum planning, using participatory evaluation strategies, and employing approaches like cooperative learning, peer teaching, cross-age mentoring, and community service. (p. 47)

Resilience is not a trademark of super-kids, those who were once thought to be invulnerable, invincible, or remarkable. Masten (2001) states,

> Resilience appears to be a common phenomenon that results in most cases from the operation of basic human adaptational systems. If those systems are protected and in good working order, development is robust even in the face of severe adversity. (p. 227)

Studies of Cultural Resilience

HeavyRunner and DeCelless (2002) expand on the definition of resilience from the American Indian point of view:

> We have long recognized how important it is for children to have people in their lives that nurture their spirit, stand by them, encourage, and support them. This traditional process is what contemporary researchers, educators, and social service providers are now calling 'fostering resilience.' (p. 35)

HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) extended the concept of resiliency theory into what they term cultural resilience, the identification of "cultural factors that nurture, encourage, and support Indian students, families, and communities" (p.

15). Among Native families and communities, spiritual protective factors have contributed to their survival through generations of adversity. "Spirituality includes our interconnectedness with each other (relationships), the sacredness of our inner spirit, our efforts to nurture and renew ourselves daily (prayer), balance and harmony (awareness), and our responsibility to be lifelong learners (growth)" (HeavyRunner & Marshal, 2003, p. 15). They propose that, in order for colleges and universities to foster student retention, the customary protective factors, including caring support, opportunities for participation, and high expectations, must be present. Hopson (2009) describes this ability to identify cultural differences and similarities and to use them in order to proactively establish supportive mechanisms, as "cultural competence" (p. 434). Public education and institutions of higher learning must help students "recognize the crucial role their own thinking plays…sometimes they lack the internal perspective that brings positive results…tapping resilience is an inside out process" (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003, p. 16).

Taylor (1999) also documented this inside-out process. In her study of Native students on a predominately Caucasian campus, students identified their own determination as a persistence factor. Comments included:

> I have a stubborn streak. It's the stubborn steak that kept me going.
>
> I really had a hard time this last year; I've almost dropped out three times already. But I'm really determined. I'll never drop out. Can't drop out. It goes against everything I've ever been taught. (pp. 14-15)

In his research involving Native and non-Native teachers of Native students, Peacock (2006) found that successful teachers tapped into "students' intrinsic motivators – their need to feel self-determined, to satisfy their natural curiosity, to receive feedback, to feel competent, to express themselves, and to imitate" (p. 11). A second persistence factor documented by Taylor (1999) was supportive people. To a great extent, interviewees mentioned one person who had influenced them in a special way; encouraging them and providing support. Statements included:

> Of all the instructors I've had on campus she was the one who's always been there for you. There was one teacher, she just took me aside and said, 'You know you have a lot of potential.' That was all I needed. I just need a little encouragement to say you can do it.
>
> My dad has been there for me the most; he always says I can still do it…You're already Indian, you're already a woman, that's two strikes against you…now you're a teen mom, that's another strike, but who said you can't overcome it? My dad overcame it.
>
> I had an advisor who was my 'mom' on campus. She's always been there for me. (pp. 14-15)

Peacock (2006) also found teacher support important to Native students. When asked, "What makes a good teacher?" interviewees labeled "having high expectations, being fair and demanding respect for all learners…and being interested in students" as successful teaching characteristics (p. 12).

Components such as cultural resilient frameworks, supportive families, and caring teachers support Native students as they negotiate interaction between their traditional culture and the college mainstream, described by Huffman (2001) as the process of transculturation. Huffman (2001) asserts that students who demonstrated the ability to interact on two cultural levels progressed through four stages of transculturation: initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment, and participation. He contends that, while Native students were initially alienated by the university setting and suffered feelings of isolation and despair, those who persisted were rewarded with a self-discovery of personal strength emanating from their cultural background. They perceived that they could compete academically and socialize with people of all races, without any loss of their cultural identity. Once this threshold had been crossed, Native students began a realignment process, using their culture as an emotional anchor while operating within the environment of higher education. These students had not been assimilated; they had learned to cross cultural boundaries. In the final stage of the transculturation process, Native students were at ease with the routine of college and reported making maximum use of their cultural traditions as a source of strength (Huffman, 2001).

Guillory and Wolverton's (2008) interviews of Native students corroborated three important factors leading to persistence: family, giving back to tribal community, and on-campus social support. In its many forms, such as parents, siblings, and extended family, the term *family* proved a motivational source for students in varying contexts:

> I think for me, my parents have always instilled the fact that education is important and that in order to achieve anything in today's world, you have to have at least a bachelor's or some form of technical degree.
>
> I'm the first in my family to go to college, and so it will mean a lot to my family and me if I can graduate and become a teacher.
>
> Mine [motivation] is my family back home…And they're, like, pushing us real bad…my greatest fear is to let them down right now. (p. 74-75)

Guillory and Wolverton (2008) surmised that persistence in college "brought hope in making life better for their families…a reflection of an Indigenous philosophy of putting community before individualism" (p. 74). Jackson and Smith (2001) interviewed 22 graduates from a small high school on the Navajo Nation and likewise cited internal factors

> Our finding that family members' postsecondary experiences are influential in students' postsecondary attitudes and experiences suggests that more attention needs to be paid to relationships with potential mentors…This study suggests that family support, family problems, and family financial concerns are strongly related to post-secondary persistence. Participants in this study who reported support from both parents and extended family members expressed greater confidence in their career and postsecondary aspirations. (p. 41-42)

Traditional studies of resilience focus on identifying risk factors such as ethnicity, poverty, abuse, community violence, alcoholism, and low parental support. Although identification of such factors may facilitate getting students in touch with needed services, this deficit-lens approach may also lead to stereotyping, tracking, low expectations, prejudice, and discrimination based on a student's perceived deficits (Benard, 1993, Benard, 1997; Berliner & Benard, 1995). Rather than focusing on the disadvantages an individual may face, resiliency theory, particularly cultural resiliency theory, can build on an individual's capacity and focus on cultural and linguistic assets and funds of knowledge that can be harnessed in formal school settings (Gutiérrez, 2008). The pedagogical and institutional stance is a "proactive position…based on building capabilities, skills, and assets. It emphasizes strengthening the environment, not fixing kids" (Krovetz, 1999, p. 121). Implementation of this proactive position itself builds resiliency, defined as "the ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to extreme risks" (Benard, 1993, p. 44) and "the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life" (Grotberg, 1995, p. 2). Werner and Smith (1977) specifically endorse a difference, rather than a deficit, model of human development and cultural unity. The researchers "recognize the need for a delicate balance between personal and cultural identity in a pluralistic society such as the United States" (Werner and Smith, 1977, p. 151) and assert the importance of preserving a positive cultural identity while acquiring the cognitive skills and dominant cultural tools needed and valued by a larger society.

HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) and Feinstein, Driving-Hawk, and Baartman (2009) believe that native culture provides individuals with additional protective factors, that resilience is indeed an ancient concept to indigenous people. In fact, every indigenous language has a word that is synonymous with resilience and cultural protective factors in American Indian families and communities include "spirituality, family strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks" (HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003, p. 16). VanBreda's (2001) review of literature cites several researchers who promote cultural identity as a fundamental factor in resiliency and call for racial socialization, or the sharing of the cultural worldview, in order to enhance individual resilience through a community of native culture. A pluralistic society "needs both the many [within-group cultural practices] and one [across-group cultural practices] to remain vibrant" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Paris (2012), Franklin (2009), and VanBreda (2001) predict multicultural issues and culturally sustaining pedagogies to be core areas for future research, influencing the kinds of variables to be studied (strengths rather than deficits) and the differing interpretations given to research results of ethnic minorities who have survived racism and oppression.

Conclusion and Restatement of Problem

Resiliency studies encompass a multidisciplinary focus of interest to researchers in the fields of psychology and education. This literature review has summarized findings regarding school belonging and quality of friendships as found in transition theory, longitudinal studies of resilience, studies of individual resilience, studies regarding educational settings, and studies of cultural

resilience. As American Indians strive to persist in higher education, the aspect of cultural resilience, bicultural competence, and their relationship to academic success becomes central, particularly among the plains tribes of western Oklahoma. Dr. Henrietta Mann, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal elder, encourages tribal members towards persistence by stating:

> I got my education from my culture…In order to be a whole human being, I also have responsibilities to the people to whom I belong and to maintain our cultural ways as a people…You are the ancestors of those who are yet to come. (personal communication, 2010)

Previously cited studies on Native students and the resulting theoretical explanations for successful transition and resiliency have been conducted in Montana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Arizona, all states with large reservation populations. To date, no similar studies have been done with Native students who live in non-reservation states, particularly Oklahoma Cheyenne and Arapaho students. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe resiliency factors for Cheyenne and Arapaho students that facilitated their persistence to high school graduation, or to obtain a General Education Diploma, and their perseverance to transition from a high school setting to a post-secondary setting.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Qualitative research is a field of study entrenched in the human disciplines that encompasses many approaches, methods, and procedures. As practitioners of qualitative studies, researchers may employ techniques such as ethnography, case study, grounded theory, narrative research, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Regardless of the particular methodology, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach, emphasizing processes and meanings that stress how social knowledge is constructed and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative research techniques are appropriate when an issue within an identified group needs to be explored and is particularly useful when a detailed, complex understanding of an issue is required. Janesick (1998) identifies important decisions that the qualitative researcher must make prior to beginning the study, including questions that guide the study, participant selection, access and entry to the site, and selection of appropriate research strategies. These criteria correspond with Creswell's (2007) list of characteristics for good qualitative research, including rigorous data collection procedures, a study framed within the assumptions regarding a qualitative approach, the use of a recognized approach to research, and an ethical research design.

Throughout my teaching career, in both elementary and university settings, I have always been intrigued with the question of why some students persevere toward their goals, even in the face of adversity, and why others do not.

One group that particularly captured my attention was my American Indian students, predominantly Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal members. Specifically, I became concerned when I saw a pattern of some of my brightest elementary students who either did not persevere to high school graduation or who, upon graduating from high school, did not transition to a post-secondary setting. My interest in these students and my doctoral studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies became the basis for this qualitative inquiry focusing on Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal members and their experiences in transitioning from public education to higher education. I was interested not only in *what* they experienced during this time, but also *how* they experienced the phenomena. This "science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's…experience" is termed phenomenology, a concept introduced in the eighteenth century by the philosopher Immanuel Kant (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). The twentieth century philosophical writings of Edmund Husserl expanded on the concept of transcendental phenomenology, proposing that "natural knowledge begins with experience" and that such knowledge may be gained through the study and reflection of one's direct experiences (Husserl, 1962, p. 51). Later works emphasize that "phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26) and that "human experience…has a particular discoverable structure regardless of the unique facts of varying circumstances" (Frick, 2008, p. 81). I hoped to discover commonalities between individual experiences in order to discern the essence and the meaning that students made of their experiences. Therefore, I decided to

employ a transcendental phenomenological research model, as outlined by Moustakas (1994), consisting of four methodological steps: 1) preparing to collect data; 2) collecting data; 3) organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing data; 4) summary, implications, and outcomes (p. 181-182).

Preparing to Collect Data

According to Moustakas (1994), research preparation includes the formulation of the question and the definition of relevant terms of the question, followed by a literature review of prior research. The development of criteria for selecting participants is the third step, followed by the development of guiding questions for the research interview.

Question formulation.

As stated previously, this research explores the resiliency factors for Cheyenne and Arapaho students that facilitated their persistence to high school graduation, or to obtain a General Education Diploma, and their perseverance to transition from a high school setting to a post-secondary setting. In order to explore the essence of these experiences, the following probes were used as points of inquiry during the interviews.

What are factors of resilience for Cheyenne and Arapaho students?

a. How do participants describe a successful Cheyenne and Arapaho student?
b. What challenges do Cheyenne and Arapaho students experience in public education and when transitioning to higher education?
c. Who or what facilitated this transition?

d. What internal structures promoted personal resilience?

Literature review of prior research.

In order to provide the foundation for my research, I prepared a literature review, presented in its entirety in the second chapter of this document, which included a summary on transition theory. Previous studies which focused on how young adults transitioned from high school to the collegiate setting included information on school belonging and the impact of quality friendships. The literature on resiliency theory had several components as well, including longitudinal studies, studies of individual resilience, resiliency in educational settings, and studies of cultural resilience. Many studies referenced in my literature review pertained to Native students in states with large American Indian reservation populations. I identified the "original nature of [my] study" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 181) to be: *What are resiliency factors of Oklahoma Cheyenne and Arapaho university students?*

Criteria for participant selection.

The fields of psychology, philosophy, and education often employ phenomenological methodology because it can be used to describe the "essence of a lived phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 78). This method is appropriate in that the problem in question has to do with "several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). I did not attempt to explain why American Indians are among the smallest ethnic population at colleges and universities, nor did I impose my personal beliefs on measures that might be taken to make transition easier for this group. I sought only to

communicate participants' experiences with this phenomenon, "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

I employed purposeful sampling for this study because this method allowed me to select information-rich cases for in-depth study. Patton (2002) encourages qualitative researchers to use purposeful sampling and to select cases from which the most can be learned. He stated, "More can be learned from intensively studying exemplary (information-rich) cases than can be learned from statistical depictions of what the average case is like" (p. 234). All participants were freshmen and sophomore students of American Indian heritage, specifically the subgroup of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe. All participants were graduates of public high schools within a 130-mile radius. These two criteria ensure group homogeneity by bringing people together who have "similar backgrounds and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 236). The university at which this study took place is a small, regional, public institution in western Oklahoma. It has an enrollment of approximately 4,700 full-time undergraduate and graduate students and had a self-identifying population of 483 American Indian students during the fall 2010 semester. This institution also has a satellite campus sixty miles west of the main campus that offers two-year associate degrees in Computer Science, Criminal Justice/Corrections, General Business, General Studies/American Indian Studies, General Studies/Exceptional Learning Needs Paraprofessionals, Hospitality, Restaurant and Gaming Management, Medical Lab Technician, Pre-Nursing, Radiologic Technology, Tribal Administration, Wild Land Firefighting,

Occupational Therapy Assistant, and Physical Therapy Assistant. Additionally, the university is acting as an incubator for a newly formed tribal college on its premises. The tribal college offers three associate degrees and boasts an enrollment of approximately 110 students. Eventually, the tribal college will seek independent accreditation and will have a physical campus separate from the university.

The phenomenon studied was the lived experience of participants as they transitioned to the university setting in order to pursue an undergraduate degree and the factors of resilience, if any, that support them. Participants provided a description of their experiences, thinking, and related perspectives; I did not attempt to provide interpretation. As Guillory and Wolverton (2008) state, "Native Americans are the experts at being Native American, and thus it is imperative that their voices be heard when creating policy that can directly or indirectly affect their educational lives" (p. 63).

Establishing contact.

Since I am not of American Indian descent, I am aware of the skepticism some may have regarding my ability to explicate the essence of the lived experiences of Native students. However, I took substantial steps to ensure the veracity of my findings. I employed two gatekeepers, a technique borrowed from ethnographic research, in order to develop a relational trust with participants. Gatekeepers, or "known sponsors," introduce the researcher to the participants and encourage cooperation between them (Shenton & Hayter, 2004, p. 224). By doing so, gatekeepers may significantly increase the trustworthiness of the

findings because participants feel safe to share their true thoughts, feelings, and experiences and researchers can focus on being "balanced, fair, and conscientious" (Patton, 2002, p. 575). The tribal college president and vice president agreed to act as gatekeepers for this project. As interim chair of the Department of Education, I have collaborated extensively with these mentors. Together, we have designed and presented a two-day workshop entitled "Enhanced Education of Native American Youth," which was directed at the professional development of novice public school teachers. We also collaborated on a grant application which, had it been funded, would have enabled us to provide a summer bridge workshop for incoming freshmen students of American Indian descent. During the fall 2010 and fall 2011 semesters, I taught a freshman gateway course for the tribal college entitled "College Success," targeting freshmen students who have one or more content deficiency per their American College Testing (ACT) admission scores. By so doing, I was able to develop a personal relationship with freshman tribal students transitioning from high school to the university, thus increasing the chances for an honest and in-depth exchange during the interview process. The gatekeepers also introduced me to sophomore students whom I had not yet met.

Outline of research procedures.

Ethical awareness is essential to qualitative research. As Schwandt (2007) states, ethics is the "systematic and thoughtful account of human responsibility" (p. 90). In order to address this responsibility, I obtained approval for this research project through Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at both the regional university

where the research was conducted and from the University of Oklahoma. Since the objective of phenomenological research is to gain insight regarding a phenomenon that several individuals have experienced, the end result of which is a description of the essence of the experience, a purposeful sampling was appropriate (Creswell, 2007). Research that seeks to gain understanding from the perspectives of the participants warrants such a sample (Merriam, 2002).

After IRB approval, the regional university's Department of Institutional Research identified 45 Cheyenne and Arapaho students who were classified as freshmen and sophomores, making it possible for me to solicit a purposeful sample. All possible participants were contacted by mail and electronic mail. Eight participants responded to me via electronic mail. I then made a follow-up telephone call with each individual in order to set interview times. Because of the proximity, participants were able to meet with me on campus. I gave each participant the option of meeting with me in my office or meeting in the conference room of the tribal college, with which they were familiar. Each participant indicated that they felt comfortable meeting in my office and that it was convenient for them to do so. As participants arrived for their individual interview, I provided each with a bottle of water and asked if they were comfortable in regards to temperature and setting. Each stated that they were comfortable and interacted with me in a friendly, relaxed manner. I explained that participant confidentiality and anonymity would be protected by the use of pseudonyms, and all participants indicated that they were comfortable with this arrangement. Signed confidentiality and informed consent forms were obtained

from each participant (See Appendix A). Initially, eight participants responded and completed the first interview. Although the first interview session went well, one participant failed to meet for his second interview. Repeated attempts to contact him in order to schedule the second interview were unsuccessful. Data from his interview transcription was not included in the study results. The project then consisted of seven participants, a number appropriate to a phenomenological study of this type. Generally, phenomenological researchers interview "from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Seven participants fell within this range and, since seven is a sacred number to the people of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe, my gatekeepers endorsed this sample size.

Questions for the research interview.

In qualitative research, rigorous data collection includes the principal investigator's commitment to significant amounts of time in the field. The fieldwork involved in this phenomenological study consisted of two intensive interview sessions with each participant:

> The root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior (Seidman, 2006, p. 9-10).

The fundamentals of Seidman's (2006) structure were used, combining "life-history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing" over the course of two

interview sessions (p. 15). The first interview session was 90 minutes in length and focused on the life history of participants. They were asked to share their personal stories regarding tribal affiliation, level of participation in tribal events, past experience in school, their experience in transitioning to college, and factors that contributed to their resilience via a series of open-ended questions. The first interview established the context in which the participants have experienced the phenomenon, although by simply verbalizing their experiences, participants were already beginning the meaning-making process (Seidman, 2006). The second interview was scheduled three to seven days following the first interview and was also 90 minutes in length. In this interview, participants were asked "to reflect upon the meaning of their experience…how factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation" (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). Specifically, participants were prompted to define success and failure, the respective causes of each, and people or events that enabled them to persist through high school and successfully transition to higher education. As participants reflected on their educational experience, they identified *how* they experienced the phenomenon and became cognizant of key people and events that influenced their journey (see Appendix A for Interview Protocol.).

