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Expressions of Native Resiliency: Experiences during the 1950s and 1960s

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived educational experiences of American Indians who grew up during the 1950s and 1960s, known as the termination period in American history. The research for this phenomenological narrative study consisted of three interviews each with eight participants who were willing to share their personal experiences from this selected time in history. Ten themes were uncovered: chaos brings balance, challenge to become bi-cultural, the importance of teachers, teachers as support systems, one's spirituality, tribal influences, influences of economic resources, cultural awareness and value, relevant curriculum and recruitment of Native teachers. By uncovering these stories, it is hopeful that today's educators are more informed of the need for culturally responsive pedagogical curriculum and instruction.

Many Americans view the Indian as a romantic or comic figure in American history without any contemporary significance (Stedman, 1982). This limited view of the American Indian may have occurred in part because as Michael Yellow Bird (1999) suggested that throughout history, stories have often been viewed through the eyes of the dominant society of the white man. Consequently, many Americans are unwilling to develop a *critical consciousness*, which is best defined by Freire (2003) as the awareness of connections between individuals, their experiences, and the social contexts in which they are embedded. Lack of critical consciousness often has resulted in historical injustice and lack of empathy.

American Indians occupy a singular position in the United States, unlike that of any other ethnic minority group, by virtue of having been the first people to occupy the land that is considered to be America (Prucha, 1988; Wilkins, 2002). This unique relationship stems from the fact that in the early history of the United States, American Indians were not considered as part of the nation (Wilkins, 2002). When the opportunity arose, there were also federal efforts devoted to civilizing American Indians by persuading them, using whatever means necessary, to surrender their tribal culture and adopt the habits and lifestyles of European-Americans (Snipp, 1989).

In a democratic and culturally diverse society, it is necessary to understand multiple perspectives that emerge from within cultures and their social interactions involved (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994). In order to fully understand the historical context and meaning of the American Indian experience with implications for

education, it is imperative to not only understand the effects of *assimilation* and *acculturation,* but to listen to the voices of the persons who have lived and are living the experiences now (Garrett, 1995).

Garrett (1995) defined *assimilation* as the enculturation with mainstream American values, behaviors and expectations. *Acculturation* has been described as the act of being reared with traditional American Indian values and later acquiring the behaviors necessary for mainstream American culture (Little Soldier, 1985).

Most of the current literature on American Indian education and cultural responsive pedagogy seems to focus more on enumerating the problems, rather than identifying possible solutions and understanding the wealth of contributions this culture could provide to society as a whole (Pewewardy, 2002). These understandings do not allow individuals to make appropriate sense of the actions, ideas and products of the American Indians, nor do they allow relating to interacting with people within their diverse society and throughout the world. Characterized by *institutional racism* in the public school arena, there has been a long history of misunderstanding traditional American Indian cultural values and beliefs on the part of the dominant culture (Deloria, 1991).

Institutional racism is described by Singleton and Linton (2006) as occurring when organizations such as a school or district remains unaware of issues related to race or more actively perpetuates and enforces a dominant racial perspective or belief (p. 41). According to Spring (2004b), *institutional racism* is defined as the power

systems use to control the behavior of nonwhites. Throughout history men have attempted to overcome factors of oppression to attain their full humanity despite the dominant pressures from those who are in power (Freire, 2003b). The historical experiences of dominated groups have resulted in the development of basic distrust of the major institutions in American society (Ogbu, 1992; Spring 2004a). Thus, this group represents a concept of culture, which is not fixed or linear but rather it representing only one facet of the totality of one's human experience.

When research is approached from a culturally sensitive perspective the complexity of an ethnic group's culture, as well as its varied historical and contemporary representations, is acknowledged. The use of culturally sensitive research approaches within American Indian communities facilitates telling their stories that represent their perspectives and place in history (Carter, 2003).

This study uncovered the stories of successful American Indians who experienced either boarding school or traditional public school during the 1950s and 1960ss. The use of narrative inquiry non-fiction story method enabled these stories to be revealed by those who were willing to share their perspectives from this time of termination and self-determination through active participation.

Problem Statement

Education has always played a vital role in the American Indian culture; however, during the termination period of the 1950s and 1960s American Indians were not all allowed to attend

traditional public schools. Those that did attend public schools were often ostracized or forced to conform to the mainstream or dominant society's interpretations (Demmert, 1994). Schools, in carrying out early government language policies and their efforts to better socialize the Indians, were also instrumental in destroying the Native language (Demmert, 1994).

Religious schools and Bureau of Indian Affairs forbade the use of native languages in the school environment and punished students for speaking their own languages (Spring, 2004a). Research indicates that American Indian children living in poverty and on reservation schools tend to lag behind in academic performance more than other ethnic group (Quality Education for Minorities, 1991). Despite the trauma inflicted upon the indigenous peoples of North America during the 1950s and 1960s they have survived and some have become very successful.

