The Role Traditional American Indian Values Play in Fostering Cultural Connectedness and School Connectedness in American Indian Youth: Experienced through a Blackfoot Way of Knowing Paradigm

by

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ABSTRACT

American Indian youth are experiencing a mental health crisis fueled by the lingering ramifications of experiencing a near cultural genocide. Scholarly literature indicates that American Indians have used their cultural values to survive the atrocities associated with colonization. The purpose of this Indigenous based mixed-methods action research project was to examine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The study was conducted through a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm and consisted of two distinct but related data collection efforts. The first sample consisted of formal and informal interviews with 26 American Indian elders as well as observation notes from attending and participating in American Indian ceremonies in order to discover the traditional values believed transferred during ceremonies, cultural activities, and traditional stories. The elder interviews resulted in identifying ten traditional values encasing spirituality displayed in the Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values. The second sample consisted of 41 American Indian youth attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The youth learned the values identified in the Blackfeet Education Standards "Hoops of Values" through a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm and completed measures to assess cultural connectedness and school connectedness. In addition, all students were interviewed to develop a more robust understanding of the role culture plays in cultural connectedness and school connectedness and to lend a Blackfoot youth perspective to a Blackfoot way of knowing. Quantitative data analysis showed that a

Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm significantly influences cultural connectedness but does not significantly influence school connectedness. In addition, analysis of the student interviews provided a Blackfeet youth perspective on cultural connectedness and school connectedness.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all the American Indian people denied their personhood at the hands of colonization.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Under present circumstances she is thrown in with others who consider her as an inferior race and whose influence will be morally bad for her" (Voucher of Disinterested Persons used as the basis for an application of a Native child to the Carlisle Indian Boarding School).

Introduction

In modern-day academia, scholarly research centered on American Indians or in American Indian communities is frequently met with suspicious intentions. I felt the suspicion firsthand and contemplated changing the direction of my study, but that changed one evening as I scrolled through a dissertation about how the Piegan view the natural world composed by La Pier (2015). The author offered an original interpretation about the relationships between the Blackfeet people and the natural world. My understandings about Blackfeet culture expanded exponentially during my study of her dissertation; understandings that I never considered during my time as the principal at the largest Piegan attended high school in Montana. I found her story fascinating and believable, and her struggle with whether she was authentic enough to be trusted to conduct a study about her people caused me both apprehension and excitement at the same time. Authentic, like the *Nitsitapiksi,* is a rich word that carries a deep meaning for a non-Indigenous scholar that cannot do the "re-righting" of history as argued by Smith (2012) and instead, must trust that by using ethnographic approaches and believing in the wisdom of cultural guides, that my dissertation will present an accurate accounting of a Blackfoot way of knowing.

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) discusses the notion of 'Trading the Other,' as it relates to Indigenous populations and Western Civilization. She explains that when 'Trading the Other,' the dominant group trades nothing with the less dominant group in exchange for their knowledge, culture, materials, and spiritual perspectives to fuel their commercial enterprises. Smith recognizes the fact that trade normally occurs between two parties who exchange things of value, but with 'Trading the Other' only the dominant party of the two benefits, leaving the marginalized group further oppressed without control over sacred knowledge and cultural practices. I contend that 'Trading the Other' is a commerce built on the dominant culture's advantages captured during colonization (Smith, 1999).

Decolonization is a complex process that not only looks at political structures but also identifies the importance of rewiring the mind, and the spirt so that the soul is cleansed (Battiste, Bell, & Findley, 2002), and rejects the idea that the cultural traits of the dominant culture are transferred to other cultures (Coleman et al., 2012). Scholarly research notes that a fundamental aspect of an Indigenous research paradigm is the commitment by the scholar to decolonize the word of the marginalized group. The core of an Indigenous view on research theories is that scholars should give voice to the worldviews of marginalized peoples in place of the dominant culture that incorporates all aspects of a non-Western based research model to honor the words of Indigenous people (Chilsa & Tsheko, 2014).

Smith (1999) and Pidgeon (2008) suggest that researchers have customarily preferred ways of knowing developed primarily by colonizers. Simply put, the colonizers' have privileged their ways of knowing and building knowledge. Scholars

claim that people come to know and understand their knowing through their relationships with other people, by connecting to their descendants through their spirituality, and their lived experiences (Chilsa and Tsheko, 2014). Favoring the foremost group's ways of knowing promotes a lack of consideration as it relates to marginalized groups' ways of knowing and constructing and pursuing knowledge is acutely interwoven throughout colonization efforts (Smith, 1999). The scholar suggests that validating Indigenous knowledge, including that Indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world which are unique, is just one of many challenges Indigenous populations face when trying to gain and retain control over those forms of knowledge.

A fallacy many scholars make when conducting studies with Indigenous populations is that they frame their study through a situated context instead of through a broader societal scope resulting in conclusions that merely support their own beliefs (Smith, 1999). Scholars commonly suggest that Indigenous people are the cause of their difficulties and they lack the knowhow to escape their struggles (Smith, 1999). Equally, the system is structured in a way that makes it challenging for those who reside in poverty, come from divergent cultures or are prejudiced to the dominant cultures values and who have a dearth of social, cultural and financial capital to progress through the educational system unscathed (Pidgeon, 2008).

I contend that before scholars can decolonize as called for by Smith (1999), they first need to decide if the purpose of education is to sustain the values of the dominant culture or if it also includes sustaining the values of Indigenous peoples. Bourdieu argued that socioeconomic inequality is primarily bolstered by formal education because the formal educational system validates the notion of a merit-based or gift-based social status

(Edgerton and Roberts, 2014). However, if one does believe that the purpose of education also includes the values of Indigenous children, they can then begin to contextualize how habitus and capital come to bear on the purpose of educating American Indian children and thus honor the power Indigenous people bring to their learning. Navarro (2006) posits that Bourdieu (1984) offered the equation: "[(habitus) (capital)] + fields = practices" (p. 16), to explain the relationships between the core concepts of his views of the social world. Bourdieu conceptualized habitus as a structure of robust, similarly situated characters, designed organizations susceptible to operate as guideposts which engender and categorize representations that can be independently changed without assuming a definite proficiency of the actions required to capture them (Swartz, 1997).

I suggest that habitus can be explained as the person's disposition structure—formed through an individual's lifestyle, principles, temperaments, and assumptions associated with specific social hierarchy that are acquired through the happenings and practices of ordinary life experiences. Habitus are those features of culture that are situated within the person or quotidian habits of persons, groups, civilizations, and countries. It comprises the sum of learned behaviors, proficiencies, panaches, preferences, and other non-descriptive facts that might be associated with a certain group. Habitus is one's corporeal and mental deportment as a result of habits formed across a time period. It grows an individual's frame of mind regarding humanity and effects how a person responds to the surrounding world. Habitus is an organizing characteristic of personhood and is caused by a sequence of influences on the person, like socioeconomic position, family, faith, educational attainment, and race. Namely, the attitudes, idiosyncrasy, philosophies, deed, and customs that an individual has encountered

throughout their life to form their personhood. Hence, a person is formed by the adopted influences across their lifespan. Habitus is fashioned by a person's understanding of their place in the social structure resulting in their ability to decide what is attainable or probable throughout life (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu, 1990b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Hill, 2011; Mills, 2008; Pidgeon, 2008).

American Indians have experienced a multitude of atrocities propagated by the dominant cultures' desire to maintain a power imbalance that fortifies their world building desires. Likewise, many Indigenous students have fallen victim to school systems based on a colonial mindset designed to assimilate them through the dominant cultures' values and experiences, which in turn, begins to set the schema of the habitus to mimic the values that the school seeks to legitimize and transfer willfully (Mills, 2008).

One scholar suggests that public education uses cognitive imperialism as a devious method of mental maneuvering to disrepute other people's values and knowledge in order to substantiate another groups' knowledge (Battiste, 1998). To be stripped of one's knowledge and identity is to be separated mentally and spiritually from one's ancestors. Therefore, decolonization is not merely a political mechanism, but rather a cognitive imperative that allows the spirit and minds of the colonized to be set free. (Battiste, 1998).

Schooling practices create a power relationship between the instructor and the learner. If the teacher can select or even influence the learning materials, as well as the pedagogy used to transfer the knowledge than the teacher or the system has created a power imbalance. To decolonize instructional materials and instructional practices is to disrupt the power relationship by allowing those being taught to have a say in not only

what is taught, and how it is taught, but also what materials are used to help transfer the knowledge (Battiste, Bell, & Findley, 2002). American Indian students having a history of encountering school practices based on Western ideologies suffer an eroding of their values as they adapt to the values of the dominant culture. Even though they are on the lower end of the class structure, underserved individuals are still apt to view the world as normal and deem it much more satisfactory than one might envision, particularly when the circumstances of the oppressed are examined from the perspective of the oppressor (Bourdieu, 1990a). One scholar coined the term habitude to explain an understanding of the relationships that contribute to societies growth and functioning (Wildcat, 2001d) that, hence, can be viewed as Indigenous habitus that is grounded on Indigenous dispositions and perspectives (Pidgeon, 2008). This perspective would lead one to believe that an Indigenous worldview can be understood as capital.

American Indian children are at a distinct disadvantage as they must learn to navigate school systems crafted to subjugate their culture, values, and languages in order to advance to higher education which is even less likely to honor the capital Indigenous students bring to their learning. Scholarly literature indicates that academic accomplishment is more related to cultural capital than aptitude and meeting academic benchmarks (Swartz, 1998). The definition of capital is understood to include both utility and power (Pidgeon, 2008). Bourdieu offered three types of capital (social, cultural, and economic) to explain the structures of the social world (Pidgeon, 2008; Mills, 2008). The offer of cultural capital is especially significant for American Indians who are led to believe that their way of knowing is primeval and their languages are believed inferior to the dominant culture (Battiste, 2009).