Collecting Data

In this study, the method of data collection was participant interviews. As discussed previously, purposeful sampling was employed in order to obtain personal interview data from seven participants. The process consisted of two interviews per participant, each 90 minutes in length, scheduled with three to

seven days between sessions. The first session elicited contextual information by focusing on participants' life histories. The second session encouraged participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences.

The Epoche Process

As stated by Moustakas (1994), the first step in collecting data is to engage in the Epoche process in order to create the appropriate environment for conducting interviews. Epoche is a word of Greek origin, meaning "to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The Epoche is the first step in a phenomenological study that requires the researcher to set aside pre-determined judgments about what is real, to suspend presuppositions (Creswell, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). The phenomena are viewed freshly, in a wide sense, in order to determine the essence of the lived experience.

As a researcher of European descent, I am aware of the skepticism some readers may have regarding my ability to elucidate the essence of the lived experiences of American Indian students. This is why I employed Moustakas' framework for data analysis; it is a recognized procedure that ensures the trustworthiness of phenomenological descriptions (Creswell, 2007). I was aware of the challenge to allow participants to communicate their experiences and to allow the phenomenon to "disclose itself so that [I might] see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). I continually focused on bracketing so that "the entire research process [was] rooted solely on the topic and question" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Perhaps most importantly, I

borrowed an attribute of ethnographic research, the gatekeeper, in order to develop a trusting relationship with participants. As interim chair of the Department of Education, I work collaboratively with the tribal college affiliated within our university and draw upon the educational and cultural expertise of its president. I also collaborate extensively with the tribal college's vice president for development and planning. In the past year, I have worked with these mentors to design and implement a two-day workshop entitled "Enhanced Education of Native American Youth." Additionally, I teach a freshman gateway course for the tribal college each fall semester entitled "College Success." By doing so, I was able to develop a personal relationship with freshman tribal students transitioning from high school to the university, thus increasing the chances for an honest and in-depth exchange during the interview process. The president and vice president of the tribal college also introduced me to sophomore students whom I had not yet met. The processes of horizonalization and phenomenological reduction further served to provide a level of surety that the study and its descriptions are viable. The use of participants' verbatim statements helped me "listen with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening [myself] to phenomena" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 92) from "the vantage point of an individual researcher" (p. 100).

Bracketing the Question

During the interview process, the researcher must continually bracket the question so that it remains the focal point of the discussion. I focused on bracketing so that my research process was "rooted solely on the topic and

question" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97) and that I did not get distracted with other tangential issues. Later, the use of participants' verbatim statements obtained during the interview process helped me, as an individual researcher, to "listen with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening [myself] to [the] phenomena" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 92). Taking steps to bracket the question enabled me to remain focused on the identified research problem and to assist participants in staying focused as well as they related their experiences and understandings to me.

Interviews

Participant interviews were conducted in the informal setting of my university office. I began each session by introducing myself again, explaining the process, and thanking them for their participation. I reviewed the informed consent document with each participant and obtained their signature. (See Appendix A) The interview sessions consisted of open-ended questions designed to promote discussion. Data was collected via digital audio recordings of the interviews; each participant readily consented to being recorded. At the beginning of each session, I tested the digital recorder prior to beginning the interview. The interviews themselves were conversational and personable. Although the interview protocol was prepared in advance, prompts for clarification and additional details varied at times so that the "co-researcher [could] share the full story of his or her experience of the bracketed questions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). After the first interview session was completed, I thanked the participant for their time and we scheduled the second interview at a

mutually-convenient time within the seven to ten day window. The procedure for the second interview session was conducted as the first.

At a later time, I personally transcribed the audio files into a written electronic document on my computer. This ensured the accuracy of the transcription and allowed me to become immersed, a second time, in the conversation. During the transcription process, each participant was assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their anonymity. All written transcriptions and digital audio recordings were kept in the secure location of my locked university office.

Participant Descriptions/Characteristics

Three of the seven study participants were considered to be non-traditional students, given that they were over the age of twenty-four (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996). Sara's high school academic career and her initial transition to higher education were reportedly ideal. Raised in a traditional household by her grandparents, she always enjoyed school and looked forward to attending college. However, Sara was unsuccessful in her first attempt, stating that she "didn't take education seriously." It wasn't until several years later, after a successful career as a Certified Medication Aide, that she met a tribal college president who encouraged her to return to the university in order to pursue her degree. The remaining two non-traditional students did not graduate from high school with a standard diploma, but completed requirements for a General Education Development (GED) credential several years after dropping out of high school. Both of these participants reported negative experiences in public

education that caused them to drop out. Additionally, both conversed about parental substance abuse problems which made them feel vulnerable as children and adolescents.

The remaining four participants were considered to be traditional college students. They persisted through public education and graduated with a standard diploma and immediately transitioned into higher education. Two of the young women, Mary and Teri, both had strong familial support and inter-generational ties to grandparents during childhood and adolescence. The fact that Teri was raised by her grandparents rather than her mother was a normal paradigm for her. As the interviews progressed, I found out that these two were actually cousins, although they lived in opposite corners of the state as children and did not know one another well until they arrived at the university. The third traditional student, Sue, shared stories of great loss during her interviews. Her mother, from whom she received her Cheyenne and Arapaho heritage, died when she was two months old. Consequently, she was extremely close to her maternal grandmother and her paternal grandparents as well. Within the past three years, both grandmothers have passed away and her grandfather has been placed in a care facility. The final traditional student, Greg, is the one male participant. Although he enjoyed public school and has an outwardly sunny disposition, Greg reported a tumultuous childhood and adolescence, compounded by poverty and disputes with his brother.

Although participant demographics may be disaggregated in several ways, they all share characteristics considered crucial for this project. All participants

share lineage within the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe, as determined by Constitution, attended high schools within a 130-mile radius, and were classified as university freshmen or sophomores at the time of the interviews.

Organizing, Analyzing, and Synthesizing Data

After the transcription process was completed, I had participants' verbatim statements from which to analyze data. It was then that I understood Patton's words, "The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. This involves reducing the volume…sifting trivia from significance…identifying significant patterns" (2002, p. 432). I proceeded with the following steps of Phenomenological Reduction, as prescribed by Moustakas (1994) and summarized by Patton (2002) and Creswell (2007): 1) I considered each statement with respect to significance for a description of the experience; 2) I recorded, verbatim, all relevant statements and gave them equal value (horizonalization); 3) I highlighted significant statements, sentences, and quotes to determine invariant, or constant, horizons (delimited horizons). I selected the clearest descriptions of resilience, discarding all that were less relevant; 4) I listed each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements in order to cluster them into themes. I quickly found that I needed a visual aid to help me organize this data. Appendix B shows the matrix used to identify the clusters which were eventually grouped into themes.

When these four steps were completed, I was able to write an individual textural description for each participant. This is a descriptive integration of the themes which emerged from the analysis of the interviews; it is "what the

participants in the study experienced" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). After all individual textural descriptions were written; I proceeded to develop a composite textural description for the group. The constant, or invariant, themes of each participant are summarized in order to depict "the experiences of the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 138).

Upon completion of the Phenomenological Reduction stage, Imaginative Variation was utilized. In Imaginative Variation, the researcher takes time to reflect in order to understand participants' perspectives of the experience. I examined many possibilities in order to derive structural themes from the textural descriptions and to seek possible meanings through the use of imagination. The aim of Imaginative Variation is "to arrive at structural description of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). During this phase, I was able to reflect upon the causality of participants' experiences, their relationship to one another, and other possibilities that connect these lived experiences. When writing about the context, or setting, that influenced how each participant experienced the phenomenon, individual structural descriptions emerged. These descriptions provided "a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience…that account for 'how' feelings and thoughts are connected" in individuals (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135). It allowed me to reflect "on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced" by each participant (Creswell, 2007, p. 159).

The individual structural descriptions preceded a composite structural description, which is a "way of understanding how the co-researchers as a group experience the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 142). Appendix C illustrates the matrix used to identify common core structures that aided participants in their transition from high school to college and that have aided in their persistence thus far. Identified structures include determination, autonomy, self-discipline, and spirituality.

The final process in phenomenological data analysis is the synthesis of the composite textural and the composite structural descriptions. At this point, I strived to intuitively integrate, or weave, the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a "unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). Interestingly, Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007) both acknowledge that the essences of any experience are never fully exhausted. Therefore, this composite description is only a short narrative in which I focus on the common experiences of the participants. I hope that it is adequately descriptive so that "the reader should come away from the phenomenology with the feeling, 'I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that'" (Creswell, 2007, p. 62).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the perspectives of Cheyenne and Arapaho students regarding their transition from secondary school to higher education and resiliency factors that contribute to their ongoing success. Since this project is an attempt to summarize the lived experiences of a particular

cultural group, qualitative analysis in the form of a phenomenological research study was appropriate. Purposeful sampling was used in order to guarantee homogeneity of the participant group; all participants were members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe and were classified as freshmen and sophomore students at one regional university. Interview questions were open-ended in order to facilitate in-depth discussion. Data analysis processes consisted of 1) Epoche; 2) Phenomenological Reduction, in which individual and composite textural descriptions were written; 3) Imaginative Variation, in which individual and composite structural descriptions were developed; and 4) Synthesis, in which a composite of the essences of the experience were relayed to the reader.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Data

Identification of Meaning Clusters and Themes

In order to address the research question, *what are resiliency factors of Cheyenne and Arapaho university students*, a phenomenological research method was used. Seven participants were interviewed, all members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe and all classified as freshmen or sophomores at a regional university. The verbatim transcripts were used as data in order to employ Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach for data analysis. All statements were considered to have equal value as part of the process called horizonalization. Overlapping or repetitive statements were deleted so that delimited horizons, or meanings that stood out, could be analyzed. These meanings were organized into clusters; the clusters were then assimilated into larger themes (Moustakas, 1994).

Although Moustakas (1994) states that horizonalization is a never-ending process, this important step in Phenomenological Reduction is the way in which researchers can "reach a stopping point" in order to better understand an experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). This chapter discusses the delimited horizons of participants' experiences by identifying and labeling clustered components. These components become the core themes of the experience.

Clusters and Themes

A total of seven clusters were derived from participants' interviews and individual statements. These clusters were consolidated into two primary themes: 1) Sense of Belonging and 2) Affectional Ties. The clustering of meanings and

their resulting themes are presented in the following section. Raw data and direct quotations are included.

Theme 1: Sense of belonging.

The participants described many situations in which they purposefully engaged in activities that contributed to their sense of belonging, whether in high school activities, tribal activities, or university activities. In so doing, they experienced a "connectedness to one's school…a sense of commitment to the institution, individual commitment to work in [a] setting, and a sense of one's abilities being recognized by others" (Pittman & Richmond, 2008, p. 344).

Cluster 1: Sense of belonging through tribal affiliation.

For most of the research participants, involvement in tribal activities has been an important part of their life for many years. Regular attendance and participation at pow wows throughout childhood and adolescence was reported by the six female participants, both traditional and non-traditional university students. The final participant, a male, traditional university student, is now enjoying discovering these events as a young adult. Specific activities mentioned included the participation in the Jingle Dance, the Cloth Dance, the Feather Dance, and the Shawl Dance. All expressed warm feelings of the camaraderie experienced during these tribal festivities. The fellowship includes sharing meals as well as music and dance:

It's pretty fun to dance at a pow wow!

I attend pow wows on a regular basis and I dance. I am a cloth dancer.

> Oh, the food. I love the food! There's nothing like corn soup and fry bread.
> I cook our traditional meal, like stew.
>
> My mom and grandma bring food from the northern side, like hominy soup and fry bread.
>
> I have a cousin who was the Cheyenne and Arapaho princess. She was in pageants.

Some participants enjoy contributing their talents to planning and implementing tribal activities and sharing other acts of service as well:

> All these pow wows that we have…they're reviving a new one because they had sort of died down. Nobody's there to keep the tradition or the culture. It's a lot of work. I don't dance [but] I help out a lot.
>
> I do a lot of cooking [for the pow wows]. It doesn't bother me, I like to cook. I do a lot of sewing. I make our shawls, our Indian shawls, I make Indian shirts, and I make pillows.
>
> My mom is a pledger. She takes in two or three women and takes care of them. She does their paint and stuff. The women don't dance; they sit and pray for three days. With no food and no water; they are fasting for three days. She [my mother] paints their face and braids their hair. I'm usually her runner, which means I go and get her sage and crushed cedar whenever they need it. Or I'll take her water buckets up there so she can wash their paints and put new ones on.

Pow wows are not the only tribal activities that participants enjoy:

> I really enjoy going to workshops . . . some of them were leadership workshops and some were self skill-building workshops.
>
> Whenever someone is sick, we have a peyote meeting, a healing ceremony for them . . . it should be people who are strong and healthy and are going to help the purpose of the meeting with prayers.

The Recreation, Exercise, and Sports for the Elders and Children of our Tribes (R. E. Sp. E. C. T.) club and the Honoring Our Peoples' Existence (H. O. P. E.) club are two tribal organizations mentioned by six of the seven participants:

> My siblings and I attended day trips. R. E. Sp. E. C. T. offered, like snow tubing at Bricktown and a night-trip to the university where we spent the night, hung out, and played all sorts of games.
>
> We [H. O. P. E. Club] went to Tahlequah. We had a round-table discussion with Senator Kelly Haney. He was asking us about our education, about how to better ourselves, about what we do as a group.
>
> The R. E. Sp. E. C. T. program tries to keep kids away from drugs and stuff. They try to get kids involved in sports. It's a great outreach program.

Cluster 2: Sense of belonging through high school activities.

Five of the seven participants reported that they felt a sense of belonging in high school activities. Of the four traditional university students, three were enthusiastically involved in a multitude of high school activities, as was one of the non-traditional students. These five participants unanimously participated in interscholastic athletics, and enjoyed the team affiliation for a variety of reasons:

> I really liked being involved in sports, being a part of a team. Getting to know those girls, you know. Kind of make that bond that you don't lose for a while. I really like that.
>
> We played basketball; I always had something to do.
>
> I highly enjoyed track. We went to State in the 2-mile relay. It's a four-man team [but] it's what it was made up of. It was me, a black guy, a brown guy, and a, like that Latino that's real pale brown. So it was a good team. You know, I loved them all.
>
> I played basketball and volleyball, I ran track, and I played softball one year. I guess [I enjoyed] all the social events like Homecoming and football games and hanging out with friends.
>
> That was always my way of going to school, having extra-curricular things. We were a football oriented town, and we always went to football games on Fridays. If they went to State, we went with them! If it was basketball, I don't care what it was, any sport, we were always there. I always looked forward to that.

This group of participants also shared examples of how their sense of belonging developed via participation in other activities and organizations:

> I was in Future Homemakers of American (FHA). I was in band. I didn't have any hard times in my high school years. I always liked them.
>
> It was easy for me to make friends and get involved in activities like FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) and then like FCCLA (Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America). I did Key Club and I was involved in our Native American Club.
>
> I was part of Student Council. Because I'm from a small town, I was pretty much involved in anything I could be in, like the academic team.

The fifth traditional student claimed that she "didn't like high school because it was so small" yet she specifically mentioned one high school activity that captured her enthusiasm:

> I was in a group called FCCLA – Family Career and Community Leaders of America. I liked it because we, every month, we were assigned to an elderly person at our nursing home. We would go share snacks and make them presents on their birthday. I liked that.

Cluster 3: Sense of belonging through university activities.

The three non-traditional university students and three of the four traditional students reported feeling a sense of belonging through their participation in university campus activities; only one of the participants has yet to engage in such activities. The traditional students living in campus dormitories appreciate what is often referred to as "mixers":

> My resident assistants…they've been helpful with the whole moving in process and getting started and meeting new people.
>
> They host monthly events in the lobby like ice cream socials and movie nights and stuff. It's just a good way to get to know people we live with.

The Campus Activities Board, New Student Orientation Days, and church affiliations were mentioned by many participants:

> I've attended a couple of CAB (Campus Activities Board) meetings. They do a lot. You can pick and choose activities.
>
> We also help parents with the family sessions at NSO (New Student Orientations). Answer any questions they have. We do skits and stuff and when school starts next August; we'll be putting on the Dawg Days.
>
> I got involved with the BCM (Baptist Collegiate Ministries). I got involved in their volleyball team and their softball team.
>
> I attended Freshmen Families which is basically on Tuesdays. All freshmen went and had Bible study.

Involvement in the Student Government Association (SGA) has given one non-traditional student a voice and "another outlook on campus life":

> When we have our debates, I either oppose or go along with certain issues. And I think that gives me the freedom to express the way I feel. Maybe others don't feel that way, but it gives me the freedom to let others know how I believe differently. Some agree and some disagree and that's the whole point of the debate. That's what's fun about it. You know, I'm not the only person there that wants to see a change for a better campus.

Six of the seven participants have immersed themselves in tribal activities hosted by the tribal college:

> Tribal education has helped me understand that Native Americans, regardless of where they've come from in the past, have a place in this world like everybody else.
>
> They are trying to get all of the Cheyenne and Arapaho kids there. They teach, like, some of the native language and some of the history. Just history of the tribe, things like that.
>
> I didn't think I wanted to get involved with our tribal club, but then I was just kind of pushed into it. The officers that they had couldn't fulfill it so they asked me. So, OK, now I'm in it!

> I am the H.O.P.E. (Honoring Our Peoples' Existence) Club princess for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe.

Theme 2: Affectional Ties.

Resilient individuals are adept at garnering support from family members, school connections, and their communities. Supportive affectional relationships are ensconced in caring environments that serve as a protective shield to help children withstand a stressful world (Benard, 1993; Benard, 1997; Berliner & Benard, 1995; Espinoza, 2011; Garmezy, 1991; Krovetz, 1999). Werner (2005) identified "affectional ties that encouraged trust, autonomy, and initiative" (p. 96) as the primary benefit of family and community resources, reinforcing HeavyRunner and DeCelless' (2003) design of American Indian resilience:

> We have long recognized how important it is for children to have people in their lives that nurture their spirit, stand by them, encourage, and support them. This traditional process is what contemporary researchers, educators, and social service providers are now calling 'fostering resilience.' (p. 35)

Research participants identified four sub-groups of affectional ties: family, inter-generational community members, high school teachers, and university faculty and staff.

Cluster 1: Affectional ties of family.

All seven participants reported strong affectional ties to immediate family members and continue to enjoy that companionship while in college. Even for the

three participants who experienced emotional turmoil as children, the bonds remained strong. One participant, a female, non-traditional student, commented:

> Although [my father] had alcohol in his life, he always tried to keep us together and he always tried to teach us the values of being together and taking care of one another, looking out for each other. To this day, I have a wonderful relationship with my two brothers and my four sisters. We have a good, close connection.

A second participant, a female, non-traditional student, noted:

> I was in kindergarten when she got sober. That was the beginning of our life. I never had a childhood before that. My mother encouraged me. She told me what I need to do so that I could start [college]. My best decision was to move back home with my mom.

A third participant, a male, traditional student, expressed it this way, "The choices [my parents] made…I don't want to get into that, but it's how they lived their lives. I can't discriminate about that. I can only respect them."

The remaining four participants experienced childhood and adolescence free from parental addictions:

> I like spending time with my family. I love outdoors stuff: fishing, hunting, and camping.
>
> My dad…was telling me, 'I really want you to go to school. Do…better for yourself. Don't skip out on college.'
>
> Everyone was always real proud of us, our families. Our parents always taught us…go to school; you will get something out of it. It was always hammered in my mind to do better. We were always working, always trying to be better.