A U.S. Department of Interior Survey (1999) targeted parental involvement and lack of preparedness as the issues of greatest concern by teachers. Ninety percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native students attend non-tribal, public schools (Henson, 2002; Sparks, 2000). In these schools, they have some of the highest dropout rates of any minority group and a disproportionate number are identified as requiring special education services (Grossman, 1995). Several reasons for these high dropout rates have been suggested, including that some students are ridiculed for pursuing a better education and were accused by their peers of just trying to "act white" (Sue & Sue, 1990, p. 60). However, current research has indicated that high school dropout rates have improved from a high rate of 40% to a

rate of 23% in American Indian populations as compared to the white students at 11% (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau., 2000, p. 120). American Indian high school students in the school year 2004-2005 graduated at a rate of 50.6 percent compared to a non-minority student rate of 77.6 percent (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008).

Many of the problems faced by American Indian populations can be traced back to the conflicts between their desire to perpetuate their cultural heritage and the pressure to assimilate into the larger society. All ethnic groups wrestle with this conflict to some extent (Breault, 2003). One complicating factor for the American Indians is that there is an incredible diversity of cultures that falls into the category of American Indian. Rather than preserving one language and way of life, they must preserve hundreds of relatively complete cultures (Pewewardy, 2000). As educational leaders begin to incorporate more American Indian historical, cultural and linguistic studies into their curriculum and adopt more appropriate teaching styles that focus on the American Indian students, they hope to stimulate the students' interest in their own academic progress (Sparks, 2000).

Definitions

Operational definitions for this qualitative study included several concepts as indicated below:

Lived experiences. The term lived is described in this study as being immersed in a contemporary

society where the educational climate was unstable and discriminating for those of different cultures, specifically the American Indians (Howard, 1999 p. 35).

Institutional racism. Institutional racism has been defined as the power systems to control the behavior of nonwhites (Spring, 2004b).

White privilege. Macedo and Bartolome (2000) have defined white privilege as the management of tokenism and exercised authority in effort to acquire, accumulate and conquer the globe (p. 29).

Culture. Tillman (2002) defined culture as a group's individual and collective ways of thinking, believing and knowing, which includes their shared experiences, values, forms of expression, social institutions and behaviors (p. 4). Spring (2004b) defined culture as the socially transmitted behaviors, patterns, beliefs and institutional thought of a group of people (p. 3).

General culture. The general culture refers to what the majority of people view as cultural characteristics of their society (Chomsky, 2003; Spring, 2004b).

Dominant culture. The dominant culture has been described as the most powerful members of a society (Chomsky, 2003; Spring, 2004b).

Oppressive situation. Freire (2003) has defined an oppressive situation as any in which "one exploits or hinders another for pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person" (p.40).
Hegemonic behaviors. By way of definition within social dominance, hegemonic behaviors are those that tend to be disproportionately represented at the higher positions of authority within social institutions (Brookfield, 1995, p. 15).

Termination Period. The federal policy by which all the special arrangements made by the government for the American Indian in the field of education, welfare etc...created a system of virtual dependency implemented by a top heavy system of administrative bureaucracy, were to be ended (Brookeman, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

A variety of research has focused on American Indian students who have experienced limited educational opportunities, societal stigmas, and unemployment as adults (Alfred, 1999; Griffin, 2000; Pewewardy, 1998). The purpose of this study was to explore the *lived* educational experiences of American Indians who grew up during the 1950s and 1960s, known as the termination period in American history and how these experiences influenced their career decisions. This study investigated the following questions:

What are the lived experiences of American Indians attending boarding school?

What are the lived experiences of American Indians attending traditional public school?
What factors influenced American Indians in making their career decisions?
What recommendations do American Indians make for culturally responsive teaching?

Education as key

Thinking of Indians as children who only needed to be protected from evil and sent to school, McKenney concluded that under the conditions of isolation and education, Indians could be civilized in one generation (Spring, 2004a; Viola, 1973). The key to fulfilling the humanitarian goals of removal would be education (Reyhner, Lee, & Gabbard, 1993).

Boarding schools. As the government geared its educational efforts, Hoxie (1984) noted that there was an early optimism regarding how easy it would be to assimilate Indians into the general population by giving them a White man's education for a few years in a boarding school. This optimism was based largely on the apparent success of students of the first off-reservation boarding school established in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (Hoxie). The Carlisle Indian School was operated by its founder, Richard Pratt, whose primary goal for educating the Indian children was to instill a White man's work ethic through manual labor and to immerse them in the Baptist doctrine until "thoroughly soaked" (Spring, 2004a, p. 28).

Between the founding of the Carlisle Indian School in 1879 and 1905, 25 non-reservation

boarding schools were opened throughout the country (Spring, 2004a). In *American Indian Education*: A history, Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder (2004) demonstrated connections between the establishment of boarding schools for Indians and the history of Black education in the South. In 1889, Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote a bulletin on Indian Education that outlined the goals and policies of Indian schools that included teaching colonial patriotism and allegiance to the U.S. government.