I wholeheartedly reject the colonizers' view in favor of viewing Indigenous peoples' values, traditions, and languages as cultural capital. Scholarly literature suggests that in order for children to obtain cultural capital there needs to be a commitment by parents, mentors, or hired professionals to make them aware of certain cultural characteristics (Swartz, 1998). This perspective would lead one to believe that acquiring cultural capital would seamlessly flow between generations of Indigenous populations, and that acquiring these forms of cultural capital are valued within the Indigenous community. I suggest that contextualizing acquisition and value, and how they contribute to situated power are critical components of decolonizing.

Indigenous communities frequently have a very diverse set of questions that outline the key instructive issue as being essentially around epistemic self-determination that incorporates dialect and culture and the challenges of creating academic approaches from a distinctive epistemological basis (Smith, 2005). One scholar indicates that Indigenous belief systems or habitus are founded on the notion that one must be able to comprehend one's connection to the world and is rooted in the individual's geographic origin and the culture of that place (Pidgeon, 2008). Battiste, Bell, and Findley (2002) learned during an interview with Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith that Indigenous people view and announce their personhood through their connections to their ancestors and their geography before attaching a name. Drawing from these perspectives I intentionally designed this study through a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm to focus on the experiences of the Blackfoot people as social beings in relation to how they view the world, and I used a Blackfoot worldview to guide this investigation.

Problem of Practice

Every day in America nearly 160,000 young people miss school because they experience bullying as either a victim, perpetrator, or bystander (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016; Thapa et al., 2013). Some studies contend that American Indian children are engaged in more bullying perpetration and bullying victimization than White youths (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Melander, Sittner Hartshorn, & Whitbeck, 2013; Taylor, Anderson, & Bruguier Zimmerman, 2014). In Montana, during the 2017 school year, 35% of all middle school students reported being bullied. The same survey indicated that over 41% of American Indian middle school students living on one of our seven reservations and nearly 37% of American Indian middle school students attending school in an urban center indicated they had experienced bullying (Montana OPI Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017). The data suggests that bullying is a national problem and American Indian children are encountering bullying at levels significantly higher than their white counterparts.

The 2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that 22% of the students attending Browning Middle School, located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, in the district at the center of my study reported experiencing face-to-face bullying. In addition, 17% indicated experiencing electronic bullying and 15% experienced bullying because they were believed to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In 2016, over 85% of the 4th and 5th grade students at Napi elementary school, the school at the center of my study, indicated that bullying was a severe problem at their school, and less half of the same students said that other students were kind to them or that they felt valued in their classroom (MyVoice Survey, 2016). The school at the center of my study reported 142

bullying incidents during the 2017-2018 school year and had experienced over 100 episodes during the 2018-2019 school year, with the 5th grade accounting for over 36% of all bullying reports during the 2017-2018 school year and 46% during the 2018-2019 school year. The data suggests that the students at the heart of my study are experiencing adverse mental health consequences as the result of encountering high levels of student bullying.

More than one out of every five students report encountering a bullying experience during school time (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Thirty-three percent of schoolchildren who experienced bullying at school revealed that they were bullied monthly during the school year (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Schoolchildren who reported being bullied indicated that, 13% were mocked, verbally abused, or insulted; 12% experienced harmful gossip; 5% experienced unwanted physical contact, or spit on; and 5% experienced intentional social isolation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016); The statistics suggest that female students encounter more bullying episodes while at school when compared to their male counterparts. Conversely, a higher proportion of male youths indicate being physically bullied or threatened with harm when compared with their female counterparts. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). The data presented by the National Center for Educational Statistics suggests that nearly a third of all students are encountering bullying behaviors.

Bullying Impacts

There is a robust association between student bullying and adolescent suicide-related behaviors, but this association is frequently impacted from other elements like

depression, violence, and abusing drugs or alcohol (Reed, Nugent, & Cooper, 2015). Schoolchildren who bully other youths, experience bullying themselves or observe student bullying are more probable to suffer severe mental health issues and report elevated levels of suicidal ideation when compared to schoolchildren who indicate no bullying victimization or perpetration (Center for Disease Control, 2014). A breakdown of several studies revealed that youths encountering bullying are 2.2 times more likely to have suicidal ideation and 2.6 times more likely to attempt suicide than students not facing bullying (Gini & Espelage, 2014). Scholars suggest that schoolchildren who are both victims and preparators of bullying are the highest risk group for unfavorable outcomes (Espelage & Holt, 2013). The misperception by young people that suicide is a normal reaction to experiencing bullying can cause youth to normalize the reaction (Center for Disease Control, 2014).

Bullied students indicate that harassment diminishes their self-worth, harms their relationships with classmates and their family, causes their academic grades to suffer, and decreases their physical health (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Schoolchildren who encounter bullying are two times as likely as their non-bullied classmates to experience adverse physical wellbeing such as headaches and stomachaches (Gina & Pozzoli, 2013). Children who have diminished self-worth and believe they deserved to be a victim of bullying have a greater likelihood of experiencing mental-health struggles, prolonged victimization, and maladjustment (Perren, Ettakal, & Ladd, 2013). Scholarly literature indicates that depressed people or people that are disposed to depression and who exhibit actions and features of depression have a higher risk of encountering social risk factors (Lee et al., 2018). Social risk factors include facing

negative social experiences such as being victimized through bullying or the fear of being publicly rejected by peers are closely associated with severe mental health issues (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Sweeting, Young, West, & Der, 2006).

Adolescent Development

Adolescence is commonly referred to as the developmental period between childhood and adulthood, traditionally beginning around 12 years old and continuing to 18 years of age, but current endeavors stretch the age of adolescents to include young adults as old as 25 years of age (Jaworska and MacQueen, 2015). The progression into and athwart adolescence is characterized by substantial modifications in social patterns and relationships as they gravitate towards their peers and become more focused with their social position (Dijkstra, Cillessen, & Borch, 2013; Lam, McHale, & Crouter, 2012). These social fluctuations align with aggrandizing occurrences of depression that begin to rise in early adolescence and continue to increase across adolescence (Costello et al., 2003; Hankin et al., 2015). Scholarly literature suggest that an adolescent's fear of rejection contributes significantly to their sensitivity to criticism and their adverse understanding of social clues experienced through interactions with their peers and threatens their need to be part of a social group (Liu et al., 2014).

Adolescents are at a stage in their moral development where they begin to consider others' feelings and think about societal issues of fairness and justice (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). Both positive and negative peer relationships can significantly impact their social and emotional development. As adolescents search for a sense of identity, exposure to bullying can be particularly harmful (Atkinson & Sturgis, 2003). Scholars learned from an investigation with a group of 6th grade schoolchildren that victims of bullying

indicated higher levels of depression, social anxiety, and loneliness as compared to perpetrators of bullying and noninvolved schoolchildren (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). Scholars suggest that youth who experience bullying during middle adolescence have diminished mental health and are at a higher risk for suicide (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). Some studies indicate that bullying involvement forecasts ensuing suicidal ideation and actions in adolescence (Klomek et al., 2013), and cause negative psychological consequences that make intervention crucial (Mayes et al., 2014).

I learned during an earlier study that child physiatrists contend that an adolescent's initial life experiences significantly impact their growth. The physicians suggest that physiological alterations to the emerging brain because of severe trauma cause intellectual shortcomings and interruptions in bodily, emotional, and social growth, and they cause emotional and behavioral responses that hinder a child's instructional engagement, and academic success. Scholarly articles note that because most brain growth happens during early childhood, traumatic experiences, like physical violence, profoundly impact and limit brain development (Klomek et al., 2013; Mayes et al., 2014; Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013).

Scholarly literature suggests that during adolescence, bullying could impact academic success, physical wellbeing, interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem (McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015) may cause severe mental health problems (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2001) such as suicide (Arango, Opperman, Gipson, & King, 2016; Schreier et al., 2009), and homicide (Gunn, & Goldstein, 2017) and are likely to continue experiencing adverse mental issues into young or middle adulthood (Olweus, 1993b; Sigurdson et al., 2006).

I have intentionally centered my investigation during adolescence because the rates for death by suicide among non-Native populations peak in older adulthood, whereas, rates of death by suicide among Indigenous populations peak during adolescence and young adulthood (Ballard et al., 2015). Youth suicide is one of the principal public health concerns for American Indian communities and is one of the leading causes of death among American Indian children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Wexler et al., 2015). The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2013) suggests that Native youth account for nearly 40% of all deaths on Reservations. Several scholars contend that American Indian and Alaska Native youths have the highest suicide rates of all minority groups in America (Wexler et al., 2015; Taylor, Anderson, & Bruguier Zimmerman, 2014) experienced at more than double the same age peers in the general population (O'Keefe et al., 2014). Suicide is contextualized as an intentional or supposed willful self-inflicted lethal exploit that causes death (Olson & Wahab, 2006).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Researchers indicate that the majority of Alaska Natives and American Indians reside in rural areas that suffer from a lack of culturally sensitive suicide prevention programs (Taylor, Anderson, & Bruguier Zimmerman, 2014; Leavitt et al., 2018) resulting in elevated suicide rates (McNamara, 2013). Rural communities also suffer from a lack of competent mental health professionals resulting in a dearth of mental health intervention and prevention opportunities coupled with community members fears of confidentiality breaches or being socially shunned for seeking help (Taylor, Anderson, & Bruguier Zimmerman, 2014).