Cluster 2: Affectional ties of inter-generational bonds.

Strong inter-generational bonds existed for six participants; three of the four traditional students specifically referred to the importance of this support:

> It seems like I have more cousins than trees have leaves. I have a lot of family members. I have a whole family line of people who will support me and want the best for me.
>
> My grandma brought me on all my campus visits. She wanted to get a look at the campus herself to make sure I would be comfortable in it and in a safe environment. She knew people in all the towns that I was visiting.
>
> I was my grandma's little shadow when I was younger and I spent a lot of time with older people, older Indians. She taught me how to respect my elders and respect my culture, yet still be my own person and have my own values, too.

Inter-generational bonds, both with those older and younger than the participants in this study, were valued by all three non-traditional university students:

> The elders would come in to eat and we would talk. We would say, 'How do you say this?' We would sort of round-table talk. It got me more interested in doing this [going to college].
>
> I think it's the parents' and the elders' responsibility to implement that in their [children's] lives: who they are, where they came from, why they should be proud, why they shouldn't let drugs, alcohol, and environmental influences take the best of them.
>
> [My granddaughter] is real inquisitive at this age and she asks a lot of questions. So I talk to her in Cheyenne.
>
> I tell my nephews and nieces, 'Come back to school.' And that's why I'm trying to do that, to go to school, to show my nieces and nephews. You know, 'Well, if Auntie can go back to school, maybe I can.'

One participant tearfully shared the experience of being inspired to enroll at the university by her deceased aunt:

> She didn't come to me in a dream, it's just that it was always on my mind; if she was still living and able and healthy, I'm sure she would have finished school here. So, I figured that since I am still living I should do this…and maybe I can do it for her.

Cluster 3: Affectional ties of high school faculty.

Positive role models for children, adolescents, and young adults often include supportive teachers and mentors (Espinoza, 2011; Werner, 2005). These external sources of support, particularly at major life transitions such as high school graduation and subsequent college enrollment increase children's competence and efficacy over time. In fact, Werner (2005) reported that at least one-third of adults reported that they received some sort of positive intervention from community arenas such as supportive academic environments and Espinoza (2011) found that educational knowledge is effectively transmitted to youths when middle-class, college-educated adults provide counsel. The majority of participants in this study agreed, including one of the three non-traditional students and all four traditional students. They specifically appreciated high school teachers who presented academic content-related material in an engaging manner and those who assisted them with the rigor of college applications:

> My history teacher in high school…taught in a different way. We might watch a video, but we had to take notes over it and write a paper. And my Biology teacher, she was really fun. We got to dissect frogs. They were real encouraging about going on to college. They didn't want us to end up like some people from our town.

> At the high school, I would definitely have to say our counselor; she was very helpful. First of all, she made sure we got enrolled in OHLAP (Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program) and filled out our FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). She helped me by pulling me aside and saying, 'you qualify for this and this'…grants and stuff.

> My math teacher; she tries to motivate everyone. She tries to be involved with every student. I love her. And my science teacher…she is energetic about Biology. When it comes to being a small-town teacher, she was more at the college level. I appreciate it now. She was showing me what college was going to be like.

> On the main portion of the scholarship, [my high school Psychology teacher] was my recommender, so she filled out eight essay questions for me. You know, I can't thank her enough. She's awesome…same with [the high school counselor]. I'm glad they believed in me. I'm thankful.

Participants recounted how high school faculty members communicated their high expectations for their students, and continue to do so, thus motivating them throughout high school and through the first years of college:

> Even now, when I see her [high school counselor], she says, 'You can do it. I'm not settling for less than a dental hygienist,' which is what I want to be.

> In our school, we had more Indians graduate than any other school around. All my friends that I know, and all my relatives, all graduated from high school. It's always in our mind.

> She's a really good teacher and would help out anybody. I took Chem I my first semester here [in college] but I still went back [to her] with questions. Every time I'd go for help, she's like, 'So, how are the grades doing?' And she'd put a little more emphasis, 'Maybe you ought to do a little better' and I was like, 'Maybe you should teach me a little better.' (laughing)

> From time to time, I still talk to them on Facebook and they check up on us.

Cluster 4: Affectional ties of university faculty and staff.

The pursuit of a college degree often entails a psychological transition as well as a physical transition for students. These transition points are often difficult to maneuver, as documented in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of ecological transition, Tinto's (1987) model of academic and social integration for college students, and Espinoza's (2011) Educational Pivotal Moment Processes. The three non-traditional students in this study emphatically stated that they relied heavily on university faculty and staff when transitioning to campus life:

> When I got enrolled here [at the university] the lady that was my advisor, she was like an angel in disguise because she helped me with everything I needed. That's exactly what I needed. I needed someone to say, 'This is what you need to do.'
>
> My College Success, that class is so important for all students who are going into college for the first time. It gives you information. It lets you feel comfortable where you're at. It let you feel that, even though you are an older student, it's OK. [My teacher] made me feel at ease by explaining the difference between a traditional student and a non-traditional student. [She] just encouraged us in so many ways that if we need help, don't be afraid to ask.
>
> She's my big influence [president of the tribal college]. If she weren't here with the tribal college, I don't think I would have come back.

The three non-traditional students and one of the traditional students mentioned, by name, the administrative assistant and student advisor at the tribal college:

> I really admire her. She's got a lot of patience with everybody. And it doesn't bother her. She's one of our Indian club sponsors.
>
> She's really good. She helped me through everything. She walked me through it. I didn't feel stressed or scared, I felt like I was ready for it. She gave me options.
>
> The tribal college made a good choice in her. I hear her talking to other people and she talks good to them. She talks to me, too, so I know that…she's always helpful.

Three of the four traditional students went on to mention other specific professors and university services:

> The instructors are very interactive, very positive, very helping, what a teacher should be. They do an outstanding job. In class, they have to teach 'a body.' It's not individual time. If you are struggling, there should be no reason why you shouldn't go ask for help. I've done that quite a few times.
>
> My English Comp I teacher helped me with essays and stuff. She would meet with me, you know, list out bullet points on what I needed to cover on my essay. So, I can go back to her, even though she's not my English II professor. Oh, yeah, I used the writing center a lot!

> I found out there was a writing lab. But, I didn't know that for a long time!

Conclusion

During their personal interviews, participants described a feeling of connectedness to others through their tribe, through high school activities, and through university activities. They purposefully engaged in activities in which they were committed to others and in which they felt recognized by others. These invariant components were clustered into a larger theme, *a sense of belonging*. The second theme, also derived from invariant components within participants' interviews, was one of *affectional ties,* ties to immediate family members, inter-generational friends and family members, high school faculty members, and university faculty and staff members. In order to provide a more in-depth and extensive understanding of *what* each participant experienced, the following chapter presents individual textural descriptions.

Chapter 5

Presentation of Data

Textural Descriptions

Individual Textural Descriptions

Textural descriptions are constructed from the delimited horizons and themes of participants' experiences. The goal of the textural description is to provide a thorough depiction of relevant factors involved in the experience. "A textural description is rich in detail and provides an elaborate account of what transpired as it relates to an experienced phenomenon" (Frick, 2008, p. 169). The individual textural descriptions that follow communicate to the reader *what* each participant experienced during their transition to, and subsequent experience in, a four-year university, the *what* that appears in their consciousness. Each description paints a portrait of a singular experience, each "considered in its singularity, in and for itself" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). The individual textural descriptions were derived from verbatim transcripts of personal interviews in which research participants described their experience with this phenomenon. I submit each individual textural description based upon my analysis of the horizons and themes of each participant's experience.

Mary's textural description.

Mary is a twenty year old university student who has just completed her freshman year. Born and raised in a small western Oklahoma community of approximately 1,800 residents, Mary attended the Cheyenne and Arapaho Head Start Program before entering public school. "I grew up in a small town with

people from kindergarten on up, so I'm just a small town girl." Mary is one-half Cheyenne, and is "very involved in tribal activities such as pow wows and Sun Dance," even tracing her lineage back to the Peace Chief Black Kettle. "He was at the Sand Creek Massacre and was killed at the Battle of the Washita. My mom's maiden name was Black. When [General] Custer killed Black Kettle, he outlawed the name so that's where we got the name Black." She credits her maternal grandmother for raising her with a strong Native American foundation. "She's just a very well put-together lady. She's very caring. She taught me how to respect my elders and respect my culture, yet still be my own person and have my own values, too." Mary accompanied her grandmother regularly to worship services at the Indian Mennonite Church and this strong relationship allowed her to forge other inter-generational friendships.

> My grandma and her older Indian friends would go to the Indian Mennonite Church and they would sew, like make quilts and stuff. They called themselves "The Rusty Needles" since they were older. I was my grandma's little shadow when I was younger and I spent a lot of time with older people, older Indians. They would call me "The Little Rusty Needle."

As a child, Mary danced at many pow wows each year. "When I was younger, probably around four or five, maybe even six, I did the Jingle Dance. That was probably the last competition I was involved in." As high school activities, such as competitive basketball, took up more of her time, Mary attended fewer tribal celebrations. "In high school, I only went to pow wows that were for certain

family members. But when I do go to pow wows, I dance – just the traditional, nothing like the fancy. I dance along with my grandma." With a large extended family, "I have more cousins than tress have leaves," she continued to attend pow wows to watch family members perform. "I have a lot of cousins that have, like the Feather Dance and stuff like that. I have a cousin that was the Cheyenne and Arapaho princess…she was in pageants." Besides the dancing, Mary enjoys the traditional food served at pow wows. "Oh, the food, I love the food! There's nothing like coming home and having grandma fix corn soup and fry bread. It's just so good." Traditional ways of preserving food are practiced in the home.

> My grandma has certain ways of making jerky. She, like, dries her meat and, oh, it's just so weird how she makes it. It might seem nasty to some people, but she dries it outside, like the Indian way, but either way I still think it's pretty good. No, it really hasn't [hurt anyone yet]. I'm still here!

Mary enjoys her extended family. "I also like having a lot of family members…It's always nice to know I have a whole family line of people who will support me and want the best for me."

Mary enjoyed high school. "I played basketball, I ran track, I was a part of student council…I played softball…I was pretty much involved in anything I could be in, like the academic team." Due to the low number of native students, Mary's high school did not have an extra-curricular club for tribal members. "There's probably only, at the most, ten Native American students at my high school…we really didn't have a Cheyenne and Arapaho group like they've had in

the past. But the ones they've had in the past, my grandma's been involved with." For Mary, the most enjoyable aspects of high school were "being involved in sports, being a part of a team" and "getting to grow up with the same people. You know them and they know you. It's just a homey feeling." She also appreciated her teachers because "they were very involved." The most difficult aspect of high school was "not joining cliques." As with most high schools, Mary's consisted of common groups, "the basketball team hung out, the football team hung out, the ones not involved in sports hung out so that was probably the hardest thing, trying to be friends with everyone." Now, she has one year of college completed and "looking back at high school, it just doesn't seem too difficult!"

Mary navigated the process for selecting, applying, and registering for a university easily. "My older sister had been to college so my mom was aware of what to do. It was easy." She found the state tribal agency, located in El Reno, Oklahoma, helpful in providing financial aid to students attending regional institutions. "I could come to [this university], get the degree that I wanted, and the tribe would still help me. That was a big influence on my decision." Three faculty members from her high school played a role in helping her transition to the university. Her high school counselor facilitated financial aid paperwork.

> [My counselor] was very helpful. First of all, she made sure we got enrolled in OHLAP (Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program) and filled out our FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and did all that. I would say that she particularly helped me because sometimes the tribe doesn't always send out things saying what you qualify for. She

> helped me by pulling me aside and saying, 'You qualify for this and this and this.'

Mary received college preparatory instruction in two significant content areas, math and science. "[My math teacher] always motivated us and made it fun. When I think of math, I don't think, 'Oh, math!' I think, "Oh, math. I can figure this out." Having declared Biology as her major at the university, Mary values the instruction she received in science. "She is energetic about Biology and really nice. When it comes to being a small-town teacher, she was more at the college level. I appreciate that now." The only difficulties Mary experienced were "all those scholarship applications and the deadlines. That's the only hassle."

Mary enjoys living in one of the campus dormitories. "My first roommate, our schedules were so different. It's like she was going out as I was coming in. So my roommate this semester, we have more of the same schedule and it's working out a lot better." Mary's grades have been good this year and she has enjoyed her Chemistry and Micro Biology courses. "I really do like Micro Biology. It is so interesting." She also has the distinction of being a campus Orientation Leader.

> We give tours and help kids enroll. We also help parents with the family sessions at New Student Orientations, answer any questions they have. We do skits and stuff and when school starts next August; we'll be putting on the Dawg Days. Next fall, I'll have my own Freshman Orientation class. We have to do projects, like community service and stuff like that.

The biggest challenge and obstacle for Mary has been time management.

> In high school, you just had a set schedule. Now I have so much free time, I think, 'Oh, I'll do this later. I have plenty of time.' Then when it's time to take a test or get an assignment in, it's like, 'Why didn't I do that earlier?'

This challenge also manifests itself with extra-curricular activities. "I've attended a couple of CAB (Campus Activities Board) meetings, but with studying, it is so hard to be involved with CAB." Although assigned a university advisor, "He seems so busy. Like, very busy…he doesn't have much time to talk," Mary has sought the most assistance and encouragement from family, friends, and former public school teachers.

> When I see her [high school counselor], she says, 'You can do it. I'm not settling for anything less than a dental hygienist,' which is what I want to be. [My high school math teacher], oh, she's just a wonderful person…I love her. I, personally, love her. If I need anything, I'll end up going back to her. I really haven't sought any support from anyone on campus, just my family members and friends.

Teri's textural description.

Teri is the oldest of six children. Born in a small town in western Oklahoma, Teri was raised by her grandparents in eastern Oklahoma, but remained in close contact with her mother and five younger siblings, returning to spend summers with them in her hometown. Teri's childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood have revolved around tribal activities, both from the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe and the Ponca tribe. Teri attends pow wows on a regular basis,

"I am a cloth dancer. It's a more traditional means of dancing for the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. I have two dresses. I have a Cheyenne and Arapaho dress and a Ponca dress." Teri and her family participate in the Cheyenne and Arapaho ceremony held each summer, the Sun Dance. During this ceremony, Teri's mother takes in two or three women and cares for them by painting their faces, braiding their hair, teaching them to make gourds, and praying and fasting with them. Teri acts as her "runner" fetching sage and crushed cedar when needed and bringing water buckets so faces may be washed and paint reapplied. She and her family participate in other pow wows as well: those held as benefit dances, celebration dances for graduations and birthdays, and memorial dances. Although she does not have a relationship with her father, she is reconnecting with her paternal grandfather, who lives in the same town as the university.

> When I moved to Ponca City, I kind of lost touch with him. But, now that I'm back here, I try to go over there at least once a month, just hanging out with them, getting to know them a little bit better. He is a Sun Dance Medicine Man.

As a public school student, Teri was involved with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe's R. E. Sp. E. C. T. (Recreation, Exercise, & Sports for the Elders and Children of our Tribes) program, playing basketball and volleyball and attending day trips to events such as snow tubing in the Oklahoma City Bricktown area. She is an advocate for others to get involved as she did, because she understands the implications of a sedentary lifestyle:

> The R.E. Sp. E. C. T. program tries to keep kids away from drugs and stuff. They try to get kids involved in sports. It's a great outreach program. They are trying to cut down on…you know, kids stay inside and play video games and eat junk food and Native Americans have a higher risk of diabetes and that just makes the risk go even higher.

At the university, Teri remains involved with tribal activities, including taking an active role in the H.O.P.E. (Honoring Our People's Existence) Club and serving the club in an ambassador's role as "princess" at various pow wows and ceremonies. During our interview, Teri was assisting other university students in planning a pow wow which is now held annually on the campus. The itinerary consisted of gourd dancing, give-aways, a dinner break, the grand entry, and contests for fancy dancing, the chicken dance, and the traditional grass, cloth, and jingle dances. Teri's mother and grandmother were also contributing to the dinner, making fry bread and providing a northern Cheyenne/Ponca variation of hominy soup. During this event, Teri was introduced as the H.O.P.E Club princess and performed a special dance. Her mother and grandmother brought "give-aways" for the honored guests, on her behalf, as well as food. Teri stated, "It's exciting; several of my friends from [the university] want to come and learn more about my heritage."

Teri is a professing Christian, views herself as a spiritual person, and considered attending a Bible-based university:

> I'm a member of the West Central Baptist Church. I'm a huddle leader for FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). A huddle leader is in charge

> of ten girls in either high school or middle school. You do devotionals, help them in their sports, and lead them from station to station in camp, get them ready for chapel and stuff. I got the job over the summer at Falls Creek, which is exciting. I'll do all eight weeks.

Teri enjoyed her high school experience and was involved in activities such as basketball, volleyball, track, softball, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Native American Club, Key Club, and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). "I liked high school. I got along with everyone and I was a really outgoing person. It was easy for me to make friends and get involved in activities." She refused to be classified in a clique, hanging out with diverse groups such as the "Emo Clique" (a term she could not quite define, yet good-naturedly acknowledged that they "dressed all in black"), football players, the volleyball team, and the church girls. She laughed as she described each group dynamic and stated:

> They called me a 'bouncer' because I would jump around tables at lunch. I didn't really feel the need to change myself for everyone else. I was doing good in school; I was doing good in sports. Some of the older seniors would say, "Come party with us." but I would just say, "No."

The worst high school experiences for Teri were "losing friends to drugs and stuff." She stated that several of her friends dropped out during their junior year of high school:

> Junior year, a lot of girls were getting involved with drugs and partying and then a lot of them got pregnant. So they all dropped out of school; I

had like eleven friends drop out. They thought it would be easier just to stay home and not have to worry about homework and classes and projects.

The other negative experiences she recounted dealt with faculty members. One issue dealt with inconsistency of instruction. "One of my English teachers never gave us homework. Then, during my senior year, we had homework every single day." The other issue dealt with teaching styles. "The ones I liked where the ones that really explained…they would help you one-on-one. Then there were the teachers who would just talk in class, give you an assignment, and send you home."

Teri felt that the process of choosing a university, applying, and registering was relatively easy. She applied to three universities and was accepted by each so her decision hinged on "where I would be most comfortable. I wanted to be away from home, but I didn't want to be too far. I didn't want to be too close to home because I didn't want to go home every weekend." She received significant assistance from three specific individuals. Her high school counselor met with her weekly to discuss test scores and complete paperwork, such as the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). "We didn't have to meet weekly, but I wanted to. I wanted to be the first out of my family to attend." One of her high school teachers is an alumnus of this university and recommended it to her for the small class sizes and the feeling of community. Teri is appreciative of her grandmother for visiting all three campuses with her. "She wanted to get a look at the campus herself to make sure I would be comfortable in it and in a safe

environment." Teri's sense of humor was evident when she laughingly said, "She knew people in all the towns that I was visiting!" The decision was made to attend this regional university because "OSU [Oklahoma State University] was too big for me and too close to home" and because she didn't think the enrollment at SAGU [Southwestern Assemblies of God University] was big enough and it is the farthest campus from her home. She credits her academic advisor in the tribal college with making the university enrollment process easy for her and states that she will use this advisor for as long as possible, even though she has declared a major in social work. The only difficulty Teri mentioned was that the majority of her high school friends decided to attend OSU; she came to this university knowing only two students on this campus.