As boarding schools returned more and more students to reservations that seemed to blend back into the population rather than transform it, criticism of Indian education and especially boarding schools increased (Reyhner et al., 1993). During the 1920s, a variety of investigators of Indian schools were horrified by the conditions they found Indian children subjected to. In addition to a poor diet and extreme manual labor, overcrowded conditions contributed to the spread of tuberculosis and trachoma. There have been many obstacles for the American Indian family to confront and overcome. The use of boarding schools was one of many obstacles that proved to be one of the most detrimental experiences ever encountered by the American Indian family (Diller & Moule, 2005). Many of the social problems that are prevalent today stem from these boarding school experiences.

Public schools. Henry Dawes, Massachusetts senator and chair of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, valued the Indian communal way of life and saw the need to educate rather than exterminate these populations so he sponsored the General Allotment Act in 1887 (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). Under this allotment act, it was hoped that

Indians would attend public schools however; too frequently the contracts that were made with public school districts were not benefitting the Indian students. These contracts required Indian students to be educated alongside white students and to be treated the same way, but this was not always done, with the result that some contracts were ended. Indian students were often too poor to buy clothes for school and did not speak the English language well enough to do the required classwork (Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

In 1934, a new allotment emerged called the Johnson-O'Malley Act which allowed the federal government to pay states for educating Indians in public schools. After several years under the JOM Act, funding soon became an issue, which led to the establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and state operated schools (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). According to Szasz (1977), these state accredited schools seemed to be more responsive to the needs of Indian students with added vocational programs, yet did little to offer Indian culture courses.

Modern educational reforms

Perhaps, the greatest threat facing Indian education at the beginning of the twenty-first century is the push for outcomes assessment, state and national standards, and the associated increased use of high-stakes testing, such as NCLB and individual state exams, in all facets of education but especially grade promotion. Young minority students who do poorly on exams are often placed in special education and remedial programs instead of culturally appropriate ones. High school students get tracked into non-college

bound curricula based on achievement tests and are denied diplomas when they cannot pass state exit exams (Oakes, 1985; Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

Cultural responsive pedagogy

For educators and policy makers to understand why the various programs in Indian schools exist and why certain curricula are more likely to lead to success, they must know about the past failures and successes of Indian education. They must know the roots of Indian resistance to schooling and the educational empowerment that Indians are striving for.

Some theorists have recommended that indigenous people reject schooling because it destroys their cultures and communities (Prakash and Esteva, 1998). But others see community-controlled schools as the only way that Indigenous people can protect their lands and communities from the onslaught of mainstream society (Enos, 2002).

According to Smith (1991), *culturally responsive pedagogy* has been described as the educational instruction most beneficial to all students in a positive manner. Teachers who go beyond teaching, who learn about their students' cultures, can change their students' lives for the better. This type of teaching has used the child's culture to build a bridge to success in school achievement (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Smith). Such an endeavor has required a degree of cultural literacy often absent in mainstream classrooms, whereas non-native teachers teach the vast majority of American Indian students (Smith). No attempt to remedy problems in education can occur apart from an understanding that the United

States has been so unsuccessful in producing educational equity (Razack, 1998).

Fuller (1996) has noted that cultural responsive pedagogy involves providing the best possible education for all children, preserving their own cultural identity, in order to ensure meaningful relationships with other people. In his book, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education,* Cajete (1994) has advocated developing an environmental educational process, which lays the foundation for American Indian life and learning. This also has included living productive lives in the present society without sacrificing their own cultural perspective (Banks & Banks, 1995; Cajete). According to Gay (2000), high quality educational experiences will not exist if some ethnic groups and their contributions to society are ignored or demeaned.

Methodology

The design of this study was a qualitative phenomenology using a narrative reporting approach to uncover the stories of American Indians who experienced either boarding school or the traditional public school during the 1950s and 1960s and to identify factors that contributed to their personal and professional success. The use of inquiry enabled these stories to be revealed by those who were willing to share their perspectives from this selected time in history of reorganization, termination, and self-determination.

The use of a phenomenological study was selected because it identifies the "essence" of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by the selected participants in this

study. Understanding the "lived experiences" marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and themes for meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the researcher "brackets" his/her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Nieswiadomy, 1993).

In addition, phenomenological studies respond to historical events (like that of assimilation and termination) whose cultural and political ramifications continue to be enacted in the present (Casey, 1996). Phenomenological design yields a study that provides a common feel for life in a different cultural group so that readers truly gain an understanding about a particular culture (Neuman, 2000).

This study used the direct approach where the researcher asked participants to reflect on, and talk about, their subjective experiences of phenomenon in interviews. The researcher transformed these subjective constructions through interpretation to re-present them, faithfully, as objective constructions, which increases potential for transferability (Van Maanen, 1990). Thus, Van Maanen states another way of looking at this perspective is to think of being- in-the-world, known through senses and shared meanings. It is only the unlit, pre-cognitive, background of phenomenon that enables us to assume but not to explore (Van Maanen).