Montana ranks number one in the country for youth suicide (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, 2011; McIntosh & Drapeau, 2014; Taylor, Anderson, & Bruguier Zimmerman, 2014). Montana students participate in the Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) administered annually by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2019). The survey measures six health-risk areas that contribute to death and disability (CDC, 2019). The 2019 Montana YRBS indicated that 28.4% of American Indian youth living on a federally recognized Indian reservation had considered suicide, with 23.8% reporting they had made a suicide plan, 21.3% reporting attempted suicide, and 44% reporting feelings of sadness or hopelessness for two-weeks or more. The data captured from the multitude of sources demonstrates that American Indian youth in Montana are experiencing adverse mental health issues and are at an increased risk for suicidal ideation. Sample results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey

AI-R: American Indian students living on a reservation. AI-U: American Indian students living in an urban center.		
Question asked: YRBS	AI - R	AI - U
Felt so sad or hopeless two weeks or more in a row?	44.0%	47.9%
Considered suicide during the past 12 months?	28.4%	31.0%
Made a suicide plan during the past 12 months?	23.8%	26.1%
Attempted suicide during the past 12 months?	21.3%	17.2%
If you attempted, suicide did the attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that has to be treated by a doctor?	9.0%	5.8%

The 2019 Montana YRBS indicates that 38.75% of middle school students attending a school in the school district at the center of my study reported feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row; 16.05% considered suicide; 14.81% made a

suicide plan; and 13.58% reported they attempted suicide (Montana Office of Public Instruction, Youth Risk behavior Survey, 2019). The data gathered through the YRBS shows that the students at Napi elementary school are experiencing significant mental health issues that are contributing to suicidal ideation.

The Montana YRBS 10-year trend shows that over the past decade the number of young people experiencing a dilapidated mental health and increased suicidal ideation has steadily increased. Sample results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey 10-year trend (All Youth)

The data in Table 2 represents the 10-year trends for all students completing the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.						
Injury and Violence	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019
Felt so sad or hopeless two weeks or more in a row	27.3	25.2	26.4	29.3	31.0	36.7
Considered suicide during the past 12 months	17.4	15.2	16.8	18.8	20.8	23.4
Made a suicide plan during the past 12 months	13.4	12.3	13.6	15.5	16.6	19.5
Attempted suicide during the past 12 months	7.7	6.5	7.9	8.9	9.5	10.0
If you attempted suicide did the attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor	2.8	2.4	2.6	3.1	3.1	3.7

The Montana YRBS 10-year trend data indicates that the percentage of Montana youth feeling sad or hopeless for more than two weeks increased by nearly 6% from the 2017 survey results and has increased steadily since a slight decrease between 2009 and 2011. The percentage of Montana youth indicating they considered suicide increased by over 3% when compared to the 2017 survey results. The percentage of Montana youth

indicating they made a suicide plan increased by nearly 3% when compared to the 2017 survey results; The percentage of Montana youth indicating they had attempted suicide increased by a 10.5% when compared to the 2017 results and has increased by 3.5% since 2011.

The 2017 Montana YRBS data shows that of the 15.8% of American Indian middle school youth indicating they had attempted suicide, 45.8% had experienced face-to-face bullying; 46.2% had been cyberbullied; and 29.4% had experienced teasing because of sexual orientation (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2017). Table 3 shows selective data from the 2017 Montana Youth Risk Behavioral Survey.

Table 3

2017 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey

AI-R: American Indian students living on a reservation. AI-U: American Indian students living in an urban center.			
Question asked: YRBS Middle School Students	AI - R	AI - U	Attempted Suicide
Were bullied on school property during the past 12 months?	41.18%	36.87%	45.8%
Were electronically bullied during the past 12 months?	23.73%	20.47%	46.2%
Have you been a victim of teasing or name calling because someone thought you were gay, lesbian, or bisexual?	19.26%	20.10%	29.4%

Cultural Genocide

The debilitating effects of bullying only explain part of the reason that American Indian communities are facing a youth mental health crisis. American Indians experienced a cultural genocide that nearly erased their cultures. Nearly all Indigenous people experienced a cultural annihilation that was more successful than the cultural attacks against the Jews and Armenians. Entire groups of Indigenous people—their

civilizations and languages were eradicated from society, and for many others the extermination was nearly as complete (Vizenor, 2008).

Indigenous adolescents are in a precarious position as they not only stand at the crossroads between childhood and adulthood but also must navigate between their traditional culture and that of the dominant culture. The metaphor walking in two worlds is oftentimes used to describe the experiences of educating Indigenous students. The image of traipsing across two universes establishes a resemblance between being multilingual or relating to two distinct cultures and securely moving in two different places. The rather intangible idea of distinctive social and etymological collections is made understandable through allegorical reference to a physical procedure, as in walking, occurring in two discrete places, which in this case are the two universes (Henze & Vanett, 1993).

There is a growing body of scholarly examinations that link many of the mental health struggles experiences by American Indians with acculturation stress. Acculturation stress is explained as a methodical strain caused by navigating between multiple cultures that oftentimes reveals itself within American Indian peoples as challenge or conflict to preserve Indigenous cultural veracity when operating in Western society (LaFromboise & Malik, 2016) and is known to cause adverse physical and mental health issues in individuals or across larger populations (LaFromboise, Albright & Harris, 2010).

In Western society, suicide is frequently viewed as an individual's response to an internal psychological struggle; whereas, many Indigenous communities view suicide as a reaction to collective suffering (Wexler & Gone, 2012). Some studies provide overwhelming evidence that American Indian people continue to experience a cultural

genocide that has contributed to Indigenous youth experiencing increased anger, avoidance, anxiety and depression (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004), all linked to increased suicidal ideation (Wexler, 2006; Wexler & Gone, 2012). American Indians have been forced into a way of knowing based on their oppressors' cultures and values (Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999), causing Native children to experience cultural confusion (Whitbeck et al., 2002), resulting in diminished mental health (Brave Heart et al., 2016).

Theoretical Lens

Philosophical conventions build the basis for the theoretical lens (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Many Tribal leaders are troubled with the increased attention placed on standardized testing and the associated instruction resulting in a decline in academic approaches that are culturally sensitive to Native children (Beaulieu et al., 2005). One researcher suggests that American Indians lack of academic success is because they are involuntary immigrants as a result of colonization (Ogbu, 1987), causing them to suffer from a theory of context (Atleo, 1990). Several scholars contend that the typical Western world approach of direct instruction used in most classrooms often fails to meet the learning needs of Native students (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Jacobs & Reyhner, 2002). Brayboy and Castagno (2009) suggest that educators in America have relied on either an assimilation model or culturally responsive practices to educate Indigenous children. Scholarly literature indicates that culturally responsive teaching models positively impact educational experiences and academic achievement for American Indian children, but many in society still support and believe in the benefits of teaching Native children through assimilation schooling practices (Brayboy and Castagno, 2009).

Some scholars contend that in order to motivate students to learn, teachers must use pedagogical techniques that explicitly connect learning to students' worlds outside of school (Gilliland, 1995; Klug & Whitfield, 2003) and their innate desire for autonomy and self-rule (Cleary and Peacock, 1998). Several investigators acknowledge that culturally relevant instruction is more effective than generic instruction (Cannon, 2009; Leonard et al., 2005; Robinson & Lewis, 2011; Sachau & Hutchinson, 2012; Santamaria, 2009), and helps students who are outside of the dominant school culture make sense of their learning (Klug and Whitfield, 2003).

Culturally responsive education is a broad school-wide method that pursues language and sociocultural congruence of American Indian youth in all aspects of the school program, but particularly in classroom instruction (Yap, 2004). Culturally responsive education authenticates, enables, frees, and emboldens racially and culturally disparate children by contemporaneously nurturing their cultural veracity, personal skills, and scholastic achievement (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive learning environments are centered on four foundational pillars of practice that Gay (2010) defines as: (1) teacher attitudes and expectations, (2) cultural communication in the classroom, (3) culturally diverse content in the classroom, and (4) culturally congruent instructional strategies. Culturally responsive pedagogy helps build a bridge between the child's cultural experiences and modern-day advances and should adjoin school experiences with community-based learning to promote academic equality and merit that empowers and strengthens a young persons' power to produce an effect (Gay, 2013).

Gay (2001) theorized Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and argues that CRT is linking students' cultural understanding, past observations or participation in

events, perspectives and learning styles to scholarly astuteness to make learning more individualized. Ladson-Billings (2014), the pioneer of culturally responsive pedagogy, claims that the foundation of culturally responsive instruction rests in the teachers' ability to blend the art of teaching with an understanding and appreciation of one's culture. Gay claims that the guiding principles of CRT are profoundly different from traditional educational programs. CRT is an educational equalizer that acknowledges disparities amid racially diverse factions, people, and societies as a norm to the human existence and prized to community and individual growth (Gay, 2013).

McCarty (2012) suggests that the inequalities that exist between the educational experiences and opportunities of Native students and non-Native students can be reduced by making educational experiences that are culturally relevant to their family and community. When educators have the skills to connect a comprehensive understanding of learning with a broad appreciation for ethnically diverse populations children seize accountability for their learning (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Many scholars have learned that using Indigenous centered teaching practices result in Native schoolchildren who have a robust sense of oneself (Agbo, 2004; Cleary & Peacock, 1998), have stronger cultural association (Trujillo, Viri, & Figueira, 2002), exhibit higher-levels of school connectedness (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Demmert, 2001; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Klump & McNeir, 2005) and increased cultural connectedness (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017).