Teri's first two semesters at the university went well. The only challenges she reported were early morning classes, unfamiliarity with class locations, and limited travel time between classes. She has enjoyed her early involvement with the Baptist Collegiate Ministries; she attends weekly Bible study and participated on their volleyball and softball teams. She also kept busy with her part-time job at the campus grill. Teri specifically cited fours individuals as providing the most assistance and encouragement this year, including the Director of the Baptist Campus Ministry, who helped her work her class schedule around BCM events, and her academic advisor at the tribal college, for making the enrollment process easy for her. She also named the professor of her English Composition I course, who helped her with a self-identified "procrastination problem" regarding essays:

> I wouldn't want to do them until the last minute. I would call her and she would meet with me, you know, listed out bullet points on what I needed to cover on my essay. So I can go back to her, even though she's not my English II professor. She will still help me.

She talked in great detail about the resident advisors in her dormitory and their ability to make her feel comfortable both academically and socially:

> I would call my RAs and say, "Where is this class?" and they would help me find where to go. They've been helpful with the whole moving in process and getting started and meeting new people. They host monthly events in the lobby like ice cream socials and movie nights and stuff. It's just a good way to get to know people we live with.

Greg's textural description.

Greg is a twenty year old university freshman pursuing a degree in Business Management. Born and raised in a western Oklahoma community only sixteen miles from this university, he "grew up in a relatively poor setting, to say the least." Greg gets his Native American lineage from his mother, who is a full-blood Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal member. One would not know his heritage by his physical features; he has blue eyes and a fair complexion, inherited from his Caucasian father. "You know, my brother, he's brown and black-headed. You know, we're almost exact opposites, black hair to blond. You know, not black to white but brown to white." In fact, Greg once experienced the pain of cultural bias while attending a tribal conference in Los Angeles.

> It was Saturday night at a dinner party. There was this guy, just kind of staring at me, giving me this cold, dark look and I couldn't understand why…I teared up a whole lot. I went outside and this dude talked to me. I was like, 'I can't help this; I was born like this.' It gave a real, I don't know, a surreal moment whenever I was outside there. It kinda sucked.

Elementary and middle school went well for Greg although "I was kinda poor so I really didn't have the kind of clothes that some kids ha[d]. But I had my personality so that kind of made up for it." By the time he was in high school, he "was very independent…[My parents] really strive[d] for me to do my best. It's what I gained from my parents."

Greg was not heavily involved in tribal activities until his high school years when he "went to a couple of pow wows with the Cheyenne and Arapaho. It was sponsored by the R. E. Sp. E. C. T. (Recreation, Exercise, & Sports for the Elders and Children of our Tribes) center." He also attended a tribal-sponsored ceremony for graduating high school seniors. "Overall, um, I wouldn't say I'm too involved, but I want to be more involved."

Greg is a multi-faceted person and enjoys a variety of activities. He is a natural athlete and is currently preparing to compete in a marathon. "I highly enjoy running. I run about five miles every other day just to stay in shape and get ready for that race." He is a member of the Methodist Church and has participated in events such as Youth Force. "Overall, I highly enjoy church. It's a place where you can express yourself and you don't feel any different than you

should be…but, I think that should be with any situation." He also enjoys reading.

Greg enjoyed high school. "I loved high school…it was very easy. I didn't have to try, didn't have to do anything." His socioeconomic status was not an issue for him.

> No one really cared…I got pretty strong after I got out of middle school. I didn't let anyone talk to me like, you know, bug me down. That wasn't happening. I'm not a fighter or anything, but no one should talk to someone else like that, to bring them down.

His best memories of high school revolved around team-oriented athletic events. "I did wrestling in high school. Very competitive." But his participation in wrestling was viewed more as "a conditioning workout for track," his real love.

> We did really good our junior year of track season. That's when everything really came together. We went to state in the 2-mile relay. It's a four-man team. Each individual does half-miles and we placed seventh in State. I thought that was freakin' bad-ass! It's what it was made up of. It was me, a black guy, a brown guy, and a, like that Latino that's real pale brown. So, it was a good team. You know, I loved them all.

Greg also achieved his goal to pay for college on his own because:

> My parents would not, could not, it wasn't meant for them to pay for college. The choices they made, I don't want to get into that, but its how they lived their lives. I can't discriminate about that; I can only respect them because they raised a really good child.

He completed only one scholarship application, one from the Gates Millennium Scholars Program (GMSP), sponsored by Bill and Melinda Gates. "It's a full ride anywhere in the U. S. A. you want to go." After discarding all other scholarship materials that the senior counselor had given him, he pursued the GMSP.

> And, well, pretty much, I won it! It was a shock, definitely. I can't say it wasn't. But here's a twist. My brother, his senior year, he filled out the same scholarship and he won it also. Smart kids, or just lucky? I don't know. Won the scholarship and set out for my goal to pay for college myself and now I'm here at [the university].

Greg was hard-pressed to describe the worst aspect of high school. He laughingly recounted a minor incident in which he was sentenced to In-School Suspension (ISS) and discovered that "there's some cool kids in ISS." However, after much thought, he admitted that:

> I've stood up for the little man a lot because I think it's immature when someone is bullying in high school. It's an unfortunate fact that some people do that. I'll be one to say something because it's wrong. It's not like that guy's gonna bully me. It's not going to happen.

The process of selecting, applying, and getting enrolled in a university was easy for Greg. "The reason I chose [this university] mainly was because my brother went straight to OU after high school. . .and didn't do so hot." In reflection, Greg began tearing up and found it difficult to speak. "Um, um, didn't do so hot…I don't want to say that…I decided to, you know, take it slow. Make sure I'm ready for a bigger college." Later in the interview, he elaborated that he

and his brother no longer "see eye to eye" and he believes the friction is due, in part, to the fact that his brother lost the GMSP due to poor decision making while in college. "It's the regret of losing the scholarship and me getting it. I think there's some jealousy…just sucks, actually. It stinks." Although he waited until only two weeks before fall classes began, "enrollment and everything was smooth." He credits two public school faculty members with helping him transition to the university: his high school counselor and his English/Psychology teacher.

> On the Gates Millennium Scholarship, you had a recommender and a nominator. The Recommender was [my teacher] and the nominator was [my counselor]. [My teacher] was my recommender, so she filled out eight essays for me. You know, I can't thank her enough. She's awesome…same with [my counselor]. And, uh, I'm glad they believed in me. It's, uh, (tearing up). I got off subject, but [my teacher] is just a teacher that I get everything when she speaks. I love her to death. She is an awesome individual!

Greg's first semester was "very tough. I didn't really like to study too much. I was a procrastinator, very bad about that." His second semester has gone better because "I've settled down. I stopped partying." He plans to return to SWOSU next year to "get my GEs out of the way." Because it's a "small college…I can still see mom and pa" but he will then consider transferring to a university in "California, or Colorado, or Florida…the point of college is to go out on an adventure, not be able to drive fifteen minutes to see your parents."

Greg plans to live in a campus dormitory his sophomore year and not repeat the mistake of renting a trailer off-campus. "Me and my buddy decided to get a trailer. GMSP covered the trailer cost, so it was nice, but that trailer takes away from study time." Throughout his freshman year, Greg found encouragement through his college professors, "the instructors are very interactive, very positive, very helping. What a teacher should be," and about his former high school Chemistry teacher:

> I took Chem I my first semester here. I had lots of questions for [my high school Chemistry teacher]. She's a really good teacher and would help out anybody. Every time I'd go for help [for my college class] she's like, 'So, how are the grades doing?' and I was like, 'I'm passing.' And she'd put a little more emphasis, 'Maybe you ought to do a little better' and I was like, 'Maybe you should teach me a little better.'

Sue's textural description.

Sue is a nineteen year old freshman university student. She is the only child of a Cheyenne and Arapaho mother and a Caucasian father. Although her mother died when she was just two months old, she remained close to her maternal grandmother until her death three years ago. Indeed, it was through this relationship that Sue remained active in tribal activities. Her maternal grandmother made her a jingle dress when Sue began dancing at pow wows at the age of five. Sue's grandmother continued to accompany her to pow wows three to four times per year, even after her desire to dance waned and she simply attended for the social aspect. One pow wow that they always attended was the

Labor Day festivities in the small town where Sue went to school from grades five through twelve. "It's been fun to meet other Indian kids because [my hometown] is mainly a German town." She and her family also attended reunions of her maternal extended family. Sue stated that she likes history and is curious to learn more about her culture.

> When I came to [the university], I really didn't know that much other than what my grandmother taught me. I started talking to more kids around campus that I found out were from the same tribe and I learned a lot of new stuff, like history.

Sue and her father spend a lot of time outdoors fishing, hunting, camping, and playing on the river. This love of nature, and the fact that their family consists of just the two of them, contribute to their close bond.

The high school which Sue attended is in a small rural community with a population of approximately 1,000. In fact, Sue only had eleven classmates in her graduating class and they will be the last; the school was forced to consolidate with another district in the fall of 2010. High school was easy for Sue. "My favorite subject was history. I don't know why, but something just fascinates me about history. I was thinking about becoming a history minor or something, but now I just want to focus on my major [early childhood education]." Sue entered high school thinking that it would be an "adventure" for her due to her shyness, but "the small size helped me in some aspects." She found a niche in FCCLA – Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America, the only high school extra-curricular activity in which she participated. However, her favorite endeavor was

a service learning project in which high school students were assigned to an elderly person at the local care facility. "We would go share snacks and make them presents on their birthday. I liked that. I liked it because I had someone to talk to. We could visit them anytime we wanted."

The small size of her high school acted as a double-edged sword for Sue, because she also identified this as the worst part about high school. "I didn't like high school because it was so small. I don't really like to meet new people, but I'd rather meet new people than be stuck with the same ones every day. I was ready to graduate." Sue felt ill-prepared for college. "We were so small our teachers didn't really…like, we learned, but probably not as much as we should have. I thought, 'I'm not really ready to do this whole college thing.'" However, the process of choosing a university was easy.

> I knew I couldn't really get anywhere without attending college…I thought that staying here [at the university] would be a lot easier because I wouldn't have to take a three-hour drive to see my dad. I figured I would stay close to home until I had to…to finish something. He knows I'm a shy person and he didn't want to push me into a large place where I'd be scared and not done as well as I did. And then he pushed me to come to [the university] because it's not as big as an OU or OSU.

Applying to the university and getting enrolled proved a bit difficult, since she was the first in her immediate family to attend. "I didn't know what I was doing but I have a cousin who also goes here…so she kinda helped me figure out what to do to get enrolled. She guided me." Sue completed her admissions paperwork

independently, because her school did not have a high school counselor. Besides her cousin, Sue's father provided the most assistance and encouragement. "He was telling me, 'I really want you to go to school. Do the better for yourself. Don't skip out on college.' He motivated me." Once admitted to the university, Sue credits the staff of the New Student Orientation office for being "really helpful" and for "showing me where all of my classes were going to be." Two of her high school teachers also encouraged her to continue her education. "My history teacher taught in a different way. And my Biology teacher, she was really fun. They were real encouraging about going on to college." These two educators continue to communicate with their former high school students via Facebook. "They don't want us to end up like some people from our town, just little nobodies that live in [my small hometown] the rest of our lives."

The best part of college for Sue is the flexible hours, not having to attend school all day from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. "I can't believe the semester is almost over. It feels like another one is getting ready to start, and I'm not ready for that!" Although she did not join any clubs during her freshman year, she wishes to next year, particularly the H.O.P.E. (Honoring Our People's Existence) Club because "they teach, like, some of the native language and some of the history. If your family is well known in the tribe, then you'd learn about them, just history of the tribe, things like that." Many things were difficult for Sue, even "just finding my classes. I was scared and it was difficult." Grades were also a challenge. "When I first graduated high school, I thought, 'College is going to be easy' but when I got here it was like NOT. Not the way they taught me." Her declining grades put

pressure on her until she took charge. "I've got to pull this together. Nobody's going to do it for me."

Sue found assistance through her cousin, a friend that introduced her to the writing lab for instructional help, and her father. "A lot of stuff happened last semester and I thought about dropping school, but [my cousin] talked me out of it." And when her father found out that she wanted to quit, he encouraged her to persevere. "He kind of pushed me to stay in school and get through it. He said, 'I know it's a really tough time for you but do whatever you have to do to get through school.'" The "tough time" that her father alluded to was the placement of her paternal grandfather in a care facility. This was followed by the need to move her grandmother to town so she wouldn't be living by herself in a rural setting. "She didn't like it, being in that big house, because she was so used to doing everything for him. And I got really sick. I wanted to drop out really bad." Sadly, Sue's grandmother passed away within four months of these events, compounding her stress.

> We've gotten a lot closer than we used to be. I'm glad my dad and cousin talked me into staying. I feel like, if I had dropped out when I wanted to, then I wouldn't have the ambition to get through. I'm glad they pushed me to stay in school.

As her second semester came to a close, Sue became an advocate for herself. After determining that she did not do well with all of her classes in the morning, with no breaks, "I made my schedule with more flexible hours so it fit me. I like making it work for me."

Linda's Textural Description.

Linda is a non-traditional student; entering the university as a freshman at the age of twenty-nine. Linda is a Cheyenne-Cherokee, but is enrolled as a Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal member. "My mother is full-blooded Cheyenne and my father is a full-blooded Cherokee. I was raised by my mother. My father was absent from the family." Linda's mother struggled with alcoholism.

> We have these addictions in our family. It's very big within our tribe and within the Indian people. When I was little, I remember her getting beat by these men that she would be with that night. I don't remember being abused or molested or anything. If I was, I guess I have a good way of blocking it out. I say I had a good guardian angel to carry me through those times because I remember this happening to her but not to me. I think God took care of me.

When Linda was in kindergarten, her mother achieved sobriety. "That was the beginning of our life. I never had a childhood before that." Her mother pursued her college education at this university, obtaining a baccalaureate degree in Psychology. She now serves as a counselor for a tribal treatment center in western Oklahoma. "She goes to many workshops to understand her counseling techniques. Even though she's a recovering addict, probably twenty years now, she still deals with these problems." As a child, Linda enjoyed "the social aspect" of tribal gatherings, but did not participate due to the financial strain her mother's alcoholism placed on the family.

> She never entered me [in dances] because there's a lot to it. There's give-aways, which are part of the tradition. You do give-aways to honor the person dancing or in honor of people dancing with you. It's like a form of respect. I think that's one of the reasons mom never got me involved is because she never had the money to do that. And we never had a good functioning car. I can understand that and respect that.

Linda discovered gymnastics in upper elementary school and it was in this sport that she found her niche. "I was on a gymnastics team with a coach who was Native American. She really pushed me more than she pushed the other girls, but I felt connected to her." Linda's participation in gymnastics was the best part of high school, and it buoyed her through until her sophomore year.

> I carried that sport with me up until sophomore, when I started straying from my education and straying from my sport. My friends were running around, already getting drunk. One of my friends already had a baby in middle school. Already getting drunk, already having sex; I didn't have time for that because I was in gymnastics. But, when I got to middle school, that's when I started losing interest. The senior [team members] graduated and part of our team was missing. That's when I really let things go.

For their sophomore year of high school, Linda and a friend were both accepted to the Santa Fe Indian School, a boarding school, but Linda's stay lasted only two weeks. "I did something stupid and I got suspended. I could have gone back, but I didn't." She regrets the decision not to return to the boarding school, because "I

know I would have gone further in my education." Instead, she returned to her public school in Oklahoma, but no longer participated in the sport of gymnastics.

> I got involved with a guy who wasn't the best of guys. I always tried to be good, to be decent and respectable. With him in my life…I did things I never thought I'd do. I ended up dropping out. My mom said, 'If you want to act like a married couple and be with this guy, then quit school, get a job, and go to work.' I think she meant it sarcastically, but I took it seriously. She had never talked to me like that. She just cut strings with me.

At the age of sixteen, the only way Linda could support herself was to find employment at a fast food establishment. "I was at my wit's end. After that, probably two years later…we had been together all that time and then he went to jail. After he was gone, I found out I was pregnant." With her mother's encouragement and support, Linda successfully completed the General Education Development (GED) exam at the age of nineteen.

Linda's mother encouraged her to attend a community college. "She told me that since I had a baby, I needed to start school. She knew I wouldn't make it very far working fast food or in a motel, so she helped me enroll." The struggle to juggle school work, babysitting, and finances contributed to this failed attempt at higher education. "I passed a computer course…only one course. If I could take it back, I'd be more willing to look for people to help me with babysitting, with transportation, with necessities." Linda justified dropping out of college by thinking, "As long as I'm working and I'm supporting my child, then we'll be OK

and when we get a little more situated, I'll go back." Unfortunately, the next few years were extremely difficult.

> I always had a mind of what a family should be like and I always wanted that even though I didn't have it. It's what I sought. Well, I would say about ten years later and five kids later and two divorces later, I finally figured out that I'm ready to start school again. I'm ready to pursue my education. I have my head screwed on straight now. I was through with all the playfulness and trying to settle down with the perfect man and make a family, because it wasn't working for me, not with these guys that I chose. I took it into my own hands. I know where I need to go.

The process for choosing a university, applying, and registering was relatively easy. While working at the tribal casino, Linda heard about the new tribal college "because they offered classes to the part-time workers" and initially thought, "What would I get out of it? But all that changed when I came back to school." Garnering her courage, showing up on campus, and "randomly asking, 'I think I need to enroll, but I don't know how'," she was welcomed by the administrative staff at the tribal college and shown degree options. "She [the academic advisor] walked me through it. I didn't feel stressed or scared. She kind of laid it out on the table and let me choose. That's how I found myself in the Tribal Administration degree." Linda found the idea of attending large general education courses to be the most frightening.

> [She] helped me pick the classes of interest that would get me started. Those classes let me see where I wanted to go with this education.

> History, Art of the Plains Indians, Basic Algebra – I was scared of that, of the general education. I was comfortable with learning about American Indians, but these college classes felt like high school. I wasn't comfortable learning in that environment. Only because these tribal classes; there are Native Americans in there and I was comfortable.

Linda's involvement in the campus Student Government Association (SGA) has made her transition easier. "Being in the SGA group gave me another outlook on campus life, the governmental aspect of campus life, you know, their opinions about how to make a better campus." She has slowly found her voice at these meetings.

> When we have our debates, I either oppose or go along with certain issues. And I think that gives me the freedom to express the way I feel. Some agree and some disagree and that's the whole point of the debate; that's what's fun about it. You know, I'm not the only person there that wants to see a change for a better campus.

Another campus organization that Linda has found beneficial is the Honoring Our Peoples' Existence (HOPE) Club. "I try to be very involved. I really enjoy going to workshops." When the HOPE Club traveled to the Oklahoma Native American Students in Higher Education (ONASHE) event, Linda found one workshop particularly interesting. "He was talking about American Indian studies and leadership. He asked me if I would be interested in graduate school in American Indian studies. I had never thought about it!" Another inspiring opportunity for Linda was meeting the author Walter Echo-Hawk. "He was talking about some of

the worst crimes committed against Native Americans. 'In the Courts of the Conqueror' was the workshop. He spoke to a crowd of people from different campuses, different communities, from all over the nation." Linda is proud of her participation in the HOPE Club and she often brings her daughters to campus meetings, telling them "You guys can do this stuff, too. Don't get distracted by your friends, by all these drugs and temptations that will get you. Education will give you the opportunity to do what you want to do."