The intent of this study was to record the educational experiences and success factors of a cultural group of people focused on a specific era. Since "dynamic social conditions and people's

interpretations continue to change, [and] there is an overabundance of stories still waiting to be told and studied" (Casey, 1996, p. 240), narrative inquiry is the vehicle selected for capturing these stories.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommended that individuals should "listen to the bits and pieces of narrative form handed down to us" (p. 425). These bits and pieces exist through relationships that unite researchers, participants and an audience. Kaser, Mundry, Stiles, and Loucks-Horsley (2002) noted that it is through these relationships and the research that we see the possibility for individual change. The change referred to here is not necessarily a physical change but more of an emotional and psychological change by the participants. For example, stigmatized experiences provided the motivation to succeed in school for all the participants.

In reality, every society is the sum total of the people who work within a given space each day and the structures that organize them-policies, practices and the culture. According to Neuman (2000) and Crotty (1998), humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective-we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally.

Pre-Interviewing/Selection Process

As a result of the researcher sharing the topic of attending school during the 1950s and 1960s,

fourteen individuals were identified as possible participants. A selected sample from a state organizational meeting involving the Louisiana Indian Education Association and the Coushatta Tribe's Annual Field Day began the selection process. The Coushatta tribe sponsors an annual gathering involving outdoor events that represent their cultural heritage. Examples range from bell dancing to Palmetto basket weaving.

All fourteen participants for the pre-interview process were e-mailed four questions to identify eligible participants. The four questions used in the selection process were:

- What U.S. Tribal affiliation do you claim?
- Would you be willing to share your educational experiences as part of this research study?
- Did you attend K-12 school during the 1950s-1960s?
- Did you attend boarding school, parochial school or public school?

Findings suggested that six of the fourteen were not eligible to participate in the research after their responses to question two. The remaining eight participants were then selected for the larger phenomenological study. This selection process resulted in a greater representation of tribal affiliation, gender balance and educational experiences.

The Participants

The participants for this study after the eligibility screening from the pilot study included eight American Indians who grew up in various

geographical locations during the 1950s and 1960s. All eight participants selected to be identified by using their own names.

Of the 14 candidates, eight were selected by a criterion-referenced questionnaire provided by the researcher through e-mail. Neuman (2000) asserted that purposeful sampling provides for greater triangulation of data collected. It is called for when the researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation that is part of exploratory research. Also, Creswell (2003) noted that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select cases that can show different perspectives on the problem. This may allow the researcher an opportunity to select "ordinary cases, accessible cases or unusual cases" (p. 62). Purposeful sampling relies on the discretion and judgment of the researcher to select cases to study that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions.

In this study, this sampling technique meant selecting individuals who were able to contribute to understanding the school experiences of American Indians in the 1950s and 1960s by answering the following primary questions during the first of three interviews: Why did you select education or related discipline as a career? Explain how attending boarding school influences your career choice? Explain how public school influenced you career choice? Explain how your tribal background influenced your career choice? Do you feel valued and respected by your peers in your chosen career? All eight of the participants selected for this study are American Indians who grew up during the 1950s and 1960s and are considered to be successful both personally and professionally. The definition of successful

depends on the individual. According to contemporary standards, six of the eight participants are not wealthy or famous, but they are valuable contributors in the educational arena.

Pat

Pat is a Houma Indian female from Louisiana who has had many years of educational experiences involving political affairs. She has her Master's Degree and was the former Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs in Baton Rouge and is also the Co-Chairperson for Louisiana Indian Education Association. She has been instrumental in coordinating many educational opportunities and grants for the American Indian populations within the state of Louisiana.

James

James is a Navajo Indian male originally from northeastern Arizona who works for Custer National Park in Montana as an archeologist. He has obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Biology and his Master's Degree in Environmental Science. James has also worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in various environmental management projects and at the time of our interviews was assisting FEMA and several of tribes in the New Orleans area with the preservation of historical records and artifacts from the storm damage.

James C

James is a Tewa Indian male from the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. He has attended business school, worked with corporations as a skilled

carpenter and is currently manager/war chief of the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. He continues to keep active in cultural festivals events by creating authentic drums with detailed artwork in the traditional methods used from the elders and native materials within the Pueblo.

Joseph

Joseph is a Cheyenne River Lakota Sioux male from Eagle Butte, Montana who works for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and is involved in crisis management programs as a liaison for the American Indian populations. He is currently living in Washington, D.C.; however, his job takes him across the country to many localities to meet these American Indian populations and their specific needs as in wildfire management or landslide recovery programs.

Kirby

Kirby is a Houma Indian male from Louisiana who works within the public school system for special programs and the Office of Indian Education involving American Indian students. He has obtained his Bachelor's Degree and Administrative Certification and works as a bi-vocational Methodist preacher part time. He has shared his interests involving the state census and identification of American Indians as a race and not just as *other*.