While Gay and Ladson-Billings are rightfully credited with laying the groundwork for culturally focused teaching and learning, I argue that their theories fall short of addressing the unique atrocities experienced by American Indians. Both Gay and

Ladson-Billings focused most of their attention on providing culturally relevant instruction to African American students. Adjapong (2017) argues that urban Black youth and Indigenous populations share many of the lived experiences surrounding oppression and marginalization. While I acknowledge that the African American community as a whole has historically and continues to experience cultural oppression and systematic racism, American Indians faced an intentional attempt to eradicate their languages and erase their cultural identities, and I believe Indigenous peoples continue to endure modern-day assimilation attempts perpetrated through public education designed to stymie attempts to revitalize Native languages and cultures.

American Indian peoples' identity yokes to their cultural identity; without one the other becomes meaningless (Penland, 2010). A person has the unique ability to use their past experiences as a bridge to their future through their cultural stories (Yellow Bird, 2012). A strong sense of belonging is related to the strength of cultural associations and a sense of connectedness with an individual's tribal history (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). The importance on sustaining traditional language is essential to cultural identity and Native community sustainability (Searle et al., 2018), because embedded in the language are the life-sustaining elements of understanding ceremonial practices that are the bedrock of Native peoples' identity (Benally & Viri, 2005).

American Indians experienced forced colonization that tore away pieces of their identity, where their beliefs were deemed appalling, offensive, repugnant and medieval (Smith, 1999). The assimilation policies of the 1880's and the establishment of the boarding school era created an American Holocaust (Brave Heart, 1998). The United States government forced Indian children, oftentimes through military intervention, into

boarding schools (Wood, 2018), where they were disciplined for speaking their native language or for practicing their culture (Deloria, 1988, [1969], p. 105), and were sexually abused (Charbonneau-Dahlen et al., 2016).

A review of a Voucher of Disinterested Persons used as the basis for an application of a Native child to the Carlisle Indian Boarding School uncovers a statement capturing the evil mindset expressed towards American Indians explicitly stating, "Under present circumstances she is thrown in with others who consider her as an inferior race and whose influence will be morally bad for her." The Vouchers of Disinterested Persons and the Carlisle Indian Boarding School application are attached as Appendix A.

The boarding school era ushered in forced internal oppression where American Indian children were required to decide the type of cruel punishments their peers would experience in exchange for avoiding similar fates. Boarding school classmates were forced to jeer, mock, and hit their peers (Charbonneau-Dahlen and colleagues, 2016) and school staff devised an extensive collection of consequences for children that violated their code of conduct (Johnston-Goodstar and Roholt, 2017) The explicit intent of boarding schools was to strip Native children of their identity by eradicating their native language seen as an impediment to complete assimilation, cutting their hair, changing their names, preventing them from wearing traditional clothing in exchange for military uniforms and forcing them to adopt the tents of Christianity (Johnston-Goodstar and Roholt, 2017).

The boarding school experience continues to haunt Indigenous student's educational experiences as Native youth were denied access to culturally normative role models that prevented them from developing positive self-esteem or cultural identity

(Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart, 1999; Irwin & Roll, 1995). Evans-Campbell (2008) suggests that perhaps multiple generations of decedents may have transferred the trauma they inherited at boarding schools to their children, grandchildren, and distant relations. The result is cultural discontinuity and low self-esteem, which affected their contemporary academic performance (Belgarde et al., 2002). Boarding schools promoted a curriculum for cultural extinction (Adams, 1995). Dismissed were the traditions of storytelling and oral history that maintained individual and tribal identity. Moreover, when teachers suppress Native cultures and use curricula that are biased or lack cultural relevance, Indigenous students are denied opportunities to express their cultural pride and honor their personal identities (Skinner, 1999) as they come to understand their cultural identity through the lens of their colonizers (Paris and Alim, 2014).

The history of colonization and the oppression that became part of Manifest Destiny (Calderon, 2014; Pratto & Stewart, 2011; Sidanius, Pratto, 1999) and the Norman Yoke (Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, 2013) continue to plague American Indian society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1994). Manifest Destiny postulated that it was God's will for European settlers to acquire land in America and they possessed the moral authority to use any means to meet this end. Likewise, the Norman Yoke, was an economic term that suggests people are not only justified to use all of the natural resources discovered on unoccupied and unused land, but they possess a moral duty to fulfill this obligation (Brayboy, 2005).

The forced removal from their homelands and exploitation of American Indians contributed to an intergeneration trauma and is explored in the literature as historical trauma or the *Soul Wound* (Duran, 1995; Gone, 2013). Historical trauma is explained as

the combined experiences shared by groups of people who encountered intentional subjugation through massacre and other hideous acts of colonization (Gone, 2013), across generations (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Crawford, 2013; Gone, 2013). The new genocide is a living history represented by poor nutrition that manifests into poor health resulting in the premature death of American Indians; health concerns such as alcoholism and diabetes pass from one generation to the next (Myhra, 2015). The historical and cultural loss experienced by American Indians is linked to adverse mental health conditions experienced by Native youth (Burnette & Figley, 2016), and connects historical trauma to substance abuse and violence (Duran & Duran, 1995). One scholar learned that compared with their white counterparts, American Indians disproportionately suffer shorter life spans, experience an earlier onset of diseases, have a higher prevalence of substance use, increased probability for obesity and hepatitis and a higher risk of mental health issues, including suicide (Mitchell, 2018).

American Indian adults and their children experience symptoms of historical trauma because of unresolved disenfranchised grief (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart, 1999; Brave Heart, 2003; Whitbeck, 2004). Disenfranchised grief occurs when individuals are denied the opportunity to mourn, and be socially consoled when encountering loss (Doka, 1998). Doka further argues that experiencing grief in Western European cultures is only recognized when there is a close relationship between the individuals. The principles of disenfranchised grief help explain the phenomenon of unresolved grief among American Indians and manifests itself in sadness, anger, and shame (Brave Heart, 2003). The concept of shame is a powerful inward emotion, and

how individuals cope with the symptoms of shame determines the physiological outcomes (Harder, 1995; Nathanson, 1992).

One scholar adapted the construct of historical trauma to delineate between trauma and oppression experienced through systematic discrimination and poverty (Burnette & Figley, 2017). Whereas, historical trauma is considered as a broad-based framework to describe the cumulative and intergenerational traumas experienced by American Indians (Brave Heart & DeBruyn 1998; Burnette, 2015c; Burnette & Figley, 2017; Duran et al., 1998), historical oppression marks the associations between historical traumas and the chronic and contemporary oppressions encountered by American Indians (Burnette, 2015a; Burnette, 2015c). Historical oppression is contextualized as the persistent and universal experiences of being vanquished across generations that, gradually, have been inflicted, standardized, and internally adopted into the everyday experiences of countless American Indian peoples (Burnette, 2015c). The difference between historical trauma and historical oppression is that historical oppression is situated in a local context and includes all risk factors that perdure to propagate oppression including prejudice, microaggressions, regulation to a powerless position, and poverty (Burnette, 2015c; Burnette and Figley, 2017).

I suggest that the academic achievement gap and mental health struggles experienced by American Indian youth are integral aspects of historical oppression that results from learning environments embedded with discriminatory experiences perpetrated through implicit and explicit microaggressions resulting in toxic school environments. The demeaning school environment creates an incubator for increased bullying experiences and is a contributing factor to the mental health crisis facing

Indigenous communities and is associated with acts of violence (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Conversely, scholarly literature indicates that a supportive and vibrant school culture is critical for positive mental development (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

One investigator contends that discrimination in schools against American Indians exists in part because of differences in belief systems between dominant cultures and Indigenous populations. To be discriminated against because of one's spiritual faith or cultural traditions is the most dangerous form of bias. It gouges the spirit leaving in its place a deafening silence that could be misconstrued as pride. American Indians who uphold their traditional beliefs are victims of discrimination especially when those beliefs are antithetical to those of the dominant culture's educational systems. To improve school experiences for American Indian children, it is essential that educators gain an understanding and appreciation for American Indian belief systems, and if deprived of this understanding and appreciation then the only possible outcome is discrimination—a discrimination that injures the soul of Indigenous people (Locust, 1988).

Discrimination comes in many forms and one of the most damaging is when young people face microaggressions. Microaggressions are short-lived and routine, day-to-day shaming behaviors, whether implicit or explicit, that convey an inimical, pejorative or antagonistic racial insult that can cause the receiver to experience emotional pain (Sue et al., 2007). Ong and others (2013) propose a three-pronged taxonomy including "microassaults (explicit racial derogation), microinvalidations (actions that nullify the experiential reality of racial minorities), and microinsults (subtle behaviors or communication styles that debase or minimize an individual's racial heritage)" (p. 189).

When all three forms of microagressions are systematically engrained a fourth type of microaggression appears and is identified as environmental (Johnson-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Native youth that continually experience insidious microaggressions have their identity subjugated by the dominant culture resulting in serious mental health issues such as depression (Walls et al., 2015), and increased suicidal ideation (O'Keefe et al., 2014).

Scholars learned during their study on violence experienced by American Indian women that marginalized groups experiencing historical oppression oftentimes engage in lateral oppression that manifests itself in horizontal violence (Burnette & Figley, 2017). Oppression is frequently cited as the underlying theory to describe the presence of lateral violence or bullying (Farrell, 1997; Leiper, 2005). Oppression is contextualized as having more access to power and privilege and using that power and privilege to impose a worldview that subjugates others; and is believed to occur at the systemic and institutional levels and between individuals (David, 2013).