The most challenging aspects of the past semester have been "time and flexibility. I didn't know how I was gonna work as well as go to school as well as attend to my children. I had to squish it together and multi-task." Perhaps the greatest challenge was the acknowledgement that she is unable to appropriately care for five children. She has subsequently allowed her two sons to live with their father in Las Vegas, Nevada. "He may not have been a good husband, but he is a good father. To me, that's all that matters. I felt kind of regretful about it but it also allowed me to pursue my college, my education." She continues to raise her three daughters.

Linda credits three specific people for supplying her with assistance and encouragement as she pursues her college degree. The first is the administrative assistant at the tribal college. Linda states that, in response to her struggle to design a schedule flexible enough to include school, work, and children, "[She] was able to help me work that out. That's one thing I've accomplished over these two years." Linda also credits her fiancé. "He's very understanding about my education and me working and being a mom. That's why I fell in love with

him…he doesn't try to push my priorities aside to accommodate him." She is appreciative of "that family-oriented life" that they are trying to build together. Lastly, she acknowledges the encouragement she has received from her mother. In fact, her mother helped Linda secure a part-time position at the addiction treatment center where she counsels patients. Linda serves as a small group leader.

> I talk to them about communication, about spirituality, about their history. I've been able to take my education and apply it at work. A lot of Indians there don't know their history. Even a lot of the Cheyenne, they don't know their background. I'm very interested in the history of our people. Not just the Cheyenne, but all the tribes. There's so much more to the story than the Whites taking over the Indian lands. A lot of anger is held with the Indians because of that, but our people need to move on and benefit from the past so our children can benefit. Our children are what are going to hold our people together or what will make us go our separate ways.

Cara's textural description.

Cara is also a non-traditional freshman university student, entering college several years after completing her General Education Degree. Carol is from a large family consisting of seven children. Her father was full-blooded Arapaho and her mother shares the Arapaho lineage, although she also claims a bit of French heritage. Cara is enrolled with the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe as a 15/16 Arapaho.

> Although I am enrolled with the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, I would like everyone to know that the Cheyenne and Arapaho are two tribes. We have a lot of similarities, but at the same time, we are different in so many ways, not only with our language, but with our traditional values, even with our appearances. A lot of Cheyenne and Arapaho are inter-married, and they don't want to choose one or the other; they can't. They are both. But, I'm very, very thankful that I'm Arapaho.

Cara's earliest memories were of living in Garland, Texas. Her father participated in the Indian Relocation Program of the 1960s. "[My parents] lived in California, they lived in St. Louis, they lived in Dallas…It was because of that program that my father got to participate and they helped them find jobs and…get established." In Garland, her father worked at the Bell Helicopter factory and her mother was a homemaker. "I remember her always being at home with us in the morning before we went to school and then when we got home." Cara recounts how she and her siblings were the only Native American children in their neighborhood and elementary school.

> I saw one dark-skinned boy in the first grade with me, but he was a Mexican. He wasn't Native American. So all the time, I was wondering, 'I'm an Indian, but are we the only Indians?' We were kind of sheltered in a way. We were always surrounded by the kids down the street. But they were white kids. We always knew that we were Indians and that we were different somehow.

Consequently, Cara was not involved in tribal activities at that time. However, when she was about seven years old, the family suddenly relocated from Garland, Texas to Oklahoma. "Alcohol always comes into the picture…My father started drinking when we were living in Garland and it got the best of him. That was why he lost his job and we had to move back home." The tiny Oklahoma community was "a major culture shock" to Cara and she repeatedly told her father that "I want to go home. Let's go back home." Three years later, when Cara was ten, her father once again participated in a government program in order to secure housing. Sponsored by the United States Office of Housing and Urban Development, Cara's family received one of the first four homes built in her community by the Office of Native American Programs (ONAP). "I believe the U.S. government, wanting to urbanize the Native Americans,…that is when we started losing our identity. I am just finding out what it means to be an Arapaho."

Immersed in this predominantly Native American community, Cara began to discover her Arapaho roots. She vividly recounts the story of her people's massacre at Sand Creek, Colorado by government forces in 1864. "Some say that there were no Arapahos there, just Cheyenne. But I stand to correct that. There was an Arapaho camp there, [Arapaho Peace Chief] Left Hand." Cara and her family are direct descendants of two survivors of Sand Creek, her mother's great-grandmother Jabene and Jabene's brother, Mixed Hair.

> Mixed Hair and another little Arapaho boy took off running west from the Sand Creek site. They ran west…for days and days and they came upon a Navajo camp. They couldn't communicate on account of the Navajo; their

> language is different from ours. They saw the shape them little boys were in…so they took them in and raised them. Mixed Hair ended up marrying a Navajo girl. [Jabene] must have run to another encampment. She ran to another Arapaho camp. She got refuge there. As time went by, they had this land allotment…so, this land that my mother was heired into [in Oklahoma], that was the original 160 acres that was allotted to Jabene. Jabene was a Medicine Woman; in the old days there were nine Arapaho medicine bags. People would come to her if they had any kind of sickness or injury. When she journeyed on to the other side, the medicine bag was buried with her.

Tribal activities became an important part of Cara's life. "Tribal activities…mean our social gatherings, such as pow wows. We have Native American church. We have sweat lodges." Although she did not dance in the ceremonies, her brother did. When she turned twelve years of age, Cara's father began to instruct her in the ways of the Native American church. He was a roadman, a "man that is acquainted with this medicine [peyote] and how to use it." Cara and her older sister were allowed into ceremonial meetings in the tipi, aiding those who sought blessings and healing.

> Peyote is considered a holy sacrament. I don't want people to get confused. It is not a drug that we take that causes us to not think clear. We don't put it above God. It is a medicine to us and we use it in that manner. The way I was taught is that you keep your mind focused on whatever the meeting is about and it should be people who are strong and

> healthy and are going to help the purpose of the meeting with prayers. So, I've been to a lot of meetings, and I love that. I love that way. I'm glad my father taught me.

Cara's oldest brother now has the responsibility of holding the "fireplace" for peyote and healing ceremonies and celebratory occasions.

Public school was difficult for Cara. She remembers that she was an intelligent first grade student who could read well, but that she struggled with stuttering. "We were sitting around a little round table and I remember I had a green plaid dress on…and I knew how to read." When her turn to read to the teacher came, Cara thought,

> I hope she stops talking to me and goes on to someone else. And then she says, 'Can you read?' and I wouldn't answer her and she grabbed me by my shoulders…and she was like moving me back and forth…'Read it! Can't you read it?'…and I started crying. I never answered her because that just kind of completely turned me off from everything. From that time, they started sending me to a speech therapist and that was alright.

High school proved just as difficult. "I was so insecure, it was not even funny. I would sit there and think, 'What am I here for? What is my purpose?'" The best part of high school was her attempt to participate in athletics, although she did not immediately make the varsity basketball squad. "I like basketball, so I played. I never did participate on the team, but I worked out with the other players." One specific incident had a dramatic impact on Cara.

> I was going into my senior year. The basketball coach approached me after lunch and we were getting ready to go to practice. I cannot remember his name for the life of me, but I can remember what he looked like. He didn't look me directly in the eyes. He said, 'I need to try to keep a good appearance. Someone saw you smoking a cigarette. I cannot tolerate that.' And he asked me to quit…from that point on I lost what small self confidence I had. The struggle to go to school, that just went out the window. I would wake up in the morning and think, 'Dang, my parents are going to be disappointed because I'm off the basketball team' and I was embarrassed to tell them that the coach told me to step off because I was seen smoking a cigarette.

Ironically, this was the first cigarette Cara had smoked and she had done so on a lunch-hour dare by two girlfriends. "It was a peer thing." This episode became the worst part of high school for Cara. After becoming disengaged from her teammates, she started drinking alcohol. "That just opened up a new world for me…at my young age; I thought that was the answer to my problems." She felt as though she "had no rapport with [her] teachers or with the other students." She was also confused regarding her role as a young woman. "A lot of girls in my grade were pregnant. It was puzzling to me, 'Am I supposed to get married now that I am close to eighteen?'" Cara dropped out of high school in December, just one semester prior to graduation. "I struggled…getting real resentful and getting a bad attitude and not being able to express it. It kept coming out in negative ways."

Cara's path to the university was long and winding. Seven years passed before she successfully pursued the General Educational Development (GED) test. "I felt that I was locked into nothing positive happening. I didn't know how to ask for help." At the age of twenty-five, Cara found herself pregnant and "my eyes just came open. I knew that…I'm gonna have to be able to get a job to take care of the baby and to take care of myself." She enlisted help from the department of education at her tribal headquarters. "I always felt like, 'There's more I can do.' I had to find my way." With the encouragement of her husband, Cara enrolled at a vocational center and obtained a certificate in business technology. This was her first positive school experience. "The teachers I had were really, really into what they were doing. I enjoyed going there." Later, these same teachers alerted her to a temporary clerical position in a district attorney's office. Cara was successful in this endeavor and it greatly boosted her self confidence.

> I always felt that people of different backgrounds…were way more important than me. But when I worked in that office, I found out that I was just like them. I wasn't below anybody and they treated me good. They were interested in what I had to say, where I was from, and my background.

The process of selecting a university was easy for Cara; she did so based upon proximity. After her divorce, she had moved back to her hometown in western Oklahoma. The university is a short thirty minute commute. However, the process of enrolling forced her to "work up the nerve" to do so. Her adult

children supported her in her decisions to pursue college. "I kept telling them that it's important to go to school. I worked at the Veteran's Hospital to support them for a lot of years. I need to go back to school." Cara found the most assistance through her academic advisor at the tribal college.

> She is like an angel in disguise because she helped me with everything I needed. She talked to me about the different classes, the choices I could make while I'm here at [the university]. She helped me do my financial aid. She helped me in so many ways; I can't ever thank her enough. She sure opened a lot of doors for me.

Another form of support came in the required course, College Success. "It gives you information. It lets you feel comfortable where you're at." She established a rapport with the course instructor as well. "She made me feel at ease. If you don't know where to go for help, that class will teach you. If you need to talk to somebody, it opens the doors. [She] just encouraged us in so many ways." Cara is enjoying her coursework as she pursues a Tribal Administration degree, particularly the classes on tribal constitution and the language classes, both in Cheyenne and in Arapaho. The only difficulty Cara identified was her life-long feeling of insecurity, especially as an older student beginning college. "I found myself scanning the room…for some older students like me. I saw a couple and started feeling more comfortable." She has also found that the younger students share the same feelings of anxiety. "I was watching these young kids and I could tell they were just as nervous as I was, so I didn't feel too nervous or threatened anymore."

Sara's textural description.

Sara is a non-traditional freshman university student and is the oldest of the study participants. Sara attended public school in a rural western Oklahoma community of approximately 2,600 people, were she was raised by her grandparents. "I tell people I'm not full-blooded; I'm full-beaded" Cheyenne. In fact, her grandfather was a Cheyenne chief. "There were forty-four original chiefs of our tribe and he was one of the last. So all the meetings…tribal meetings…always took place at our house out in the country." Sara and her siblings "were really sheltered. We lived outside of town with my grandparents and my grandparents were very traditional." She remembers how school officials first approached her grandparents about public school attendance:

> The superintendent came out to talk to my grandpa and told him that we were school-age. But my grandpa looked at us and said we were too crazy and he didn't want us to start. So we didn't start school until we were seven years old. When we did go to school, I knew my Cheyenne language better than I knew English so I had to learn English to get me through school. I went to the public school all my life. There were government schools but my grandparents wouldn't hear of me leaving home. Me and my brother and my cousins, we never went off to school. Later on, I knew many kids from our community that went out of state or went to a government boarding school but my grandparents would never think of sending us.

Sara's cultural pluralism flourished in her community, "the superintendent and teachers made me feel welcome…there was hardly no racism there when I grew up," and that continues to this day. "What I'm trying to accomplish right now, is to teach our language to our people. We don't have little ones that can even talk it, they don't understand it." As a child, Sara participated in the shawl dance at pow wows. Although she continues to attend pow wows regularly, she now has more responsibility in their planning "because they had sort of died down. A lot of people have passed on and nobody's there to try to keep the tradition or the culture." She initiates monthly fundraisers and does "a lot of cooking. I cook our traditional meal, like stew." She also enjoys sewing, making "our shawls, our Indian shawls. I make Indian shirts, and I make pillows." Many of these items are used in her fundraising and other tribal activities. Sara is a cultural activist. She was among a contingent of university students who represented the H. O. P. E. (Honoring Our Peoples' Existence) Club at a recent Oklahoma Native American Students in Higher Education function, meeting with Senator Kelly Haney to discuss continued funding to complete the American Indian Cultural Center and Museum in Oklahoma City. At one of the conference's round-table discussions, university students were slow to engage in conversation. Sara surprised herself by taking the impromptu role as facilitator:

> I told him, 'I came back to school at a later age, but I just wanted to tell you young ones here…keep on going to school. Make something of yourselves. Study hard and get that degree. Nobody can take it from you.

It is yours.' When I sat down, everyone started clapping…then everybody started standing up and talking. It was quite an experience.

Sara's teaching is intergenerational, speaking with tribal elders at the nutrition center to refresh her native speaking skills, "The elders would come in to eat and we would talk. We would say, 'How do you say this? And how do you say that?' so we would sort of round-table talk," and then passing this knowledge on to her granddaughter.

She's real inquisitive at this age and she asks a lot of questions. So I talk to her in Cheyenne. Every morning she'd come over and I'd fix breakfast for her. As I was cooking I'd be telling her words in Cheyenne, like 'salt' and 'bread' and she'd say the right words. One morning, I was talking to her and she says, 'Wait Grandma, stop right there. Let's not go there yet. Your little Cheyenne baby's starving!' She wanted me to quit talking so she could eat.

Sara's high school years "were fun." She participated in the high school band, Future Homemakers of America, varsity basketball, and enjoyed the small school atmosphere. "We were a football oriented town and we always went to football games on Fridays…I don't care what it was, any sport, we were always there. I always looked forward to that." She is proud to be part of a family that valued education. "All my friends that I know, and all my relatives, all graduated from high school. It's always in our mind. Our parents, our grandparents, always taught us…go to school…don't try to quit." She is hard-pressed to describe the worst parts of high school, "I didn't have any hard times in my high school years.

I always liked them." Sara was raised in the Baptist Church and the family "went to church all the time. I was always centered [on] the church."

Sara had a choice to make when it came to selecting a university, either the local university or Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas. "I'd never been away from home. [My mom and dad] told me to just go to [this university]. If we ever need you or you need us, we will be right there. They talked me into it." Transition to the university was made easy the first time she attended as the result of an aunt who had participated in the Upward Bound program; a federal program designed to assist low income students and students from families in which neither parent holds a baccalaureate degree. "When she got into Upward Bound, she knew all the classrooms. So whenever I came…she showed me what class I had to go to." The two young women were roommates in the campus dormitory and participated in the marching band together, but Sara recalls that "at that young age I had never been away from home. I sort of got mixed up with the wrong people. I didn't take education seriously. I just quit school."

Sara enjoyed a career as a Certified Medication Aide in tribal hospitals until, by chance, she attended an education conference in Denver, Colorado. She was asked by the tribe to participate on a panel that discussed such questions as, "What do you think of education?" and "What do you see in our future for our tribe?" Also in attendance that day was a tribal scholar, who had been instrumental in the establishment of the tribal college on this campus, and had recently accepted the appointment of President. After the panel discussion, the tribal college president approached Sara and told her that she needed to come

enroll in the tribal college. "I said I wanted to learn. I wanted to teach our language." She was also inspired by her late aunt, who had been such a wonderful friend, roommate, and mentor when she first attended college.

> She didn't come to me in a dream, it's just that it was always on my mind that, if she was still living and able and healthy, I'm sure she would have finished school here. So, I figured that since I am still living I should do this. And if I can just do half of something, and maybe I can do it for her.

The process of transitioning to college the second time was as easy as the first. This time, her mentors were the tribal college president and her administrative assistant. "I came in one day and sat down in [the assistant's] office. [The president] saw me…and said, 'Go lock that door! Don't let her back out until she enrolls here!' So I did." As before, she did not encounter any difficulties in the process.

Sara's first semesters back at the university have been "busy, real busy, but I enjoy it. I wouldn't have it any other way." She continues to be involved in tribal activities and is an active participant in the H. O. P. E. club, serving in the position of secretary. "If I'm at home cooking or cleaning, my mind thinks about tomorrow. What's going to happen this week? I've got to do this. I've got to do that." The challenges and obstacles Sara faces are "study habits. Transitioning back to college is really different. I have a daughter, a family, and we have a new home…I need to keep on trying to study more." She continues to find assistance from the tribal college's administrative assistant.

> She's got a lot of patience with everybody. She's one of our Indian club sponsors. She's a math major so whenever I have problems with my math she says, 'I've got time.' She will do that for me. She's done a lot for me, and I'm proud that I know her. When it got to be bad weather, she came and got me. That's how I got to school that day. [She's] one of the ones that helped me get to where I am.

Other encouragement comes from the president of the tribal college. "She's my big influence. If she wasn't here with the tribal college, I don't think I would have come back. She can talk Cheyenne and I can understand what she's saying. She's down-to-earth, a nice person to get to know." Other encouragement comes from her extended family.

> I tell my nieces and nephews to come back to school. Stay out of trouble and try to apply yourself to do something better. And that's why I'm trying to do that, to go to school, to show my nieces and nephews. You know, 'Well, if Auntie can go back to school, maybe I can.' That's what I'm trying to do to put across to them that if I can do it, they can do it.

Composite Textural Description

A composite textural description offers further description of what participants experienced regarding a particular phenomenon. However, the composite textural description integrates the invariant meanings and themes of each individual participant into a portrait of the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The composite textural description that follows provides the reader with a

universal textural description of "what" the group of participants experienced during their transition to, and subsequent experience in, a four-year university.

A sense of belonging, whether derived from participation in tribal activities, high school activities, or university activities was of high priority to all research participants. The individuals who were most involved in high school activities reported the greatest satisfaction with their adolescent years and public schooling. Many enjoyed the team aspect of varsity athletics and the servant leadership opportunities of extra-curricular clubs. Indeed, the two participants who reported a negative high school experience, and who eventually dropped out of high school, yearned to have this sense of belonging and the camaraderie derived from this type of extra-curricular activity. They both recounted specific events in their high school career when the experience took a negative turn. Both incidents revolved around dismissal from a team-oriented sport: basketball and gymnastics. Currently, all seven participants are enthusiastic about their involvement in tribal activities. Even those who have long participated in tribal events are now taking more ownership in planning the activities and engaging others. Participants are knowledgeable regarding the history of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and captured my attention as they enthusiastically shared their personal stories of ancestors, including the great Peace Chief Black Kettle, and as they proudly described their affiliation within the tribe. Many expressed a thirst for more tribal history through university coursework and symposiums and a willingness to share their knowledge with others. All seven participants are currently enjoying their role as university students; most are involved in a variety

of university activities including faith-based Bible study, the H. O. P. E. Club, and the Student Government Association.