Corine

Corine is a Houma Indian female from Louisiana who formerly worked in Office of Indian Education from its beginning stages in the mid 1970's. She worked in this capacity for twenty-eight years only desiring to see education

improve for American Indian children. Corine has obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Business and is currently retired but stays very active and involved with the Louisiana Indian Education Organization. She has shared her interests in the awareness of and educational opportunities that are needed for the Indian children of Louisiana.

Joan

Joan is a Mohican Indian female from Wisconsin. She has obtained her Bachelor's Degree in pedagogical instruction and has been teaching in the public school system for more than twenty years. She was honored with the Teacher of the Year Award for Indian Education in 2005. She remains active in promoting tribal traditions for young people, even though she has never personally experienced education on the reservation.

R. C.

R.C. is a Navajo/Ute Indian male from Arizona. He is a world premier performer of the Native American flute. He originally was trained in classical trumpet and music theory and later explored the traditional cedar wood flute. Since 1983, he has released over thirty-five albums with the Canyon label. In addition to his solo performances, he has worked with William Eaton, Paul Horn, James DeMars and Phillip Glass. R.C. has explored new musical settings including new age, world-beat jazz and classical. His career has been shaped by a desire to communicate a sense of Native American culture and society that transcends the common stereotypes presented in mass media.

The Setting

The researcher conducted two of a total of three interviews with all eight participants, which was obtained face-to-face at the location desired by the participant, typically at their home or office. Creswell (2003) explained the research should be conducted in the natural setting which "enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants" (p. 181). The third interview was conducted either face-to-face, telephone, or email, whichever was desired by each individual participant.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to examine the meaning and significance of these lived educational experiences, which were possible factors that led these eight participants to become successful despite societal stigmas and lack of equal educational opportunities. While the use of a phenomenological study is considered to be a way of discovery and understanding the "essence" of these lived experiences, each of the stories presented different perspectives. Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm, a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide their queries (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These assumptions are related to the nature of reality, the relationship of the researcher, the role of values, and the process of research.

In this study, the nature of reality was extremely subjective seen through multiple lenses embedded within the participants' stories. As for the relationship assumption, the researcher attempted to lessen the distance between her and

those being researched. This can be problematic and qualitative researchers must be aware that they have to put themselves into the study and at the same time claim to have some expertise (Richardson, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985) elaborate the role of values in which the researcher acknowledges that research is value laden and that biases are present. Additionally, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) warned researchers, "these relationships are vitally important in the process of qualitative research" (p. 189).

Data Collection

Data for this study were obtained through three interviews and post-interview emails or phone conversations with each participant about lived educational experiences and their successful career choices. The data collection process for this study was complex. Each participant was given the opportunity to choose his or her date, time, and location for these interviews. This was difficult at times because the participants lived in five different geographical locations: Montana, Washington, D.C., Louisiana, New Mexico, and Wisconsin.

The researcher conducted a semi-structured, open-ended interview; audiotaped the interview, and later transcribed the interview to assist in the collection of the data. This study employed personal journal writing by the researcher, archival documents from the participants and research interviews as the primary field texts. Each form of field text provided a layer of complexity that contributed to understanding each

participant's tribal uniqueness and educational experiences (Creswell, 2003).

Field Text

To assist in the data collection the researcher kept a journal, as entries are a "powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 102). Journal writing, in the field, can offer the inquirer an opportunity to reflect on what is felt during the research experiences. By simply asking the participant to tell about her/his past educational experiences, the inquirer embraces her role as the conduit for transposing her/his words into thick, rich descriptive stories using triangulation of data.

In addition to the individual interviews, other data was collected from archived documents and reference material in relation to the six tribal affiliations researched. Some of this archival data retrieved by the researcher included tribal records from six of the eight participants explaining their governing laws, past land deeds, and their schooling requirements.

Audio-taped information

All orally generated stories were recorded if participants did not object because of the cultural beliefs of American Indian populations. All eight participants allowed the researcher to record each of the face-to-face interviews for analysis of accuracy and member checked. Upon completion of the research all recorded material was disposed of as disclosed by researcher to each participant prior to the initial interviews.

Treatment of the Data

According to Polkinghorne (1995), a narrative configuration in qualitative analysis was well suited for this study due to the complexity of each participant and their unique experiences. Polkinghorne (1995) clearly delineated that narrative reporting walks the line between literature and scientific discourse. The primary strategy utilized in this research to ensure external validity was the provision of rich, thick, detailed descriptions so that anyone interested in transferability would have a solid framework for comparison (Merriam, 1988).

Three techniques to ensure reliability were employed in this study. First, the researcher provided a detailed account of the focus of the study, the basis for selection, and the context from which data was gathered (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Second, triangulation or multiple methods of data collection and analysis were used which strengthens reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam, 1988). When analyzing data, researchers collect descriptions of events and experiences and synthesize them by means of similar themes or stories.

Phenomenological researchers are required to ascertain similar themes that display the linkage among the data as the stories unfold. Finally, data collection and analysis strategies were reported in detail in order to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methods used in this study. All phases of this research were subject to scrutiny by an external auditor who was experienced in qualitative research methods.