Scholarly literature suggests that internalized oppression manifests itself as cultural discontinuity (Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000). Cultural discontinuity is explained as the chaos prevalent across American Indian communities (Gonzales, Simard, Baker-Demaray, & Iron Eyes as cited in Davis, 2013). This phenomenon can help explain why some Native youth who are victims of historical oppression engage in bullying behaviors. Facing persistent and engrained oppression can cause the receiver to unconsciously embrace the oppressor's demeaning dogma and damaging actions (Burnette and Figley, 2017) resulting in an internal battle for power (Gonzales, Simard, Baker-Demaray, & Iron Eyes as cited in Davis, 2013).

The concept of power is critical for Indigenous scholars who believe that power is not possessed by individuals but instead is the foundation of how groups come to understand their place in society (Brayboy, 2005). The scholar suggests that American Indians contextualize power as being manifested in a community striving for sovereignty—defined as autonomy—self-rule—the ability to determine their own identify parameters—and right to direct their own system of learning (Brayboy, 2005). Understanding the relationship between oppression and the struggle for power is essential for understanding how Native youth create a social hierarchy that manifests itself through violence towards other Native youth. Thus, if Native children internalize dehumanizing experiences, they may strikeout at other Native children to gain power and escape their own oppression. I suggest that the insidious ramifications of historical oppression have caused Native youth to become confused with the notion of power resulting in power being used to subjugate other Native children instead of being used to help the entire tribal nation move towards sovereignty.

Scholarly literature indicates that for Native youth to develop resiliency skills they need to have strong ties to their culture (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Developing resiliency skills and using grit to overcome social inequities is often used by people in power to get people coming from poverty or marginalized students to follow the rules established by the dominant class rather than encouraging them to challenge authority, and the connections between knowledge and power. Scholars suggest that endeavors that bond with grit and resiliency ignore the policies used by the Unites States government to create a class hierarchy based on race (Saltman, 1994). I contend that requiring youth to focus on grit or resiliency as their vehicle of escape deprives those coming from

oppressed environments the opportunity to challenge and confront the causes of those deficiencies.

Sustaining and Revitalizing Culture

To address the unique educational needs of Indigenous youth and their communities I contend that the best way forward is to combine the concept and practice of Culturally Sustaining /Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) pioneered by Paris & Alim, 2014) with the tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). To that end, I acknowledge that the term 'relevant' used by both Gay and Ladson-Billings is critical for creating and using CSRP, and that teaching practices that create relevancy in one culture may be used to create sustainability in another culture.

Adjapong (2017) surmised that urban Black youth and Indigenous youth share many similarities including being part of the Hip-Hop generation, and further argues that Hip-Hop pedagogy may be a 'relevant' pedagogy to use with both populations. Scholars argue that it is imperative to save and embed the languages and traditions of minority groups in culturally relevant schooling practices that honor both customary and contemporary ways, that are part of our youths everyday lived experiences (Paris and Alim, 2014; Ladson-Billings (2014).

I agree in part with Adjapong (2017), Paris and Alim (2014), and Ladson-Billings (2014) but only to the degree that one would believe that using a modern-day version of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014), may only create relevancy and not contribute to sustainability if the modern-day approach neglects to include the Native language from the method (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). A deficiency of all three arguments is the lack of discussion about the importance of language, and spirituality that

is fundamental to many Indigenous populations for sustaining their culture. Once a language perishes, a likely society perishes with it. Even if the language is only spoken by a few members of an eviscerated society, the chances of finding or regenerating the truth, of lucid dreams, which are understood as folklores, as poetry, philosophical speculation and the colloquy of law (Vizenor, 2008).

The construct and practice of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) was coined by Paris (2012) to shift the focus from culturally relevant to culturally sustainable. CSP is understood as a way to immortalize and promote—to maintain—language, learned, and traditional pluralism as an aspect of education and as a necessary reaction to changes in human interactions and relationships that transform social and cultural societies (Paris, 2012). Paris and Alim (2014) contend that CSP is an effective way of addressing the hidden assimilation ideas embedded in educational polices. The scholars assert that CSP helps transform deficient approaches of teaching and learning that have been engrained in American society by focusing on the relationship between education and the ability to challenge social justice. McCarty and Lee (2014) connect the social and cultural justice ideas expressed by Paris & Alim, (2014) with Native peoples' desire to control their lands and natural resources, to engage in self-governance, and to decide how they identify (Brayboy, 2005) to offer Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) evolved from Critical Race Theory and shared many of the views on racism but centers on experiences of Native Americans. TribalCrit maintains the activist nature of Critical Race Theory and is committed to social justice (Padgett, 2015). The basic tenet of Critical Race Theory is that racism is natural

and prevalent in society; whereas, the basic principle of TribalCrit centers on the prevalence of colonization and assimilation (Brayboy, 2005; Desai & Abeita, 2017; Padgett, 2015).

TribalCrit is an Indigenous centered theory that was pioneered by Brayboy (2005), an enrolled member of the Lumbee tribal nation. Brayboy (2005) describes nine essential tenets of TribalCrit (p. 429):

> 1) Colonization is endemic to society; 2) U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism; 3) Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of identity; 4) Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty; 5) The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power taking on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens; 6) Government policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation; 7) Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups; 8) Stories are not separate from theory they makeup theory and are, therefore real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being; 9) Theory and practice are connected in profound and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social settings (Brayboy, 2005; p. 429-430).

The Blackfoot Experience

Investigators contend that Blackfoot children have their identity molded based on colonialism rather than on their natural alliances (Bastien, 2004; Gloppen, McMorris,

Gower, & Eisenberg, 2017). The pressure to abolish traditional teaching methods (Hernandez, 1999) designed to honor an Indigenous way of knowing causes Blackfoot children's lived realities to be marginalized resulting in a generation to generation cultural genocide (Bastien, 2004). The cultural genocide is framed by Native children being forced to learn and interpret their values and beliefs as deficits that surface as deficiencies in areas such as mental health, suicide, substance abuse, poor academic achievement, and failing to complete school in a timely fashion (Alcántara & Gone, 2007; Chandler & LaLonde, 1998; Kirmayer, 1994; LaFromboise, Medoff, Lee, & Harris, 2007).

A lack of understanding about, and a proper application of, a Blackfoot way of knowing has caused many Blackfoot youths to experience cultural confusion resulting in a vanquished cultural identity that hinders the development of vital coping skills. Cultural confusion refers to how youth understand their individual power and cultural medicine (Crowshoe & Manneschmidt, 2002). Hernandez (1999) argues that a Blackfoot way of knowing has been supplanted for centuries. Smith (1999) posits that Indigenous ways of knowing are dominated by a theory of knowledge based on empiricism and a scientific paradigm of positivism. Pepion (1999) argues that American Indians have been forced into a way of knowing based on their oppressors' cultures and values, and Cajete and Pueblo (2010) claim that American Indians' lived experiences, knowledge, and interests are largely ignored by mainstream education. Traditional educational systems focus their attention on helping children learn skills deemed necessary to function and be successful in the dominant culture's society with an implicit goal of assimilation without honoring how Niitsitapi learn how to be successful in their world (Bastien, 2004).

Study Purpose

The purpose of my investigation is to examine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

This investigation is based on Blackfoot understandings and interpretations of knowledge, how the Blackfoot come to learn about the knowledge, who has the right to obtain and transfer the knowledge, and what purposes the knowledge serves as discovered through the Blackfoot story. The first-hand experience that is such a fundamental principle of Blackfoot knowledge provides the foundation of this work and is an analysis of the ways the Blackfoot describe values embedded in ceremonies, cultural activities and origin stories that are transferred between generations.

The Blackfoot Confederacy

The Blackfeet Indian Reservation is home to the *Amsskaapi Pikani* (Southern Blackfeet or Piegan). The *Amsskaapi Pikani* are part of an alliance with the *Apatohsi Piikani* located in southern Canada, the Siksika Blackfoot (Northern Blackfoot) situated in Canada, and the Kainai (Blood) also found in Canada to form the Blackfoot Confederacy (Crowshoe & Manneschmidt, 2002; Gladstone & Pepion, 2016; Glenbow Museum, Blackfeet Gallery Committee, 2001; Pepion, 1999). The difference in spelling between the *Pikani* located in Montana and the *Piikani* located in Canada only represents a lack of agreement to standardized spelling between the members of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Gladstone & Pepion, 2016). Since this study is being conducted in both the

United States and Canada, I will use the spelling most commonly associated with the people being studied.

The Blackfoot people are called the *Nitsitapiksi* or *Niitsitapi* which means Real People and individuals that can speak the Real Language are called *Nitsipoiyiksi* (Bastien, 2004; Glenbow Museum, Blackfeet Gallery Committee, 2001). Many investigators erroneously use the terms Blackfoot and Blackfeet interchangeably when talking about individual tribal nations and tribal members. Hall (2018) explicitly defines the terms stating "The general term "Blackfoot" is used to refer to all of the confederated tribes as a whole, whereas the term "Blackfeet" is used as reference to an individual within the Confederacy and/or the tribe of the Confederacy whose lands reside under the dominion of the United States of America" (p. 5). I will use the terms Blackfoot and Blackfeet as described by Hall (2018) throughout the document.

Study Significance

The original Montana Constitution approved in 1889 contained a clause acknowledging the absolute authority of the U.S. Congress over Indian tribes and tribal lands. The state of Montana operates under the fundamental principle that a state only has jurisdiction within an Indian Reservation if the U.S. Congress has explicitly authorized state authority (The Tribal Nations of Montana Handbook for Legislators, 2016). The passage of the Indian Civil Rights Act declaring that Indians were full members of a state and the 1973 Supreme Court ruling claiming that states were solely responsible for education (McCarthy, 2015) created the nexus needed to alter Indian education in Montana.