Study participants are quick to credit others for their successes. Although three of the seven participants had periods of tumultuous family connections during their childhoods and early adolescence, all seven report strong familial ties now. Unanimously, they shared how immediate family members assisted them, either in word or deed, in their quest to complete high school and attend college. Inter-generational ties abound as well. The active presence of grandparents who were involved in tribal activities had a profound impact on five of the seven participants. Interestingly, one participant is now a grandmother herself and is actively involved in raising her grandchildren and is teaching them the Cheyenne language. Affectional ties for high school teachers and university personnel were a shared component for participants. The four participants who are considered traditional students all shared stories of high school teachers and counselors who made positive, personal impacts on their transition to the university; one of the non-traditional university students reported a general sense of support from previous high school teachers. Five participants readily identified at least one university faculty or staff member who has contributed to their success in applying for admission, enrolling at the university, or engaging them through coursework.

Chapter 6

Presentation of Data

Structural Descriptions

Individual Structural Descriptions

The individual structural descriptions chronicle "how" participants experienced their transition to higher education and "how" they are experiencing their first semesters as college freshmen and sophomores. The structures are brought to light through imaginative variation, in which the researcher employs various perspectives in order to determine structural descriptions of experiences, "the underlying and precipitating factors. . .the 'how' that speaks to conditions that illuminate the 'what' of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Simply stated, the imaginative variation process is a reflective phase in which the researcher imagines "possible structures of time…causality, and relationship to self and to others" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99) in order to provide a "clear account of what is involved and the dynamics of the experience" (Frick, 2008, p. 178). I submit these individual structural descriptions after reflecting upon each participant's experience of *what* they experienced.

Mary's structural description.

Mary defines success as "anything that I do that makes me happy…going to work and doing a good job, just having a good day. That would be a success." Conversely, failure to her means, "not applying myself to certain things, like not studying for a test and then making a bad grade. Then I would say that was a failure because I did not apply my full self." She does not rely on others to make

for happy situations or to determine her success; she takes responsibility for her own happiness, indicating hopefulness that her own actions will positively affect her future. Self-discipline, determination, and a sense of autonomy are structures that have contributed to Mary's successful transition to, and perseverance in, college.

Regarding self-discipline, Mary states, "the causes of success for me would be trying to keep all negative thoughts out. For success there has to be self-discipline; without self-discipline, you get failure. That's how I look at it, self-discipline." Mary's parents instilled this self-discipline in Mary throughout her childhood in what she describes as "a quiet motivation…It's been more of 'apply your best.' If I brought home a C, it was like, 'No, no.' So they quietly motivated me but loudly punished me." Although she laughingly made this statement, the construct of self-discipline was clear.

Mary was determined to graduate from high school with high marks. "Graduating [from high school] was important to me…I wanted to show how hard I had worked all those years." She is equally determined to be a part of the first generation in her family to graduate from college. She and her sister are both currently enrolled at the university and are progressing towards degree completion. "We will be the first generation to graduate from college. That is our number one goal. I want to learn to be something. I definitely want to have a career for myself."

Mary is autonomous and believes in her own self-efficacy, that there is a positive causal relationship between her actions now and her success in the future.

Mary's previous mention of her self-discipline in high school academics has transitioned with her to college. She stated that her short-term goal was to make a "B" in Microbiology. "It's a tough class, but it is SO interesting." Her long-term goal is to graduate from college with a degree in dental hygiene and she intends to achieve it by "studying, studying, studying…that's definitely how I'm going to achieve those goals." Mary's belief in her own self-efficacy transcends to others. "College is for everybody. It's not just for certain kids. College is for everybody, even Indians. They really do have a chance here. It's just a matter of applying yourself and working hard for something."

Teri's structural description.

Teri defines success as "doing the best that I can do in everything I do, whether it's studying for a class or helping a friend out." The reverse construct, that of failure, she characterizes as "giving up early." The structures that infuse Teri's experience in transitioning to the university and which have contributed to the successful completion of her freshman year are a general awareness, spirituality, and determination.

Regarding awareness, Teri stays current on contemporary topics by reading periodicals such as magazines and the tribal newspaper, published in Concho, Oklahoma. She follows the actions of tribal officials and is excited when she sees them "step up as leaders and bring the tribe together…It inspired me in my high school to try to bring people together, and, in my home." Teri is conscious of the high percentage of American Indian students who drop out of high school and the low percentage that persist in higher education. This

knowledge, coupled with the fact that her mother did not attend college and that she is the eldest child in her family, fosters her determination to persevere. In speaking of her younger siblings, she clearly stated that "being like a role model for them was important to me."

Teri's spirituality plays a large role in her life and contributes to her ability to be successful. Her commitment to organized Bible studies, attendance at group events such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, church camp at Falls Creek, and Baptist Campus Ministries, places her in the company of her peers on a continuing basis. Over time, her affiliation has evolved from mere attendance to leadership positions.

A final prevailing structure for Teri is that of determination. Her "determination to accomplish something" is apparent when she speaks of her dream to be more financially secure than her mother, both for herself and her family. Her determination is illustrated by both her short-term and long-term goals. Teri is very focused on earning high marks so that her grade point average will enable her to complete a baccalaureate degree and then pursue a graduate degree in social work. She is determined to combine this academic training with her Spanish minor in order to work with bilingual clients. Her goals clearly indicate a belief in her own self-efficacy, that her actions now will have a positive impact on her life.

Greg's structural description.

The definition of success for Greg is "getting through college, getting a good job…and being able to support my family and make a good living." Failure,

in his words is "well, bluntly, not doing better than my mother and father." He views "being able to be organized" and knowing "what goals you need to get done" as two attributes defining successful people. He reiterates this when he states that the reasons for failure are "not knowing how to organize your life" and not knowing "what order to put things in." Greg is the most fiercely independent of the traditional university students who participated in this study. Born in a homeless shelter and raised in poverty, he continually evaluates his decisions against the previous "mistakes" made by his mother, father, and older brother, resulting in the structures of autonomy, self-discipline, and determination.

Greg learned autonomy at a young age. "I'm not the kind of guy to ask for support." He recounts that his parents were not even aware that he was applying for the scholarship from the Gates Millennium Scholars Program. In describing the scene in which he announced to them that he had been awarded the honor, he said, "I don't want to say it was a slap in the face, but they were like, 'Oh, that's nice' and, like, 'Move, so we can watch the weather'." When asked if their reaction was disappointing, he denied it, stating, "That was how they always congratulated me. You know, not overwhelming hugs and kisses. They would say, 'I'm very proud of you' but never yelled it." When asked who or what has enabled him to persist in college, he emphatically gestured to himself and stated, "This guy. Definitely myself."

Greg talked about his self-discipline while in high school and how it has carried over into his college life. "I didn't take Honors my freshman year [of high school] and it was a waste of time." After sitting through classes the first day of

his sophomore year, he approached his high school counselor and asked to be placed in Honors courses because "I couldn't learn [in the other classes]. It was pathetic." At times, the Honors courses proved difficult and he would occasionally make poor grades. But he remembers that his parents never asked to see his grades and he viewed this "as a poison…I was a person that kicked himself in the ass and was pissed off and did better next time. I've always had that tendency." He readily admitted that he needs to employ more self-discipline in future semesters, as he was charged with an alcohol-related offense, driving under the influence, during the second semester of his freshman year of college. "That's where those priorities come in. I know what comes first and I plan to stop drinking. That's why I'm moving to the dorm…it doesn't work to try to study in your room when the trailer if full of friends."

The structure of determination permeates throughout Greg's experiences. "There's a reason I'm not going to fail college. My brother got the same scholarship; he lost it. Now people are discriminating over there [his home town] about what might happen about me. It makes me mad." He is determined to make the most of the opportunities presented by the scholarship and also to mend the relationship with his brother. "My brother's love is more important than the scholarship. But, I won it and I can't look back. I'm not gonna lose it…I just want to make sure I shut everyone up over there [his home town]." Although success in college is his short-term goal, Greg's determination is also evident in his long-term goals and how they will affect those who are dear to him. I don't see myself failing. Personally, that is not in my vocabulary…I'm trying to get

through college, get a good job, and take care of the parents…Every Native American should know that the more [people] that succeed, the more it strengthens the tribe for the future.

Sue's structural description.

Sue's physical and mental focus is centered on her success at the university. When asked her definition of success, she immediately stated, "getting through school, going to school and doing well." Her construct of failure also revolves around her college academics, "Failure would be if I got dropped from a class or if I failed a class. Even worse would be if I dropped out of school or got kicked out of school." The dominant structures of Sue's transition to higher education include determination and autonomy.

Although almost painfully shy, Sue has a sense of quiet determination about her. She shared that she thought the "cause of success is hard work, determination. You have to be willing to do something if you want to get there." In her young life, Sue has certainly exhibited this determination. After her mother's death when Sue was an infant, her father relied on his mother-in-law and his sisters for a maternal influence. Three years ago, the death of her grandmother, who had been so influential in her upbringing and in her participation in tribal activities, made Sue even more determined to succeed. She focuses on her desire to be an early childhood teacher, motivated by working with her young cousin. "He needs a lot of help…I thought I needed to pursue this, not just for him, but for other little kids like him." When speaking about this boy and about her volunteer work in a Kindergarten classroom, Sue becomes excited and

her shyness is not as pronounced; she feels strongly about being an early childhood educator.

As she continues on her university journey, Sue is striving to become more autonomous; she wants to be independent and self-reliant. Important issues for her include "knowing who you are and who your people are" and not having to be dependent on others. She feels compelled to "go to school and learn a little bit more so you don't have to learn everything from other people." Sue emphatically wishes to continue at the university and complete her baccalaureate degree. Not surprisingly, given her definitions of success and failure, Sue's immediate goal is to pass her general education classes in order to prepare for coursework in early childhood education. She takes responsibility for her own self-efficacy, knowing that, if she applies herself now, she will have a positive impact on her own future. Her long-term goal is to become a certified teacher in order to "help little kids in some way."

Structural descriptions of non-traditional participants.

The following three structural descriptions are those of the non-traditional students. Although classified as freshmen or sophomores, their journey to become full-time university students has taken a decade or more. Obviously, their lived experiences are more complex than those of the previous participants. While the four traditional participants all spoke of a relatively easy path of high school completion and admission to the university, the same cannot be said for two of the following participants. *What* they experienced was quite different.

However, the constructs of *how* they experienced the process are similar for all participants.

Linda's structural description.

For Linda, success is "will power, determination, and confidence." She believes that one must have confidence as a foundation in order to achieve one's goals. Conversely, she emphatically states that "fear, above all else, is failure…we have to keep a positive outlook to not fail, to succeed." She describes how, during the darkest periods of her life, she was indeed fearful. Prior to her mother's sobriety, Linda was a fearful child, fearful of the disrespectful men with whom her mother associated and, "with my mom driving me around during her partying times." As a pregnant, high school dropout, Linda was fearful, "I was afraid to start out as a mom, [afraid] I would fail at it." The birth of her daughter and the accomplishment of acquiring her General Education Diploma (GED) were turning points for Linda. Regarding her infant daughter, she stated:

> I breastfed my daughter until she was two, so I wasn't drinking. I wouldn't consume that poison and pass it on to her. My mind was on my child and getting it together. Her dad wasn't around…that much alone made me want to pursue a better future for my child.

Regarding her education, Linda stated, "My GED proved to me that I didn't need to feel intimidated about education even though I had dropped out." This feeling of accomplishment enabled her to transition successfully to the university setting.

Along with this self-stated determination, structures that have contributed to Linda's persistence include spirituality and autonomy.

Linda identifies herself as a spiritual person. When describing her turbulent childhood, before her mother became sober, she says:

> When I was little, I remember her getting beat by these men that she would be with that night. I don't remember being abused. I say I had a good guardian angel to carry me through those times because I remember this happening to her but not to me. I think God took care of me.

Linda continued attending church "off and on" throughout her life. Now she is a faithful member of the Indian Baptist Church. "My preacher and his wife were always happy to see me…they would welcome me back and they would always question me when I was away." Linda recalls that the church had a big impact on her life about three years ago. "I hit rock bottom. It didn't have anything to do with alcohol or drugs, it was relationship-wise. That's when I found my real support. Everybody at church was so supportive." She enjoys her congregation because, even though they are predominately Native American, they welcome all people. As with many churches, fellowship revolves around the sharing of meals and she has found herself in a leadership role, encouraging others to attend regularly for the support of a faith family. "We try to encourage them, to spread the word that there's more to it than the food and activities…It takes people a while to make that commitment. As we get older, we have to serve."

Linda's autonomy continues to grow as she becomes more engaged in her university studies and activities. "Just being involved, that's motivation enough

for me." She is particularly driven by her love of Cheyenne and Arapaho history and seeks opportunities to be with other historians, such as the president of the tribal college. "She is a wonderful historian. She makes it clear…I want to be able to reflect and bring it back to her attention [to discuss]." Linda believes she can have a positive impact on others through her participation and leadership.

> The H. O. P. E. [Honoring Our Peoples' Existence] is really, really good. We keep the club active in our traditions. We hold workshops that teach moccasin making, gourd making, dream-catcher making. We try to introduce our traditions into the campus, to show others. I have the willpower to do more. I'm not too old and I'm not sick and I'm not weak. I want to be the one to tell them the Creation stories. I want to be the one to share the history with people who don't know…not just Native Americans, but everyone who is interested.

Not surprisingly, Linda's immediate goal is to successfully continue with her education, to "have the education to back me up." Her long-term goal is to work within the tribe itself, specifically in the Education Department. "I think it is the responsibility of the Education Department to help our people…go to school…because education will get you somewhere!"

Cara's structural description.

Cara inserts the synonym *blessed* when asked to define the term *success*; "I wouldn't use the word successful, but I would use the word blessed." She further states that success for her means being an educated person and an asset to others or to an organization, such as the Oklahoma Indian Child Welfare

Association, where she has previously worked. "One thing that makes me feel successful in life and in my education is when I worked for the Indian Child Welfare. [They] come to the rescue of children that are in need of foster homes." Conversely, Cara defines failure as having "no real purpose." She is determined to persevere with her formal education so that she may, in turn, help others. "The way I look at the things around me, it's not just me anymore…the more knowledge I have [the more] I can share with others." The structure of determination has evolved within Cara throughout her life and her public schooling. "I always felt like there was a shield around us [Native students] where the teachers would kind of overlook us." However, she chose to acknowledge her inward voice and pursue her dreams of higher education. "There was something there that kept driving at me to go…I always had the feeling that I want to go to college." Two additional structures which have assisted her in this goal include her sense of autonomy and her spirituality.

Cara's experiences in public education were often negative, both at the elementary and secondary levels:

> I remember clearly in the seventh grade sitting at the back of the classroom along with my other Native Americans. For some reason we always went to the back of the room. Maybe it was because I had always been told my whole life to watch out for the white people.

Regardless of the negativity she experienced, Cara felt driven to further her education and, in doing so, has used negative experiences to further her autonomy. "I guess that's what people base their dreams on. There is something

they feel inside of them that they have to find out, they just have to." Speaking of her first college courses, she came to the realization that, "it's just me and the teacher and me doing what I need to do to get my homework done and get my questions answered. No one is going to do it for me. I have to do it myself." Her university success thus far continues to inspire her for the future. "I am excited to go to school. It is a priority. If feels good."

Throughout turbulent times, both in school and in other contexts, Cara has drawn strength from her spiritual self.

> The way my father taught me from the very beginning, I knew about the Native American church before I knew about the Bible. He focused on…there is one God and that we didn't evolve from the Big Bang. My mother and my father both told me stories that had been passed down, that the first man that was created was an Arapaho man. In each culture around the world, everyone has their own stories about the Creation. My church has made me more aware of who I am, where I'm going, and…it is making me a better person.

Her faith has been a constant throughout her life. When she was younger, just as she was told to "watch out for the white people" at school, she had also "heard so much about the white man's Bible and how hypocritical some people can be with their religion." Cara was well into her adult years before she began attending a Baptist church. Through her life journey, Cara has developed a wider world-view. "This multicultural society that we live in, there are so many people, and

their beliefs in God and their religions are so different. But they all pray to a God. So, it is all good."

Sara's structural description.

Sara's effervescent personality is reflected in her definition of success; it is lively, positive, and in constant motion. To Sara, success means to "keep trying and trying to do better, whether it be raising a child, doing good in your work…even these classes I'm taking…I always got my job done." Her idea of failure relates to *not* seeing something through to completion. She regrets suspending her college education when she was a young adult. "The only thing I didn't finish was my education. My [parents] would always say, 'See, if you had finished school, you could be somewhere…but you didn't.' I didn't finish school, which I should have, years ago." Determination is the dominant element in Sara's persistence. She is ever watchful to discern determination in others, whether at the state or national level, and draws upon their leadership attributes to build her own resilience. For instance, she stated,

> I see people that I admire in our tribal government. There are a lot of obstacles they face every day. And I'm sure that our President of the United States faces a lot of criticism. But we need to let them do their work [or] if you have a complaint, get in there and let your voice be heard.

Sara was also quick to name individuals whom she knows personally who exhibit the determination to further their education. Surprisingly, I was one of those that she named:

> I admire people who are going on, like you. You are working on your doctorate. I think that is something, really something. I'm proud of you! My niece is my instructor this afternoon. [The class] is about Native American women and feminism. I really admire her. She went to OU [the University of Oklahoma] and got her Masters degree. I really think a lot of her.

Sara is determined to complete her degree, regardless of her age. She spoke of an older cousin who graduated from this university and continues to work part-time, at the age of 78, for the Colorado Department of Wildlife. "I admire the fact that she graduated. I know I want to experience that." In order to achieve her goal of a college degree, the one thing that she feels she has failed to see through to completion, she also relies upon the structures of her self-discipline and her spirituality.

Even during her long hiatus from college, Sara has exhibited the trait of self-discipline. In her career as a Certified Medication Aide, she "made sure everything was done…because you had to finish your job, you can't just stop. To me, that's not right." Sara credits her parents and grandparents for instilling her sense of self-discipline. "It's pounded in my head by my parents, to do the best I can and keep trying." As a returning college student, mother, grandmother, and active tribal member, Sara continues to practice self-discipline.

> Discipline. Keeping my mind on what I know I've got to do. It's just up to me. Thinking about it throughout the week. In order to finish school, I've got to do certain things. There were only eight of us in math class

[remedial Basic Algebra] today and I think we started out with thirty. Slowly they are leaving and not coming back. But I've got to keep trying. I know I can do it.

Sara's relies on her strong spiritual foundation in order to persevere. Raised in the Baptist Church, she "went to church all the time" and her life has been, and continues to be, "centered [on] the church." She exhibits servant leadership traits learned from her grandfather. "As a tribal elder, [he] would always make sure that the less fortunate had food. He would feed them if they came to our home or make sure they had money to get where they were going." She states that "I admired him. He was real compassionate and he understood people's ways and cared for them. It rubbed off on me." She is quick to offer support for others who may be in need. Her friends tell her, "If anything ever happens, you are there [for people]." When asked about her immediate goals, Sara simply wants to "get through school [with] passing grades." Her long-term goal is to continue as a servant leader "to help my tribe, somewhere, somehow." She believes she will achieve these goals "through prayer" and states, "I want [my grandson] to say, 'My grandma went to school in her later years.' It comes full circle. I pray every day that I can finish."

Composite Structural Description

The composite structural description is an integration of all of the individual structural descriptions in an effort to communicate universal structures of the experience. The composite structural description assimilates the meanings of the experience so that the reader may understand *how* the participants, "as a

group experience *what* they experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 142). The following paragraphs discuss four predominant core structures, derived from the seven participants that contributed to their success in transitioning from high school to the university setting and their subsequent successful persistence thus far: determination, autonomy, self-discipline, and spirituality. Participants indicated that these structures elicit feelings of pride, accomplishment, and a sense of well-being.