Organization of themes

After the transcriptions from the audiotapes were made, the researcher considered the transcript as narrative field texts and developed themes from the texts. These transcriptions allowed for the participants' voices to be heard and were accomplished by organizing the transcriptions into story elements that supported common themes. This was done for both individuals and participants as a group through the process of *free variation* which defines the "how and what" of the experience involved (Moustakas, 1994). Free variation emerged within the dialogue and tones of the participants. The use of free variation allowed the researcher to analyze the phenomena in multiple ways, which allowed for differentiation between essential and unessential elements and their relationships (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Induction

The next stage in analyzing phenomenological data was the inductive process known as *intuiting,* or inducting (Rose, Beeby, & Parker, 1995). This research relies on the utilization of tacit knowledge (intuitive or felt knowledge) because often the nuances of the multiple realities can be appreciated most in this way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, the researcher relies on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience and uses systemic methods of analysis as advanced by Moustakas (1994). Marshall and Rossman (1999) emphasized the role of intuition in research allowing for more creative thought and reorganization without pre-determined outcomes

Description

The final stage of data analysis was description or transformation (Rose et al., 1995). The description process allowed the researcher to write a full description of the phenomena, analyze the themes, and express the feelings of these experiences to others. In order to prepare for the description process the researcher divided the original protocol or line of questioning into statements or horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Meanings were formulated from the significant statements such as: chaos is part of the human experience, bicultural refers to establishing themselves within the greater society, spirituality referring to personal empowerment and economic resources: rural vs. reservation. These meanings were arrived at by reading, re-reading and reflecting upon the significant statements in the original transcriptions to get the meaning of the participant's statement in the original context.

The aggregate of formulated meanings was organized into clusters of themes. These clusters represent themes that emerged from and are common to all eight participants' descriptions such as: a necessary chaos for balance, challenge to become bi-cultural, importance of teachers as support systems, spirituality, tribal influences, the influence of economic influences, cultural awareness and value, relevant curriculum and recruitment of native teachers. **Provisions for Trustworthiness**

The phenomenological study portrays the meaning of lived experiences about a concept, a story, or phenomenon. As Polkinghorne (1995) explained, a phenomenologist explores the mind and human experiences. He further described

phenomenology as the science of experience. This study accomplished this in a reliable and trustworthy manner by maintaining critical listening skills throughout the research process. In order to provide trustworthiness, the researcher used three techniques suggested by Creswell (2003), which included member-checking, presentation of confusing information, as well as the paper trail as previously mentioned.

Confidentiality

Anonymity is an issue in any inquiry and this option should be guaranteed throughout the entire inquiry process for participants if they prefer anonymity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The participants that were selected for this study chose not to be anonymous. However, the researcher remained cautious throughout the entire inquiry process because persons with whom we are engaged may be changing and perceive themselves as vulnerable. At the conclusion of the interview process, all eight of the participants indicated that their own names would be used in the study.

Cultural Sensitivity

Culturally sensitive research approaches use the particular and unique self-defined experiences of a specific race and/or group of people (Tillman, 2006). As suggested by Tillman the researcher should be committed to, and accept the responsibility for, maintaining the cultural integrity of the participants. First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, values, needs and desires of the participants. For example, Sleeter (1992) wrote "that what White people know about the social

world is generally correct, but for only understanding White people" (p. 211).

Findings

Question One: The Boarding School Experience

Five of the eight participants that were interviewed attended a boarding school with both positive and negative experiences embedded in their stories. The one single theme for this question culminated around: 'a necessary chaos for balance.'

The theme for this question centered on the Chaos Theory which Wheatley (1999) described as necessary to bring balance in life. Most individuals have experienced chaos at some point in their lives. According to Wheatley, "chaos is part of the human experience and when we reflect on these times we emerge into a stronger sense of who we are and our purpose" (p. 119).

In addition, participation and cooperation are essential to our survival in this interconnected world (Wheatley). James and Joseph both commented that even today they see unequal treatment from society, especially in the educational setting. In retrospect, both remarked that education is the only way to overcome past inequities. Yet, they both mentioned that boarding school did very little to prepare them for the future and all of the many roadblocks they would encounter growing up in the Anglo society. James and Joseph both described their experiences in a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding school as being in prison without just cause. Joseph mentioned that boarding school was too structured and rigorous yet, it provided a sense of motivation.

Corine mentioned that her transition was difficult and unsettling to her family but necessary in order to obtain a high school education. American Indians, especially females, living in Louisiana during the 1950s and even up to the early 1970s were only provided an eighth grade education by missionary schools. Upon completion of the eighth grade, they were forced to get a job or travel out-of-state to further their education.

Question Two: The Public School Experience

Six of the eight participants that were interviewed attended a traditional public school at some point with positive experiences well established in their stories. Two themes emerged: 'challenge to become bi-cultural' and the 'importance of teachers.'

Challenge to become bi-cultural.