In 1972, 100 appointed delegates from Montana came together to draft a new Constitution. Not a single member of the delegation was Native American; yet, two Native American high school students addressed the group and expressed the importance of Indian self-determination and the significance of infusing Native American culture into their learning (Carjuzaa, Jetty, Munson, & Veltkamp, 2010). The two students were influential in convincing the convention-goers to honor the original Enabling Act clause; and more importantly, acknowledge the unique cultural heritage of Native Americans Article X section 1(2) explicitly reads "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indian and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity" (Montana Code Annotated, 2017, p. 59).

The 100 constitutional convention delegates would have no idea that Montana educators and legislators would ignore their promise of honoring the distinct culture of Montana's first inhabitants for over 33 years. The chipping away of the rust that had gathered around the Constitutional provision began in 1997 when an American Indian legislator was successful at getting his Montana colleagues to pass a law creating an American Indian Heritage Day (Carjuzaa, Jetty, Munson, & Veltkamp, 2010). Two years later, another American Indian legislator would navigate a bill through the legislature that would become known as Indian Education for All (IEFA) (Juneau & Juneau, 2011).

IEFA was written to clarify the intent of the constitutional convention delegates desire to honor American Indians. The bill contained three provisions related to Indian education:

- Every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, is to be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner.
- All school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate efficiently to Indian students and parents.
- The education system should work cooperatively with Montana tribes when providing instruction and implementing any educational goals (Carjuzaa, Jetty, Munson, & Veltkamp, 2010).

IEFA contains seven essential understandings:

1. There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana (Montana OPI, 2019, p.3).
2. Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian (Montana OPI, 2019, p.7).
3. The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the "discovery" of North America (Montana OPI, 2019, p.9).

4. Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties while others were created by statutes and executive orders (Montana OPI, 2019, p.12).
5. There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people in the past and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods (Montana OPI, 2019, p.16).
6. History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell (Montana OPI, 2019, p.22).
7. American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe (Montana OPI, 2019, p.24).

Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Plan

In 2017, the state of Montana established the Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Plan calling for the inclusion of strength-based, culturally centered suicide

prevention programs to be developed and implemented across Indian country. Yet, there is lack of understanding about what constitutes a strength based, culturally responsive bullying prevention program centered on traditional American Indian values. Furthermore, none of the public schools located on the Blackfeet Indian reservation are using a strength-based, culturally centered paradigm to institute a bullying prevention program. I contend that the lack of culturally centered, school-based intervention services available for Indigenous youth living across Montana is contributing to a mental health crisis that is far too often leading to suicide.

Limitations

An essential aspect of my study is acknowledging that I am a non-Indigenous scholar researching an Indigenous population and, as a result, my conclusions may be influenced by my own lived experiences. Smith (2012) contends that academic studies concerning Native people are innately slanted and Indigenous communities should maintain some control of the purpose for research within their communities. Some scholars argue that investigations conducted in Native communities should forgo any western methodologies and rely solely on recording and documenting oral histories. In my research design, I have tried to limit my potential biases by relying on cultural guides and using community accepted methods that are based on oral accounts and experiences that document that are an integral part of being Blackfoot.

Definitions

Paradigm

A paradigm is understood as a philosophical or theoretical framework of any kind.

A Blackfoot Way of Knowing Paradigm

A Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm is a philosophical framework based on the Hoop of Values being learned and applied through a traditional Blackfoot learning process. A key aspects of a traditional Blackfoot learning process is having children learn knowledge through traditional stories (Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999). The Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm is framed by the Blackfeet Educational Standards (2005); a Blackfoot way of knowing proposed by Bastien (2004); Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) offered by McCarty and Lee (2014); Culturally Responsive Teaching pioneered by Gay (2010); and, Tribal Critical Race Theory crafted by Brayboy (2005).

Blackfeet Education Standards

The Blackfeet Education Standards (BES) consist of cultural standards and benchmarks for educators, K-12 schools, colleges, and education programs. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council approved the Standards through tribal resolution number 59-2005 in 2004.

Pikuni Code of Education

The Pikuni Code of Education (PCE) contains the provisions for using, teaching, and studying the Pikuni (Blackfeet) language and culture. The PCE outlines the roles that Elders, other community members, and school stakeholders contribute to the advancement of the language and culture.

Montana State Constitution

Article X Section 1(2) of the 1972 Montana State Constitution proclaims: “The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is

committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity" (p. 1099).

Recognition of American Indian cultural heritage 20-1-501. -- legislative intent.

(1) It is the constitutionally declared policy of this state to recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and to be committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage.

(2) The legislature intends that per Article X, section 1(2), of the Montana Constitution:

(a) every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner; and

(b) every educational agency and all instructional personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes or those tribes that are in close proximity, when providing instruction or when implementing an educational goal or adopting a rule related to the education of each Montana citizen, to include information specific to the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.

(3) It is also the intent of this part, predicated on the belief that all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate effectively with Indian students and parents, that educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people

Federally Recognized Tribe

The term "federally recognized tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community of Indians, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act 43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq. that is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450 et seq.).

Federal Indian Reservation

A federal Indian reservation is an area of land reserved for a tribe or tribes under a treaty or other agreement with the United States, executive order, or federal statute or administrative action as permanent tribal homelands, and where the federal government holds title to the land in trust on behalf of the tribe.

Bullying

Olweus (1993a; Olweus, 2013), widely considered the pioneer of bullying prevention, crafted a definition of bullying stating, "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 9). The definition is commonly accepted by investigators and appears regularly in research reports (Smith & Brain, 2000). Olweus (2010) concluded that bullying-type of actions could be carried out by physical contact, words, inappropriate gestures or intentionally excluding an individual from a group. Bullying is an intentional attempt to cause either emotional or physical harm to another

individual through an interpersonal relationship that is characterized by a perceived or actual power imbalance.

Responding to concerns expressed by the media about the prevalence of electronic types of bullying, Olweus (2012) added a definition for cyberbullying stating, "When we say ‘bullied electronically', we mean bullied through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through a text message sent to a cell phone" (p. 5). Olweus (2012) concluded that the concern over cyber-bullying was overblown and that schools should focus their attention on traditional face-to-face bullying. The 2019 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that youth experiencing electronic bullying peaked in 2011 and has slightly decreased ever since (Montana Office of Public Instruction, Youth Risk behavior Survey; 2019).

Bully Free Montana Act: 20-5-208.

Definition.

(1) "Bullying" means any harassment, intimidation, hazing, or threatening, insulting, or demeaning gesture or physical contact, including any intentional written, verbal, or electronic communication or threat directed against a student that is persistent, severe, or repeated and that:

(a) causes a student physical harm, damages a student's property, or places a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student or the student's property;

(b) creates a hostile environment by interfering with or denying a student's access to an educational opportunity or benefit; or

(c) substantially and materially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

(2) The term includes retaliation against a victim or witness who reports information about an act of bullying and includes acts of hazing associated with athletics or school-sponsored organizations or groups.

For my study, I used the bullying definition rooted in the Bully Free Montana Act: 20-5-208. The Bully Free Montana Act bullying definition has been adopted by the Montana Legislator and is an integral aspect of anti-bullying campaigns and is embedded in school district policies designed to address bullying in schools across Montana.

Research Questions

The purpose of my investigation is to examine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. I aim to answer three research questions:

RQ 1: How do Blackfoot elders perceive traditional values transferred through ceremonies, cultural activities, and traditional stories?

RQ 2: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' cultural connectedness?

RQ 3: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' school connectedness?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"We have a responsibility to treat each other with kindness and respect and to be thankful for the Creator giving the Blackfoot people courage to persevere."
Blackfoot Elder

Introduction

The review of literature for this investigation included a multitude of sources collected by me from content and context experts, Arizona State University library databases, the University of Lethbridge library databases, the special collections (archives) at Blackfeet Community College, the Lewis and Clark County Library, the Montana Historical Society, and the Glenbow Museum. To complete this review, I examined numerous studies conducted by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Many of the sources pulled for this examination are Blackfoot or Blackfeet-specific or related to other Indigenous contexts as a foundation for braiding Indigenous ways of knowing research with formal research on culturally responsive learning.

This chapter provides an overview of the related literature to explore the historical contexts that contribute to how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

Strength-based versus Deficit-based Perspective

Previous research conducted in American Indian communities commonly uses deficit-based intervention approaches that focus on intergenerational trauma caused by historical trauma, oppression, and ongoing marginalization to explain the impacts of

societal issues faced by Native peoples (Wexler et al., 2015). Deficit-based approaches are highlighted by the belief that cultural ways of knowing that are different from the dominant culture are inadequate (McLoyd & Randolph, 1985; McShane & Berry, 1986) Across history, the stories of marginalized populations have been reshaped through the dominant culture (Yellow Bird, 2004). The successful assault by the dominant culture to alter the identity of American Indians by subjugating their culture and language must be viewed through the prism of genocide rather than through theories of deficiency (Bastien, 2004). The lack of investigations centered on the strengths of Natives contributes to the difficulty of defining what constitutes a strength-based approach for American Indian adolescents resulting in the importance of focusing on defining 'strength' by itself (Stiffman et al., 2007).