Participants unanimously articulated that the structure of determination is *how* they have successfully persisted. This structure manifests itself as participants described how hard they worked during high school in order to graduate or how they persevered in order to obtain their General Education Diploma (GED). Six of the seven participants will be the first generation of college graduates in their families. A sense of responsibility to family and tribal affiliation, and the sense of shared pride upon their successful completion of college, fosters the structure of determination in each participant. As a group, participants are watchful and quick to discern this structure in others. Participants credit those who exhibit determination as leaders to be respected.

The structures of self-discipline and autonomy are interwoven for many of the participants. Participants clearly stated that the practice of self-discipline is *how* they define and achieve success. For the four traditional university students, self-discipline in high school revolved around time management and organizational skills, including honors coursework, reading and discussing contemporary tribal issues, participation in extra-curricular activities, and

involvement in team sports. Two of the three non-traditional students failed to exhibit this structure during adolescence, but proudly credit themselves for cultivating this construct now. Autonomy is a structure espoused by both traditional and non-traditional participants. In fact, most see the two, autonomy and self-discipline, as intertwined. Repeatedly, participants commented on feeling as though their ability to accomplish goals on their own would eventually have a positive causal relationship to their future success. During the interviews, ideas that were prevalent included applying oneself, reliance on self to be successful, and effectively prioritizing responsibilities and obligations.

Collectively, participants expressed a strong spiritual structure. *How* they have been resilient is related to their spiritual foundation. They view their successes, their trials, their human interactions, and their hope for the future through this spiritual lens. Although a homogeneous group, as defined by their similarities in tribal affiliation, university classification, and geographic location, their religious affiliations are quite diverse. Two participants were raised in the southern Baptist church while another received her tutelage via the Indian Baptist church. One participant was raised in the Indian Mennonite church while another is guided via the German Mennonite faith. The lone male participant is a member of the United Methodist Church. The final participant was not indoctrinated into a mainstream Christian faith as a child, but received instruction in the Native American church. Regardless of doctrine, all participants expressed a belief in one universal God as Creator, were respectful and accepting of others' religious

views, and continue in their faith journeys. As a whole, they shared instances of feeling accepted, loved, and supported within their faith community.

Synthesis of Composite Textural and Composite Structural Descriptions

A synthesis of the experience, developed by incorporating the composite textural themes and the composite structural descriptions, is the final step in presenting phenomenological data. Using the Moustakas' (1994) model, the textural-structural integration provides a "synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience" (p. 144). Writing the synthesis involved applying a reflective-intuitive approach to the two themes, seven corresponding invariant qualities, and four structural descriptions of all participants.

A sense of belonging is integral to most humans. We derive affirmation and a sense of security from acceptance into a group. In childhood and adolescence, the majority of participants felt a sense of belonging during their public school experience. They were socially accepted among their peers and teachers and successfully participated in extra-curricular activities such as athletics and other school clubs. These five participants could readily identify a proactive teacher or mentor that facilitated their transition from high school to higher education. Conversely, the remaining two participants felt rejected and frustrated during high school, unsure of their purpose and future prospects. Unlike the other participants, these did not find key protective factors such as concerned teachers or mentors. The lack of these protective buffers may have contributed to their departure from public schools prior to graduation.

Regardless of their path to the university, all seven participants indicated that they have acquired a sense of belonging through university activities and friendships. They quickly credit specific staff and faculty at the university who have offered support during their transition period and eagerly anticipate continuing their studies. Participants feel confident that these mentors are reliable and will continue to assist them. Additionally, the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe is credited as providing a real sense of belonging for each individual. The four traditional students, all of whom graduated with a high school diploma, enjoyed tribal activities as children and adolescents, including pow wows and organized excursions. At the collegiate level, all study participants feel welcomed and encouraged by tribal offerings on campus. They are developing leadership skills through participation in tribal workshops and interaction with tribal leaders. Their participation has also awakened an interest in tribal history and tribal service.

Historically, affectional ties are treasured among the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Just as family members, extended family, and respected elders contributed to the education of tribal children prior to the mid-1800s, study participants expressed how affectional ties with family, inter-generational relationships, high school faculty members, and university faculty and staff contributed to their success. This theme, in particular, seems to promote determination within participants. Even those that failed to establish a sense of belonging while in public education have been able to garner affectional ties in order to bolster their determination. Affectional ties may also serve to foster the structures of autonomy and self-discipline among study participants. The three

participants that experienced tumultuous familial relationships at one time or another are forgiving and express a willingness to mend broken relationships with errant caregivers. In other words, they are proficient at establishing affectional ties with others that are willing and, in so doing, establish their own social competence.

One structure which transcended the gender and age of the participants was faith. Unanimously, they articulated a belief in one Creator, one God, regardless of their faith tradition. This belief was fostered by the sense of belonging that participants felt while engaged in faith-based activities. They have all successfully found a niche in their selected churches in which they feel respected, secure, and supported. Affectional ties of family members and inter-generational friends have also contributed to their spirituality. All seven participants recounted positive interaction at church events during their childhood and all are still actively engaged in activities as adults.

The following chapter provides a reflective summary of the data analysis and distinguishes it from prior research. The results have been examined to answer the question: *What are resiliency factors of Oklahoma Cheyenne and Arapaho university students?* The chapter concludes with implications for common education, higher education and further research.

Chapter 7

Reflective Summary and Implications for Future Research

Reflective Summary

This dissertation is an exploration of the experience of transitioning from common education to higher education for a specific group of participants and their experience thus far in their pursuit of a college degree. Participants in this study were seven Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal members, classified as university freshmen and sophomores. Participants were asked a series of questions in a two-interview format so that they could relate their experiences in their own words. After the recorded participant interviews were transcribed, data from each were organized into textural themes which sought to describe *what* the participants experienced. Two core themes, and their underlying subsets, were identified: 1) A Sense of Belonging through a) tribal affiliation, b) high school activities, c) university activities; and 2) Affectional Ties through a) family, b) inter-generational experiences, c) high school faculty, d) university faculty and staff. Appendix B visually summarizes these themes. Employing imaginative variation, I reflected upon the possible structures that illustrate the underling dynamics of the experience of resiliency in transitioning from high school to college in order to describe *how* participants, as a group, experienced the events (Moustakas, 1994). Identified structures include: 1) determination, 2) autonomy, 3) self-discipline, 4) spirituality. A summary of these structures is located in Appendix C. In this reflective summary, I will compare the identified themes and structures with previous research.

Five of the seven participants reported that they felt a sense of belonging while in public schools, one that went beyond simply finding a social niche, but in which they felt a sense of commitment to their school and, in return, felt that they were positively recognized for their abilities. This coincides with the research conducted by Pittman and Richmond (2008) in which participants placed importance upon such recognition. These five participants included the four traditional university students and one of the non-traditional students. They unanimously enjoyed being affiliated with a team through athletics and group centered extra-curricular activities. Two of the non-traditional university students, both of whom dropped out of high school and completed their General Equivalency Diploma (GED) years later, desired this sense of belonging in high school but never attained it. One stated longingly, "I felt like I had no real purpose for being there. . .when I look back at the yearbooks, I'm not in any of the team pictures. . .I wanted to be part of the team, but I never could." These comments correlate with Espinoza's (2011) recent findings that school sports provide high school students with strong support systems, both emotionally and academically. "These forms of support can foster coping strategies such as problem-solving skills, interpersonal and networking adeptness…that help low-income and minority students overcome institutional barriers…to successfully advance in the school system" (Espinoza, 2011, p. 21).

This need for a sense of belonging extends well beyond high school and into higher education. In the university context, new students who have a sense of belonging tend to experience less stress and have a more positive outlook on their

self-efficacy and experience an easier adjustment to college (Tobolowsky, 2008). This was the case for all seven participants, with no discrepancy among the traditional and non-traditional students. All have grown in social competence during their transition to the university setting. This socialization, the social support of others and the opportunity to engage in social activities on university campuses, is a dominant force in the retention of college students (Kelly, Kendrick, and Newgent, 2007; Pittman and Richmond, 2008). The participants credited such organizations as the Native American H. O. P. E. Club (Honoring Our Peoples' Existence), the Campus Activities Board, and the Student Government Association for providing them with this sense of belonging.

Tribal affiliation has fostered a sense of belonging for all seven participants as well. Three of the four traditional students have been involved in tribal activities since childhood, as where all three of the non-traditional students. The only male participant in the study, a traditional college student, began establishing this tribal connection for himself while in high school. All participants are now actively involved and express the desire to continue. This attribute of belonging is reflective of HeavyRunner and DeCelless' (2003) idea of cultural resilience, the "cultural factors that nurture, encourage, and support Indian student, families, and communities" (p. 15) and of Hopson's (2009) view of cultural competence as the ability to recognize the role that cultural differences and similarities play in supportive environments. Recent findings by Paris (2012) continue to emphasize the importance of integrating students' cultural histories with school practices in a way that values both contexts. Participants continue to

grow in bicultural efficacy as they view their tribal heritage as a sense of strength for their academic pursuits (Huffman, 2001; Okagaki, Helling, and Bingham, 2009). As stated by one participant, "Tribal education has helped me understand that Native Americans, regardless of where they've come from in the past, have a place in this world like everybody else."

Affectional ties with family and inter-generational mentors are resources which promote resiliency among children, adolescents, and young adults. Werner (2005) found that resilient children are adept at developing these relationships. Positive role models often include supportive grandparents or other substitute caregivers. This theme was echoed by three of the four traditional college students, who recounted strong affectional ties with at least one parent or grandparent. Indeed, all of the young women spoke of the influence a grandmother had on their childhood, taking them to pow wows and educating them on the traditions of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. The three non-traditional university students were all largely influenced by affectional family and inter-generational ties as well, benefitting from the American Indian cultural protective factors identified by HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003), "family strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity, and support networks" (p. 16).

Affectional ties with high school faculty members contributed to the successful transition from high school to the university setting for five of the seven participants: the four traditional students and one of the non-traditional students. Werner (1996) refers to the "interplay of individual, environmental, and

situational factors" (p. 19) that promote resilience among school children and adolescents, specifically identifying concerned teachers as a key protective factor. Benard (1997) and Hopson (2009) describe teachers who are student-centered, those who recognize students' strengths and encourage development of these strengths and those who embrace culturally responsive pedagogy. Paris (2012) encourages educators to move beyond culturally responsive, to culturally sustaining, pedagogies in order to support young people in both traditional cultural competence and dominant cultural competence. The five study participants provided specific, personal examples, including high school teachers, counselors, and administrators, many of whom remain in contact with the university students via social media such as Facebook.

Affectional ties with teachers and administrators continue at the collegiate level. The three non-traditional students, in particular, were quick to identify an administrative assistant who had led them through the application and enrollment process at the university, alleviating many fears and feelings of insecurity. The four traditional students were more adept at attending the mass new student orientation activities and did not rely solely on one person to assist them with initial enrollment. However, all participants spoke favorably of the accessibility of academic advisors and university faculty members, components which directly correlate to HeavyRunner and Marshall's (2003) call for institutions of higher learning to provide key protective factors in order to foster student retention.

Previous studies have examined Native students on predominately Caucasian campuses. Taylor (1999) and Peacock (2006) both identified the

structure of determination as a key persistence factor for these students. Collectively, all seven research participants claimed this structure for themselves as well, even within a university that houses an expanding tribal college. They strive to quench their thirst for knowledge, regarding the history of their people, their new-found academic interests, and career goals. Perhaps this is not a surprising structure for the four traditional students; one might assume that determination is an easy structure with which to identify for those whose public school experience was favorable and whose transition to higher education went smoothly, although favorable and smooth experiences are likely not the genesis of individual determination, as the preceding descriptions have identified. Interestingly, two non-traditional students, both of whom dropped out of high school, expressed the same fervent determination. One stated, "My GED proved to me that I didn't need to feel intimidated about education even though I had dropped out." The second said, "There was something there that kept driving at me to go…I always had the feeling that I want[ed] to go to college." Their determination may have evolved from the connection of their individual attributes, external sources of support, and opportunities at major life transitions, such as the acquisition of their GED. Espinoza (2011) calls such opportunities "pivotal moments" (p. 4) because they transform students' perspectives about education, supporting the earlier work of Werner and Smith (1977) which noted that repeated connections with external sources of support did increase children's competence and efficacy, enabling them to rebound as adults.

Five of the seven research participants evoked the structure of autonomy. They exhibited a strong sense of identity, the ability and desire to act independently, and the belief that they can exert control over their own environment (Benard, 1993; Berliner and Benard, 1995; Brown and Brown, 2006; Krovetz, 1999). The structure of autonomy was prevalent among the three participants who had experienced the greatest about of familial upheaval during their childhood, including extreme poverty, alcohol addiction, and drug addiction. Correlated with Werner's research (2005), this would indicate that these participants had effectively accessed external resources, by finding role models in extended family members, mentors, friends, and teachers. One stated, "I'm not the kind of guy to ask for support" and another echoed the sentiment by saying, "No one is going to do it for me. I have to do it myself."

The structure of self-discipline is pervasive among research participants. While three of the seven have embraced this aspect of resiliency their entire lives, the remaining four have developed this structure as they transitioned from high school and as they continue to persist in higher education. Self-discipline is a highly personal structure. For some it is practical, how they effectively organize their days so that obligations are met, "[It's] a quiet motivation…more of apply your best." For others it is more encompassing, a daily struggle to progress towards their goal, "That's where those priorities come in. I know what comes first" and "My mind is on my child and getting it together." Grotberg (1995) described this structure of self-awareness and self-discipline as an ongoing process, whereby individuals become "willing to be responsible for what I do. .

.control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous. . .finding someone to help me when I need it" (p. 3).

Religious faith is a protective buffer which transcends age and gender. Werner and Smith (1992) found that the structure of faith is not confined to a particular denomination and these research participants reinforced that finding. All seven participants, regardless of age or gender, described a firm spiritual foundation for themselves, professing to a variety of faith traditions, including Mennonite, Indian Mennonite, Baptist, Indian Baptist, Methodist, and the Native American Church. HeavyRunner and Marshall (2003) contend that cultural, spiritual protective factors have contributed to survival throughout generations of adversity. "Spirituality includes our interconnectedness with each other (relationships), the sacredness of our inner spirit, our efforts to nurture and renew ourselves daily (prayer), balance and harmony (awareness), and our responsibility to be lifelong learners (growth)" (p. 16).

Implications

In middle school and high school, a sense of belonging and affectional ties is clearly derived from elements beyond classroom instruction and academic achievement. The participants in this study unmistakably indicated that they achieved a sense of belonging and developed affectional ties through a variety of school activities and interactions with peers, faculty, and staff. This holistic perspective requires school personnel to assume the responsibility of addressing a myriad of students' needs within their contextual setting in an effort to educate them intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Students who feel that school

personnel have made a personal investment (Frick, 2008) in them may be more adept at navigating the transitional period between the junior and senior years of high school and the freshman and sophomore years of college (Pittman and Richmond, 2008). Although the idea that feelings of belonging positively impact university student retention (Tinto, 1997), most institutions are still struggling with how to go beyond traditional campus activities and social offerings to best foster this theme. Important inquiries for future research might address the connection of university-implemented summer bridge programs and its correlation to student resilience.

Summer bridge programs support students' academic progress and assist them with the emotional and physical adjustments of transitioning from the high school setting to that of the university. Typically, bridge programs offer intensive coursework for four to five weeks over the summer and use an integrated approach of academic and social components to assist students. Participation in such programs may be offered to students who show potential for success in college but who are judged to lack academic or social readiness (McCurrie, 2009). Wathington, et al (2011) have published preliminary reports that bridge participants who were allowed to focus on academic deficiencies during this timeframe, with the assistance of tutors and mentors, went on to attempt the first college-level math course at a significantly higher rate than their peers. Interventions which occur later in students' lives, such as bridge programs, take on added significance, because these students tend to have small support networks and tend to exhibit fewer help-seeking behaviors (Espinoza, 2011). Additional

longitudinal studies regarding late interventions, such as bridge programs, are warranted.

A second implication may be relevant for the field of teacher preparation, licensing coursework, and professional development. The preparation of classroom practitioners is paramount because "they are the most consistent point of contact with students" (Espinoza, 2011, p. 208) and, as credentialed teachers, they have successfully navigated the transitional waters from common education to higher education. Classroom teachers have mastered the intellectual and social opportunities for which their students now strive (Kozol, 2005). Appropriate training in multicultural and relational issues will enable teachers to develop the culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy necessary to assist Native students (Hopson, 2009). It will enable them to build trusting classroom climates, serve as advocates, and transmit necessary educational knowledge and skills to their students. Appropriate future research may revolve around a more purposeful teacher preparation component that educates pre-service teachers on how to provide economically and educationally challenged students with the tools necessary for transitioning to a post-secondary setting. In the context of the university setting, educational policy makers may wish to implement more research to determine a correlation between culturally relevant and responsive teaching and assessment practices of faculty members and the success of Indigenous students.

Educational research on the topics of transition and resilience reinforce the need for school leaders to foster a sense of belonging and social competence

among secondary and university students. By providing external sources of support for young adults, such as Upward Bound programming and Bridge initiatives, educational leaders may promote the necessary resilience that students need for completing formal coursework leading to high school graduation and for continued success during the freshman and sophomore years of college. With sustained effort on the part of educational leaders and policy makers, frameworks for success may be provided for all aspiring students.

References

Adams, D. W. (1995). *Education for extinction: American Indians and the boarding school experience, 1875-1928.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Anguiano, R.P.V. (2004). Families and schools: The effect of parental involvement on high school completion. *Journal of Family Issues, 25*(1), 61-85.

Benard, B. (1993). Fostering resiliency in kids. *Educational Leadership, 51*(3), 44-48.

Benard, B. (1997). *Turning it around for all youth: From risk to resilience.* New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED412309)

Berliner, B & Benard, B. (1995). *More than a message of hope: A district-level policymaker's guide to understanding resiliency* (ERIC Documentation Reproduction Service No. ED387 946). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Bray, B. (1997). Refuse to kneel. In A. Garrod & C. Larimore (Eds.), *First person, first peoples* (pp.23-42). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Brendtro, L.K., Brokenleg, M., Van Bockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future* (ED332292). Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). Beyond the deficit model in child and family policy. *Teachers College Record, 81*(1), 95-104.

Brown, J. H. & Brown, D. (2006). Resilient leadership and why "at risk" is at risk. *Education Digest, 71*(5), 24-28.

Cohn, E. & Geske, T.G. (1992). Private nonmonetary returns to investment in higher education. In W. Becker & D. Lewis (1992). *The economics of American higher education.* Boston, MS: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. (2006). *Constitution of the Tsistsistas-Hinonoei.* Retrieved from: http://www.c-a-tribes.org.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Daniel, M. & Ackerman, S. (2010). American Indians and Alaska natives. *Encyclopedia of Public Health.* Retrieved from http://www.enotes.com/public-health-encyclopedia/american-indians-alaska-natives.

Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H.B. (2006). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy: Longitudinal association between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 19*(4), 653-664.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Drummond, K.V. & Stipek, D. (2004). Low-income parents' beliefs about their role in children's academic learning. *The Elementary School Journal, 104*(3).

Engel, B. (2007). Eagle soaring: The power of the resilient self. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing, 45*(2), 44-49.