James, Joseph and Pat all viewed public school as an opportunity for the future. Joseph and Pat perceived education as a way to overcome economic hardships and poverty in their families. Joseph shared his thoughts of public school and the necessity to perform in academics in order for him to participate in athletics. He commented that participating in athletics was "the dangling carrot" in education for him. Public school helped me socialize as an individual to the rigors of living and working in the dominant culture's world.

Pat shared her thoughts of public school and the necessity to perform in academics in order to attend college and break the cycle of poverty that existed in her family. At age seven and being the

oldest child, she had to read the mail for her parents because both were illiterate. Excelling in academics and helping others learn to read was the "motivator" in education for her.

Most of my elementary school memories are those of the mistreatment from students. I was teased and snubbed because of my poverty and my appearance, which to most I was perceived as a light-skinned Black child.

James viewed his experience as an incredible library of subjects to explore as one does an uncharted island. He elaborated, "As you continue to explore, you open new horizons and you also begin to realize there is a whole new world outside and within your grasp to enjoy." James' public high school experience provided the opportunity to see the world through a different lens, which has been invaluable in his professional career as an environmental biologist for the National Parks Service.

The importance of teachers

James, Pat, and Joan commented that teachers were the ultimate catalyst in performing in school. All three could identify a specific teacher as being that source of encouragement.

Pat elaborated on her first grade teacher as being instrumental in her educational success. One good memory that Pat recalled from her elementary experience was the encouragement from her first grade teacher. "Her kind and motivating words encouraged me to perform, despite the teasing and discrimination from the students. This teacher took me under her wing and

provided the academic support that was so desperately lacking in my household."

Corine recalled her first five years of education in attending a missionary school as beneficial. When she first began school, Corine started with Methodist missionaries who came to Dulac, Louisiana in 1950. She attended this missionary school from the first to fifth grade. Corine loved all of her elementary teachers and desired to be one to help her people just as the missionary teachers helped her. She remarked, "Education held the key to bringing her people out of poverty." Joseph, Pat and Corine all saw education as a way for empowering their tribes both economically and socially.

Question Three: Factors for Career Decisions

Six of the eight participants that were interviewed stated that their external support systems and economic resources were the most significant factors in determining their careers. Three of the participants also mentioned their spirituality as an important factor. Four themes emerged: external support systems, spirituality, tribal influences, and influence of economic resources.

External Support System

James, Joseph, Kirby, Pat, Corine, and Carlos all commented that their external support systems were invaluable to their career choices and opportunities in life. James, Pat, and Corine specifically mentioned teachers as the guiding force in pursuing their educational dreams. James

remarked, "Kind words of praise and constant encouragement challenged me to excel."

Kirby commented that he could not see himself worthy as teacher material because his parents held teachers in such respect until the principal of the Indian school took him fishing and showed concern about his education. Another teacher took him hunting and shared the same concerns as the principal did. Even with the support of these two respected persons Kirby still did not feel as though he could cross the line of being an Indian to being a teacher who was Indian until after his college experience.

Carlos said that elders of other tribal affiliations and others from the greater American society have influenced much of his work. Much of what he does comes from stories and admonition from the elders that life is about serving others. Many of the people that Carlos has worked with who are elders of either the Cheyenne or the Kiowa Tribe have remarked that he shares information, which is useful in transforming Indian people to coexist within the "greater society".

Spirituality

All eight participants mention the existence and importance of religion whether it was referred to as "The Great Spirit" or "The Creator". Kirby, Pat, and Corine elaborated more about the "Great Spirit" as the most significant influence in fulfilling their life purposes.

Tribal Influences

Joseph and James C. identified their tribal influences playing a role in determining their career decisions. Joseph commented that nepotism and casinos are why "I stayed away from tribal politics." I see the casinos for Indians as "the nail in the coffin" and the disintegration of the cultural way of life on the Lakota Reservation.

James C. mentioned being reared by his grandparents and his tribal elders as a priceless experience in any society. "I had no real parental guidance other than my elderly grandparents as a young child and so I had to grow up rather quickly and become self-sufficient to survive in the dominant world. As a pueblo male one was expected to develop skills that would benefit the tribe. I was taught by my grandfather how to make adobe bricks. The skills my grandfather and other tribal members provided were so invaluable to me in becoming a productive member of my tribe."

Influence of economic resources

James, Joseph, Kirby, James C., Corine, and Carlos all discussed how geography and the lack of economic resources played a significant role in determining their career paths. Carlos noted that both the locality and geographical culture were significant factors, which influenced his involvement as a liaison educator for the tribal communities. James, Joseph, and Kirby all commented on the lack of economic resources within their tribal geographical locations in which they had to overcome with two being on a reservation and the other in a rural setting.