Scholars argue that American Indians have fought against their oppressors through survivance and resiliency (Burnette & Figley, 2016; Vizenor, 2008). Survivance is conceptualized as the deed, circumstances, attributes, and dregs of the verb survive, to avoid extinction or not being alive, to outlast, and endure (Vizenor, 2008). Scholars suggest that survivance includes the creativity American Indians have constantly used to overcome the atrocities of colonization, such as a devotion to their native land, puissance of spirituality, and drollery (Burnette and Figley, 2016). Survivance offers American Indians a path for rejecting their experiences as deficits while providing a foundation for cultural renewal (Vizenor, 2008) that I argue is the basis of an American Indian strength-based intervention model.

A strength-based intervention model refers to guidelines, procedures, and plans that recognize and rely upon the strengths or perceived strengths of individuals, families

or the community. Many of the findings on strength-based intervention approaches relate to social work and psychology and are based on using the principles of resilience theory as a guide. Resilience theory proposes that fortifying protective features works to offset the adverse effects of peril, and helps people conquer difficult situations (Greene, 2009; Wang, Zhang, & Zimmerman, 2015). Resilience is contextualized as an individual's ability to recover from or adjust rapidly to misfortune or change (Werner and Smith, 1992), and to endure or recover from substantial obstacles that jeopardizes its consistency, sustainability, or growth (Masten, 2001). Earlier studies contend that resiliency interventions accentuate positive attributes while at the same time acknowledging threats or negative life experience. Burnette and Figley (2016) suggest that resilience is measured at four levels including individual, community, familial, and cultural.

Self-efficacy is an integral part of resiliency theory (Wang, Zhang, & Zimmerman, 2015) and is the fundamental concept of Bandura's social cognitive theory and denotes the supposed aptitude to create a wanted action (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy goes beyond merely telling ourselves that we can do something; it is a strong belief in a skill that is built on our appraisal of many sources of data about our aptitudes (Bandura, 1986). A low self-efficacy during adolescence is linked to a multitude of mental health issues including depression (Muris, 2002), school phobia, low academic achievement, and delinquent behaviors (Bandera, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1999). Some studies identified a robust association among self-efficacy and favorable mental and physical health outcomes (Maddux, 2002), and positive associations between social self-efficacy and anxiety and depression (Suldo & Shaffer, 2007).

Previous research strongly suggests that a strengths-based intervention approach is an especially appropriate choice for American Indians as they have developed a strong survival skillset based on cultural factors to overcome centuries of oppression (Burnette & Figley, 2016; Drywater-Whitekiller, 2010), and is identified in scholarly literature as cultural resilience. The theory of cultural resilience is a strengths-based perspective that endorses the belief that all populations have positive assets, in contrast to deficit-based approaches that give the impression that certain minority groups are overwhelmed with their weaknesses and suffer from a lack of strengths. Scholars explain cultural resilience for American Indians as the incorporation of traditional practices and ways of thinking, such as concinnity of the mind, and body (Burnette & Figley, 2016) devoutness, family reliance, elders, ceremonies, oral histories, ancestral identity that support, nurture, and encourage American Indian schoolchildren, families, and communities (Heavy Runner and Marshall, 2003) to overcome oppression and other negative obstacles (Strand & Peacock, 2003).

American Indians have survived for centuries because of their understanding of their alliances and their solid relationships with the natural order (Bastien, 2004). Scholars argue that American Indians share common cultural values that are effective in substance abuse treatment programs (Harris & McFarland, 2000) and prevention programs for American Indian youth to build strong identities (Sanchez-Way & Johnson, 2000). Leland (2009) learned that Navajo adolescents' attitude toward Navajo culture was correlated with the strength of their resiliency. Literature regarding cultural resiliency demonstrated that pride in one's culture is a protective factor and that resiliency outcomes such as school attitude and performance and less involvement in risk-taking behaviors

such as alcohol and other substance use were strengthened by participating in cultural ceremonies and identifying with traditional cultural elements (LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, L. B., 2006).

School Connectedness

School connectedness relates to how youth perceive that their learning and identity are valued by their teachers and peers (Crespo, Jose, Kielpikowski, & Pryor, 2013; Foster et al., 2017; Oldfield, Stevenson, Ortiz, & Haley, 2018), and how they are supported in the school community (Joyce & Early, 2014). Fostering school connectedness during adolescents can help to offset the influence of classmates, friends, and intimate partners by offering them a chance to form connections across a broader spectrum of society. Children who are predominantly connected with classmates and friends and express negative perceptions of school, as well as resisting more positive societal connections participate in riskier youth behaviors. On the contrary, young people who express positive perceptions of school, and are engaged in the school environment are more likely to resist illicit youth behaviors that impede academic progress (Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2006).

School connectedness has been recognized as a barrier against adolescent depression (Joyce & Early, 2014; Millings et al., 2012; Resnik et al., 1997; Shochet, et, al., 2008), for forecasting impending negative adolescent mental health disorders (Shochet et, al., 2006), as well as understanding mental health resilience (Oldfield, Stevenson, Ortiz, & Haley, 2018). Scholars investigating the association between school connectedness and depressive events discovered that youth experiencing stronger school connectedness have fewer depressive events (Joyce &Early, 2014), are more adept to

triumph over the negative outcomes of bullying (Foster et al., 2017), and have a protective factor against suicide for American Indian youth (Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997).

Cultural Connectedness

Cultural connectedness is explained as the understanding of, and association with, facets of Indigenous culture (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017). To promote a strength-based approach to measure cultural connectedness, (Snowshoe et al., 2015) created the Cultural Connectedness Scale (CCS) to classify, describe, and foster an enhanced comprehension of how resiliency is interwoven within cultural connectedness for Native youth. (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017). The scholars used the scale to measure the associations between cultural connectedness and mental health for Native children and learned that cultural connectedness influences their mental wellbeing (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017). The researchers also investigated the relationships between cultural connectedness and school connectedness and learned that cultural connectedness had a slight influence on a student's school connectedness. In contrast, scholars report mixed results between the components of cultural connectedness, resilience, and youth mental health (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017), including suicidality (Alcantara & Gone, 2007).

Some investigators suggest that examining American Indian culture as a protective factor against behavioral health issues is warranted given the history of colonization (Mohatt, Fok, Burket, Henry & Allen, 2011). The scholars developed the Awareness of Connectedness Scale (ACS) to measure a person's degree of connectedness to their person, kinfolk, communal group and natural surrounds and report positive results

between awareness of connectedness and well-being. (Mohatt, Fok, Burket, Henry & Allen, 2011).

Western scholars investigating the phenomenon of culture experienced a paradigm shift when the word race was replaced with the word culture causing the advancement of a strength-based understanding about culture instead of the primitive deficit-based thinking associated with race (Erickson, 2010; Onorato, 2017). The ever-changing definition of culture has caused a misunderstanding about the importance of culture by teachers who commonly blame their inability to effectively communicate with their students or fail to understand why parents lack school connectedness (Ladson-Billings, 2006b).

Investigators espouse the significance of teachers learning about their students and families and how they fold into the broader community to develop an understanding of how their students come to know (Erickson, 2010). Students and their family's culture are too often viewed as deficits instead of funds of knowledge by educators causing teachers to resist the benefits of infusing culture into their teaching practices. Scholars suggest that many people assume that traits of ethnic groups are encased inside of people as transporters of culture—a supposition that causes difficulties for investigators examining cultural or racial factions in educational settings (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003). Practitioners who view individuals as carriers of culture run the risk of believing that the characteristics of the individuals are fixed and thus, are inherent to the entire group.

Defining and having a firm understanding about what constitutes culture is an essential component of designing and using a strength-based intervention model. Scholarly literature notes that society can comprehend and develop an understanding of

ethnicity as a dynamic structure that explains, creates ways of carrying oneself and replicates itself as part of civilization (Wexler and Gone, 2012). Culture then creates the boundaries for both acceptable behaviors exhibited by community members and appropriate intervention models designed to steer individuals back between the boundaries.

Some researchers describe culture as beliefs or behaviors that are transferred between generations through the application of both traditional and contemporary values (Carter, 2010; Demmert and Towner, 2003; Guitierrez and Rogoff, 2003). Understanding both traditional and contemporary values is a vital component of defining culture. Lee (2010) believes that culture is based on the values and worldviews shared by the members of the community. Literature suggests that Blackfoot elders view culture and heritage separately and contend that ceremonies have to do with the ontology of the people while other things are merely heritage (Pepion, 1999). The arduous task of identifying and gaining consensus of both traditional and contemporary values, and how they should be applied has eluded Blackfeet Nation educators and parents (Pepion, 1999) who struggle with their obligation to have their children meet lofty learning outcomes through a traditional way of knowing (Blackfeet Education Standards, 2005).