Espinoza, R. (2011). *Pivotal moments: How educators can put all students on the path to college.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Farquhar, R. H. (2000, October). Preparing high school students for success in university education. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Organization for Quality Education, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Feinstein, S., Driving-Hawk, C., & Baartman, J. (2009). Resiliency and Native American teenagers. *Reclaiming children and youth, (18)*2, 12-17.

Franklin, A. J. (2009). Reflections on ethnic minority psychology: Learning from our past so the present informs our future. *Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology, 15*(4), 416-424.

Freeman, T.M., Anderman, L.H., & Jensen, J.M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *Journal of Experimental Education, 75*(3), 203-220.

Frick, W. (2008). *The viability of a professional ethic for education: Perspectives from the field.* Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag.

Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty, *American Behavioral Scientist, 34*(4), 416-430.

Goodenow, C. (1993b). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools, 30,* 79-90.

Goodenow, C., & Grady, K. E. (1993). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education, 62,* 60-71.

Greene, R. R. (2002). *Resilience: Theory and research for social work practice.* Washington, DC: NASW Press.

Greene, R. R., Galambos, C., & Lee, Y. (2003). Resilience theory: Theoretical and professional conceptualizations. *Journal of Human Behavior in Social Environment, 8*(4), 75-91.

Grotberg, E. H. (1995). *A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the human spirit.* Birmingham: University of Alabama, Birmingham, Civitan International Research Center.

Guillory, R. M. & Wolverton, M. (2008). It's about family: Native American student persistence in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79*(1), 58-87.

Gutierrez, K. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43,* 148-164.

Hao, L. & Bonstead-Bruns, B. (1998). Parent-child differences in educational expectations and the academic achievement of immigrant and native students. *Sociology of Education, 17*(3).

HeavyRunner, I. & DeCelles, R. (2002). Family education model: Meeting the student retention challenge. *Journal of American Indian Education, 41*(2), 29-37.

HeavyRunner, I. & Marshall, K. (2003). Miracle survivors: Promoting resilience in Indian students. *Tribal College Journal, 14*(4), 14-18.

Hinz-Penner, R. (2007). *Searching for sacred ground: The journey of Chief Lawrence Hart, Mennonite.* Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House.

Hoig, S. (1980). *The peace chiefs of the Cheyennes.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Hopson, R. K. (2009). Reclaiming knowledge at the margins: Culturally responsive evaluation in the current evaluation moment. In K. E. Ryan, &

J. B. Cousins (Eds.), *The SAGE international handbook of education evaluation* (pp. 429-446). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Huffman, T. (2001). Resistance theory and the transculturation hypothesis as explanations of college attrition and persistence among culturally traditional American Indian students. *Journal of American Indian Eduction, 40*(3), 1-39.

Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* W. R. Boyce Gibson, Trans.). New York: Collier Books. (Original work published 1913)

Jackson, A.P. & Smith, S.A. (2001). Postsecondary transitions among Navajo Indians. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40*(2), 28-47.

Janesic, V. J. (1998). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, mothodolatry, and meaning. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 35-85). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, Inc.

Kelly, J. T., Kendrick, M.M., & Newgent, R. A. (2007). Strategies for student transition to college: A proactive approach. *College Student Journal, 41*(4), 1021-1035.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America.* New York: Broadway Paperbacks.

Krovetz, M.L. (1999). Resiliency: A key element for supporting youth at-risk, *Clearing House, 73*(2), 121-23.

Lee, J.S. & Bowen, N.K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(2), 193-218.

Mann, H. (1997). *Cheyenne-Arapaho education, 1871-1982.* Niwot: University Press of Colorado.

Mann, H. (2010). Words from the circle: Native American quotes [Internet Message Board]. Retrieved from http://www.nativevillage.org/Libraries/Quotes/Native%20American%20Quotes3.htm.

Masten, A.S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227-238.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McCurrie, M. K. (2009). Measuring success in summer bridge programs: Retention efforts and basic writing. *Journal of Basic Writing (CUNY), 28*(2), 28-49.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). *Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008.* Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/nativetrends/tables/table_1_2basp.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1996). *Nontraditional undergraduates: Trends in enrollment from 1986 to 1992 and persistence and attainment among 1989-90 beginning postsecondary students.* Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/web/97578.asp.

Noley, G. B. (2008). Writing American Indian history. *American Educational History Journal, 35*(1), 95-101.

Norris, T., Vines, P. L., & Hoeffel, E. (2012). *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010.* (Report No. C2010BR-10). Retrieved from the United States Census Bureau website: http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf.

Okagaki, L., Helling, M. K., & Binham, G. E. (2009). American Indian college students ethnic identity and beliefs about education. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(2), 157-176.

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods.* (3rd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Peacock, T. (2006). Native students speak: What makes a good teacher? *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education, 17*(4), 10-13.

Pittman, L. D. and Richmond, A. (2008). University belonging, friendship quality, and psychological adjustment during the transition to college. *Journal of Experimental Education. 76*(4), 343-361.

Porter, K. (2002). *The value of a college degree.* Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED470038)

Pritchard, M.E., Wilson, G. S., & Yamnitz, B. (2007). What predicts adjustment among college students? A longitudinal panel study. *Journal of American College Health, 56*(1), 15-21.

Reclaiming Youth International. (2012). *The Circle of Courage Philosophy.* Retrieved from http://www.reclaiming.com/content/about-circle-of-courage

Rowley, L.L. & Hurtado, S. (2002). *The non-monetary benefits of an undergraduate education.* University of Michigan: Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences.* (3rd Ed). New York: Teachers College Press.

Shenton, A. K. & Hayter, S. (2004). Strategies for gaining access to organizations and informants in qualitative studies. *Education for Information, 22,* 223-231.

Shirley, V.J. (2004). On the right path. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 21(9),* 88-91.

Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The Sagedictionary of qualitative inquiry.* (3rd ed.) Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Solomon, D., Watson, M., Battistich, V., Schaps, E., & Delucchi, K. (1996). Creating classrooms that students experience as communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 24,* 719-748.

Taylor, J. S. (1999). *America's first people: Factors which affect their persistence in higher education.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, San Antonio, TX.

Taylor, Pl, Parker, K., Fry, R., Cohn, D., Wang, W., Velasco, G., & Dockterman, D. (2011). *Is college worth it? College presidents, public assess value, quality and mission of higher education.* Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education 68*(6), 599-623.

Tobolowsky, B. F. (2008). Sophomores in transition: The forgotten year. *New Directions for Higher Education, 144*, 59-67.

Tseng, V. & Seidman, E. (2007). A systems framework for understanding social settings. *American Journal of Community Psychology. 39,* 217-228.

United States Census Bureau. (2010). *State & County QuickFacts.* Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/40000.html.

VanBreda, A. D. (2001). *Resilience theory: A literature review.* (Report No. MPI/R/104/12/1/4). Pretoria, South Africa: South African Military Health Service, Military Psychological Institute, Social Work Research & Development.

Wathington, H. D., Barnett, E. A., Weissman, E., Teres, J., Pretlow, J., & Nakanishi, A. (2011). *Getting ready for college: An implementation and early impacts study of eight Texas developmental summer bridge programs.* National Center for Postsecondary Research.

Werner, E. E. (1996). How children become resilient: Observations and cautions. *Resiliency in action: A journal of application & research, 1*, 18-27.

Werner, E. E. (2005). What can we learn about resilience from large-scale longitudinal studies? In S. Goldstein & R. B. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (pp. 91-105). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Werner, E. E. & Smith, R. S. (1977). *Kauai's children come of age.* Honolulu, HI: The University Press of Hawaii.

Werner, E. E. & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood.* London, England: Cornell University Press.

Werner, E. E. & Smith, R. S. (2001). *Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery.* London, England: Cornell University Press.

Wingspread Conference (2004). Wingspread Declaration on school connectedness, *Journal of School Health,* 74, 233-234.

Yan, W. (1999). Successful African American students: The role of parental involvement. *The Journal of Negro Education, 68*(1) 5-22.

Zucker, R. A., Donovan, J. E., Masten, A. S., Mattson, M. E., & Moss, H. B. (2009). Developmental processes and mechanisms, *Alcohol research & health, (32)*1, 16-29.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

The initial interview establishes the context of the participants' experience and allows them to give specific details of their experience. The initial interview will be 90 minutes in length.

1. Tell me your life story.
    - How involved are you with tribal activities?
    - What's it like to be a member of your family/your tribe?
    - What do you enjoy?
    - What's school been like for you?

2. Please go into more detail about your high school experience.
    - Was high school enjoyable or difficult for you?
    - What were the best and worst parts about high school?

3. Tell me about your experience in selecting a university, applying, and getting enrolled.
    - Was the process easy or difficult?
    - Who provided the most assistance and encouragement?
    - Were there difficulties you encountered?

4. What have your first semesters been like here at the university?
    - Who has provided the most assistance and encouragement?
    - What have been challenges and obstacles for you?

The second interview will be scheduled three to seven days after the initial interview session. This interview will also be 90 minutes in length. Participants will be asked to reflect on the meaning of their experiences.

1. Given what you told me about yourself, explain what constitutes success and failure for you? According to you what are the causes of both?

2. Based upon what you told me about your high school experience, explain how and why you graduated.
    - Did your involvement in tribal activities impact your perspective on success and failure in school?
    - Did your involvement in tribal activities contribute to either?
    - Has someone specifically influenced you?

3. Describe how you felt as you made the transition from high school to the university.
    - Was there a particular person or organization that helped you?
    - What were some specific challenges and opportunities for you?

4. Thinking about your first semesters here at the University, who or what has enabled you to continue?
    - Do you want to continue? Why?
    - What are your immediate and long-term goals?
    - How do you believe you will achieve them?

The University of Oklahoma®

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION - IRB

IRB Number: 13312
Approval Date: February 08, 2011

February 08, 2011

Ruth Boyd
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
1805 Sandstone Ave
Weatherford, OK 73096

RE: Resiliency Identified: Success Factors Of American Indian Students

Dear Ms. Boyd:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. This study meets the criteria for expedited approval category 6, 7. It is my judgment as Chairperson of the IRB that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

Consent form - Subject Dated: February 02, 2011
Other Dated: February 02, 2011 Recruitment letter/mail
Other Dated: February 02, 2011 Recruitment letter/email
IRB Application Dated: February 02, 2011
Survey Instrument Dated: January 24, 2011 Interview protocol
Protocol Dated: January 24, 2011
Other Dated: December 10, 2010 SWOSU IRB letter of approval

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form. All study records, including copies of signed consent forms, must be retained for three (3) years after termination of the study.

The approval granted expires on February 07, 2012. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request an IRB Application for Continuing Review from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin, Ph. D
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study Being Conducted Under the Auspices of the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus

Project Title: Resiliency Identified: Success Factors of American Indian Students
Principal Investigator: Ruth Boyd, Graduate Student
Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an American Indian student classified as either a freshman or sophomore at SWOSU.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is:

To learn how you experienced the transition from high school to the university and any factors that have helped you thus far.

Number of Participants
About seven people will take part in this study.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Participate in an initial interview session and one follow-up interview session. The two interviews will be spaced 7-10 days apart.

Length of Participation
Each interview will last 90 minutes.

This study has the following risks:
None

Benefits of being in the study are
None

Confidentiality

In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include Dr. William Frick and the OU Institutional Review Board.

Compensation

You will not be reimbursed for you time and participation in this study

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. ___ Yes ___ No.

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at

Dr. William Frick
University of Oklahoma
College of Education
820 Van Vleet Oval
Norman, OK 73019
frick@ou.edu
405.325.2447

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature Date

Appendix B

Data Matrix

Identifying Clusters and Resulting Themes

Theme 1: Sense of Belonging			
	Cluster 1 Through Tribal Affiliation	Cluster 2 Through High School Activities	Cluster 3 Through University Activities
Traditional Students			
Mary	1. Attended C & A Head Start 2. Pow wows (since childhood) 3. Sun Dance 4. Jingle Dance 5. Lineage to Chief Black Kettle 6. Traditional food 7. C&A Dept of Ed	1. Enjoyed school 2. Basketball 3. Softball 4. Track 5. Student council 6. Academic team 7. "Being part of a team"	1. Dormitory activities 2. Campus Activities Board 3. University orientation leader 4. Participation in Dawg Days
Teri	1. Pow wows (since childhood) 2. Cloth Dance 3. Sun Dance 4. Two Tribal Affiliations Cheyenne &	1. Enjoyed school 2. Basketball 3. Volleyball 4. Track 5. Softball 6. Fellowship of Christian Athletes	1. Baptist Collegiate Ministries 2. Dormitory activities 3. Honoring Our Peoples' Existence Club (H.O.P.E)

	Arapaho Ponca 5. Recreation, Exercise, & Sports for the Elders and Children of our Tribes (R.E.Sp.E.C.T.) 6. Father and paternal grandfather are Sun Dance Medicine Men 7. Serves as "runner" at pow wows for her mother 8, Represents H.O.P.E. Club as princess at pow wows	(FCA) 7. Family, Community, and Career Leaders of America (FCCLA) 8. Key Club 9. Native American Club	4. Elected H.O.P.E. Club princess
Greg	1. Pow wows (as a young adult) 2. Dance 3. R. E. Sp. E. C. T. 4. Tribal conference in Los Angeles, CA	1. Enjoyed school 2. Wrestling 3. Track 4. "I loved them all."	1. None listed 2. Want to "become more involved."
Sue	1. Pow wows (since childhood) 2. Jingle dance	1. Enjoyed school 2. FCCLA	1. Dormitory activities 2. New Student Orientation Days

			activities
Non-traditional Students			
Linda	1. Pow wows (since childhood) 2. Tribal workshops and conferences	1. Gymnastics (prior to suspension and dropping out of high school)	1. Student Government Association 2. H.O.P.E. Club 3. Oklahoma Native American Students in Higher Education (O.N.A.S.H.) workshop
Cara	1. Pow wows (since childhood) 2. Native American Church 3. Father was a "roadman" and instructed her in the ceremonies 4. Participates in ceremonial meetings	1. Basketball (prior to dismissal from the team and dropping out of high school)	1. H.O.P.E. Club 2. O.N.A.S.H. workshop
Sara	1. Pow wows (since childhood) 2. Instrumental in reviving Hub City Pow wow 3. Provides traditional foods for pow wows	1. Enjoyed school 2. Basketball	1. H.O.P.E. Club 2. O.N.A.S.H. workshop

	4. Sews traditional garments for pow wows 5. Shawl dance		

Theme 1: Affectional Ties				
	Cluster 1 Family	Cluster 2 Intergenerational	Cluster 3 High School Faculty	Cluster 4 University Faculty and Staff
Traditional Students				
Mary	1. Immediate family: mom, dad, sister, maternal grandmother 2. "More cousins than a tree has leaves." 3. Cousin was C&A princess	1. Maternal Grandmother 2. Respect elders 3. Church quilting group 4. "Little rusty needle" 5. Traditional methods of food prep	1. High school counselor 2. Math/science teacher	1. None listed
Teri	1. Immediate family: mom, six siblings 2. Raised by maternal	1. Maternal Grandmother 2. Visited all university choices with her. 3. Traditional	1. High school counselor 2. Science teacher	1. Tribal College Advisor 2. Baptist Collegiate Ministries

	grandparents	methods of food prep 4. "Give-aways" at pow wows		Director 3. University Resident Assistants 4. English Comp I professor
Greg	1. Immediate family: mom, dad, brother	1. None listed	1. High school counselor 2. English/Psych teacher 3. Chemistry teacher	1. University instructors 2. "very interactive, very positive, very helping"
Sue	1. Immediate family: dad 2. Strong maternal grandmother influence	1. Maternal grandparents 2. Aunts, uncles, and cousins 3. Maternal grandmother took her to tribal events 4. FCCLA service learning project with elderly citizens	1. History teacher 2. Biology teacher	1. University instructors 2. University writing lab
Non-traditional Students				
Linda	1. Immediate	1. Intergenerational	1. Gymnastics coach (prior to	1. Tribal college

	family: mom	church members 2. President of the tribal college (mentor)	transferring to boarding school) 2. No other support	advisor 2. President of the tribal college
Cara	1. Immediate family: mom, dad, six siblings	1. President of the tribal college (mentor) 2. Intergenerational tribal members at ceremonies	1. No support	1. Tribal college advisor 2. President of the tribal college 3. University instructors; particularly the course College Success
Sara	1. Immediate family: mom, step-father, siblings 2. Raised by maternal grandparents	1. Raised by maternal grandparents 2. President of the tribal college (mentor) 3. Practices Cheyenne language with elders 4. Teaching Cheyenne language to younger generation.	1. Public school superintendent 2. All teachers and coaches	1. Tribal college advisor 2. President of the tribal college

Appendix C

Data Matrix

Identifying Core Structures

Core Structures					
	Determination	Autonomy	Self-Discipline	Spirituality	General Awareness
Traditional Students					
Mary	1. "Graduating was important to me." 2. "I wanted to show how hard I had worked all those years." 3. Will be first generation college graduate	1. Short-term and long-term goals 2. "College is for everybody, even Indians. It's just a matter of applying yourself and working hard."	1. "For success, there has to be self-discipline." 2. A "quiet motivation" from parents 3. High school team sports and activities	1. Indian Mennonite Church	n/a
Teri	1. Success is "doing the best that I can do in everything I do." 2. Will be first	n/a	1. Focus on high grades to complete baccalaureate degree and then pursue graduate	1. Southern Baptist Church 2. Baptist Campus Ministries	1. Stays abreast of contemporary topics regarding tribal activities.

	generation college graduate		degree. 2. High school team sports and activities	3. Falls Creek church camp 4. Fellowship of Christian Athletes	
Greg	1. “There’s a reason I’m not going to fail college.” 2. “I don’t see myself failing. Personally, that is not in my vocabulary.” 3. “The more [people] that succeed, the more it strengthens the tribe for the future.” 4. Will be first generation college graduate	1. “I’m not the kind of guy to ask for support.” 2. Applied for Gates Millennium Scholars Program with no help from parents.	1. Asked to be placed in Honors courses in high school. 2. High school team sports and activities	1. First United Methodist Church 2. Attended Youth Force	n/a
Sue	1. “The cause of success is hard work,	1. “Knowing who you are	1. High school	1. German Mennonite	n/a

	determination.” 2. Motivated by a nephew with special needs to pursue early childhood education 3. Will be first generation college graduate	and who your people are.” 2. Not being dependent on others 3. “You don’t have to learn everything from other people.”	activities	Church	
Non-traditional Students					
Linda	1. Completed General Education Diploma 2. Birth of first child propelled her	1. Self-confidence necessary to achieve goals.	n/a	1. Indian Baptist Church	n/a
Cara	1. Completed General Education Diploma 2. Will be first generation college graduate 3. Striving to	1. “There is something they feel inside of them that they have to find out, they just have to.” 2. “No one is going to	n/a	1. Native American Church 2. In later life, Southern Baptist Church	n/a

	be asset to others	do it for me. I have to do it myself."			
Sara	1. Will be first generation college graduate 2. "Keep trying and trying to do better. I always got my job done." 3. Motivated by a cousin that graduated from college in mid-life	1. "It's just up to me."	1. Formerly worked as a Certified Medication Aide. "You had to finish your job, you just can't stop." 2. "Discipline. Keeping my mind on what I know I've got to do."	1. Southern Baptist Church	n/a