Question Four: Recommendations for Culturally Responsive Teaching

All eight participants had suggestions on how public education could better serve the needs of the American Indian students. Seven of the eight suggested that educators develop a sense of cultural awareness of American Indians and their own uniqueness. Three themes emerged: *cultural awareness and value, relevant curriculum*, and *recruitment.*

Cultural awareness and value

Joseph, Kirby, James C., Pat, Corine, Joan, and Carlos all expressed the view that educators need to develop a sense of understanding and cultural awareness of American Indians and their place in American history. Joseph emphasized, "Real understanding and acceptance of a culture is important to both parties involved." James C. remarked, "Knowing who you are as an individual and as a culture is the most valuable asset one possesses."

Kirby and Corine pointed out that educators need to build American Indian students' self-esteem before any real learning can occur in the classroom. Kirby commented, "How can you make children feel valued when they are labeled as 'others' rather than American Indians?"

Pat mentioned that the plight of American Indians who attend college could be alleviated if educators really valued all cultures equally. She emphasized that educators need to develop an awareness of who American Indians truly are and accept their cultural differences in order for our 21st century society to progress.

Relevant curriculum

Joseph, Pat, Corine, and Joan all said that educators need to develop better lessons in teaching factual information about American Indians rather than using only the European version of American history. Joan and Corine also said the assessment of students needs to match the child's cultural understanding and development to be reliable. Corine stated, "Until educators and administrators address the methods of assessment and low test scores, American Indian students will remain behind in education." Joseph remarked, "There needs to be a course for educators to discover the 'nuts and bolts' of the American Indian culture."

Recruitment

Kirby, Pat and Joan American Indians, declared Kirby, Pat and Joan, need to be more involved in the educational process to serve as positive role models. Joan's view was that "school districts with high percentages of Native students need to recruit Native teachers" to assist with tribal issues that arise through cultural misunderstandings. One of these misunderstandings is when most educators expect their students to pay attention and look at them when spoken to. For American Indian people, this is disrespectful and the children are punished. Another misunderstanding is assuming that all Indians are the same without any social or cultural differences. These misunderstandings seem to be more prevalent with the tribes who live on

reservations rather than in the rural settings within the greater society.

Participants noted how teachers touched lives as guides with skills and information, how mentors provided sound advice and became motivators who provided words of encouragement. Cultural awareness and value were vital to their existence within their tribal affiliation and in the greater society. All participants emphasized the importance of knowing who one is as an individual and as a cultural member of their tribal society. These findings provide insight into cultural equity.

One of the most revealing issues in the study was that each participant had a positive sense of who they were and the belief of interconnectedness to humanity and their outlook for necessary duality in the "greater society." This suggested that perhaps the most crucial point for educators to understand as they try to help American Indian students achieve academic success is the importance of cultural values and community-based beliefs where collaborative efforts supersede competition and the attainment of possessions (Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFromboise, 2001).

Educational Importance of the Study

As a civilization, credence must be given to all cultural beliefs and uniqueness. In turn, each human being should be given the equal opportunity to learn and to feel confident with his/her own identity. All perspectives should be considered and valued, as everyone contributes to the greater society. In developing culturally responsive pedagogy and emphasizing this in staff

development, educators can promote positive self-esteem and cultural value for all students (Hilberg & Tharp, 2002).

The participants in this study were primarily selected from specific time in history. Stories from their parents and children might provide additional data to reveal how their professional lives were impacted. Another beneficial exploration of successful American Indians would be to focus on one specific state and locate those American Indians who dropped out of school due to the lack of support systems.

These eight stories of successful American Indians indicate teachers are vital external support systems and acquiring duality may be necessary for establishing careers in the professional world. They also give insights into what and how those who teach American Indian children today should incorporate into the curriculum to encourage their students to achieve academic excellence.

Summary

The qualitative phenomenological methodology was appropriate to capture the honest feelings, attitudes, experiences, and emotions of eight American Indians involved in living during the termination period in the United States. For tribes that live on reservations, their struggles and inequities existed more so in the educational and environmental structures than the rural tribal communities. For instance, the Navajo, Lakota and Tewa Tribes all dealt with issues from the public school communities regarding policy.

The value of support systems was evident in all of the participants' stories. According to the

U.S. Department of Education (2001), parental involvement and lack of preparedness were two issues of greatest concern by teachers. Some felt as though their parents and tribal elders played more of a role in supporting and encouraging, while others stated it was a teacher that made the difference for them in pursuing their educational dreams.

Literacy was another factor for each participant's career success. They were imbued with the concept that no matter what cultural group one belongs to, communication and the basic understanding of one's cultural heritage was key to professional success. *The Kennedy Report* also identified schools as being essential to the social, cultural and intellectual health of communities as well as literacy, as being essential to the well-being of American Indian people (U.S. Senate Report, 1969). A final point beneficial to education that came from this study was an understanding that most American Indians believe collaborative efforts supersedes competition and the attainment of possessions.

Even though progress has been made for equitable opportunities in education and cultural awareness with establishing the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and other state organizations, there is still a great deal of work to be accomplished for all indigenous cultures to realize their significant contributions to the greater society in America.

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Expressions of Native Resiliency: Experiences during the 1950s and 1960s

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