The working definition of culture for my study is congruent with the ideas expressed by Avruch (1998) and is defined as a way of life that is both adaptive and learned from social interactions with ones understood alliances; and, also includes the Blackfeet Education Standards (BES) “The Hoop of Values” that lists the terms of honesty, generosity, respect, spirituality, courage, humility, and compassion, the “Markers of the Path of Life” (2005).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) is a fundamental part of CRT. Ladson-Billings is credited with being the pioneer of culturally relevant pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011), and learned that using culturally relevant pedagogy caused students to realize high academic achievement while strengthening their own cultural identity (Ladson-Billings, 2009). CRP refers specifically to a culturally relevant curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2014), and culturally relevant instructional practices (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Scholars advocating for using CRP encourage educators to teach up to and through their students' culture (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2014), and contend that CRP helps build a connection between a youths' cultural knowledge and understandings and contemporary developments (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Ladson-Billings (2014) identified three areas commonly targeted by teachers using CRP including scholarly achievement, cultural aptitude, and social and political awareness. The scholar succinctly defines each domain stating:

> Briefly, by academic success I refer to the intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences. Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture. Sociopolitical consciousness is the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems (p. 75).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

CSP was offered by Paris (2012) to address the longstanding American tradition of using deficit approaches to education (Paris & Alim, 2014) that were focused on dehumanization of oppressed youth (Paris, 2012). The scholar was concern with what he viewed as the need to honor the practices that viewed the languages and literacies of marginalized populations as assets to address social and cultural justice and that CSP (Paris & Alim, 2014) is understood as a way to immortalize and promote—to maintain—language, learned, and traditional pluralism as an aspect of education and as a necessary reaction to changes in human interactions and relationships that transform social and cultural societies (Paris, 2012; McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Scholars contend that CSP is an effective way of addressing the hidden assimilation ideas embedded in educational polices (Paris and Alim, 2014) by adjoining traditional and modern-day ways of nurturing cultural connectedness (Paris, 2012). Literature asserts that CSP helps transform deficient approaches of teaching and learning that have been engrained in American society by focusing on the relationship between education and the ability to challenge social justice (Paris, 2012). The idea of blending traditional Blackfoot values with modern schooling practices to generate cultural connectedness was critical for my study and I deem essential for sustaining Blackfoot culture.

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy

McCarty and Lee (2014) connect the social and cultural justice ideas expressed by (Paris & Alim, 2014) with Native peoples' desire to control their lands and natural resources, to engage in self-governance, to decide how they self-identify (Brayboy,

2005), and to offer Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP). CSRP is highlighted by the desire to focus attention on the social history and modern-day settings of American Indian education (McCarty & Lee, 2014) that help Indigenous communities move closer to educational sovereignty (Paris & Alim, 2014) which is an essential aspect of obtaining tribal sovereignty (Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy et al, 2012; Brayboy, Castagno & Solyom, 2014). CSRP is highlighted by the desire to focus attention on the social history and modern-day settings of American Indian education. Scholars suggest that culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy differs across Indigenous populations (Stanton, Carjuzaa, & Hall, 2019). McCarty & Lee (2014) explain Indigenous CSRP as having three components explicitly designed to address issues experienced by American Indians including:

1) "attend directly to asymmetrical power relations and the goal of transforming legacies of colonization" (p. 103).
2) "recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization" (p. 103).
3) "the need for community-based accountability. Respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and the importance of caring relationships" (p. 103).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is viewed by some as a culture or philosophy of education that reaffirms the importance of teachers developing and nurturing personal connections with students by gaining an appreciation for the lived experiences of each student and how their culture influences the way they come to know (Nieto, 2013). Scholars acknowledge the importance of embedding the history and

culture of marginalized populations into mainstream academics (Gutiérrez, & Rogoff, 2003) The understanding and inclusion of cultural values honor the very being of students (Cajete, 1999) and students come to appreciate his or her culture more when it is emphasized in the educational journey (Fox, 2015).

Gay (2010) explains CRT as the act of blending an understanding of one's culture, lived experiences, individual viewpoints, and competency repertoire of culturally diverse youth to foster a germane and advantageous learning experience. Gay (2000) believes that culturally responsive instructors teach through their student's culture by allowing students to reflect upon and validate their cultural experiences through their lens. Gay (2002) posits a theory that consists of five interrelated parts:

1. Developing cultural diversity knowledge base: A process of developing mastery of knowledge as it pertains to both the student population and the subject matter and how they relate to each other. Gay (2002) stresses: "The knowledge that teachers need to have about cultural diversity goes beyond mere awareness of, respect for, and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups have different values or expressed similar values in various ways" (p.107).
2. Designing culturally relevant curricula: A process of a teacher converting their culturally diverse knowledge base into culturally responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies. Gay (2000) argues that "one way begin the curriculum transition process is to teach preservice teachers and (in-service) experienced teachers how to do deep cultural analyses of instructional materials and revise them to better represent cultural diversity" (p.108)

3. Demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community: A process of the teacher becoming skillful at using cultural scaffolding. Gay (2000) espouses "Culturally responsive caring also places teachers in an ethical, emotional, and academic partnership with ethnically diverse students, a partnership that is anchored in respect, honor, integrity, resource sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence" (p. 52).
4. Cross-cultural communication: The communication process the occurs between the teacher and students that help create a community around cultural influence. Gay (2002) argues that "without this "meeting" and "community" in the classroom, learning is difficult to accomplish for some students. In fact, determining what ethnically diverse students know and can do, as well what they are capable of knowing, and doing is often a function of how well teachers can communicate with them" (p. 110).
5. Cultural congruity in classroom instruction: The process of teaching ethnically diverse students through a multicultural process. Gay argues that teachers need to develop skills for modifying for ethnically diverse students. The need to learn about learning styles is essential. Gay (add year here) states "The internal structure of ethnic learning styles include at least eight parts. The dimensions provide different points of entry and emphasis for matching instruction to the learning styles from various ethnic groups" (p. 113).

Learning environments that incorporate CRT have been shown to foster greater student motivation to learn and fewer disruptive behaviors (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009), and when education is individualized and pertinent to the learner, they organically

become inspired to participate in learning. Intrinsic motivation permeates all cultures and when activated stimulates curiosity about how our own knowledge and understandings add to discovering our past and visualization our future (Wlodkowski, 2003). Educating racially diverse students should create a community among persons and develop students' effectiveness and empowerment (Gay, 2013) that allows them to challenge the ideals of the dominant culture (Edge, 2011).

To specifically address the population in this study, I viewed the construct of CRP constructed by Ladson-Billings (1995a; 1995b), the concept and practice of Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy proposed by McCarty and Lee (2014), and the tenets of CRT as espoused by Gay (2010) through the lens of TribalCrit developed by Brayboy (2005).

Critical Theory

Critical Theory (CT), born at the Frankfort School (Baum, 2015), was named by Max Horkheimer and centered on emancipation (Prince & Levy, 2017). Early Critical theorists focused on the relationships between capitalism and class domination and almost entirely avoided critical societal issues such as racism, sexism, and colonialism causing many scholars to migrate to other critical social theory approaches (Baum, 2015). The shift away from mainly focusing on capitalism to other social issues caused the rise of critical social theories related to racism. Scholarly literature describes critical social theories as theoretical explanations of society that strive to cognize and illuminate the roots of operational superiority and inequity to enable human liberation and justice (Levinson, 2011)

CT is an extensive array of approaches stooped to discover and help people overcome the racial, social economic class, and gender restraints used against them to create a power imbalanced that triumph across society (Creswell, 2013; Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2009). CT centers on lived experiences in order to capture and describe the social, cultural and economic systems that breed inequalities and contribute to historical oppression (Martinez-Alemán et al., 2015). CT can be further narrowed into Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CRT and its applications are based on five tenets which aim to: (1) center the conversation on race, racism, and power and how it intersects with other forms of oppression (e.g., gender, immigration); (2) challenge American educational claims of being objective, meritocratic, and colorblind (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998); (3) advance social justice for the oppressed (Bell, 1987); (4) recognize the experiential knowledge of people of color as it is crucial to understanding the effects and manifestations of racism (Delgado, 1989; Williams, 1997); and (5) employ an interdisciplinary approach that broadens our research scope.

Scholarly literature notes that CRT places a theoretic emphasis on how race and racism are profoundly entrenched within the fibers of the United States and is situated on contemporary narratives about bias from the viewpoint of minorities, for the elimination of cultural suppression while concurrently acknowledging that race is a collective concept, and additional areas of distinction, such as sex, socio-economic status, and any inequalities encountered by persons (Creswell, 2013).

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit)

Brayboy (2005) recognized CRT as a legitimate framework from which to examine issues of race but believed CRT was limited in its ability to address the needs of Indigenous populations because it did not address the historical issues inherent within the American Indian experience. Brayboy (2005) developed TribalCrit to provide an analytical lens that is more culturally centered on the lived experience of American Indians and their interactions with settlers. TribalCrit has nine tenets that are specific to the experiences of American Indians.

A fundamental difference between CRT and TribalCrit is the existence and prevalence of colonization. The basic premise of CRT is that racism is endemic in society; whereas, the first tenet of TribalCrit is that colonization is endemic in society (Brayboy, 2005). The Lumbee scholar describes colonization as the belief that European settlers ideas, understandings, financial systems, and hierarchical stratifications rule modern civilization in America, and is explained as an historic and universal attempt to make Native Americans abandon their own culture in favor of the adopting the culture of the domineering citizenry (Brayboy, 2005). McCarty and Lee (2014) argue that Indigenous educational sovereignty advances when the legacies of colonization are explicitly addressed through sustainable and revitalizing pedagogies. One scholar argues that modern-day colonization and assimilation policies are perpetrated through textbooks that inaccurately portray Indigenous populations (Padgett, 2015). Brayboy (2005) places colonialization at the vanguard of TribalCrit to specifically address the debilitating effects of colonization and contends that all other aspects of the theory flow from this understanding.

The second tenet of TribalCrit rests on the belief that the dogmata of America are engrained in colonialism, the ideology that white people are superior to all other races, and a yearning for tangible assets (Brayboy, 2005). Miller (2011) credited Walter Williams with discovering the genesis of United States Imperialism. The scholar claims that there were similarities between federal Indian policies and America's desire to establish an overseas empire. Miller (2011) and Feagin (2010) claim that it is essential to understand that the push westward across America was based on the concept of assimilating or exterminating American Indians and claims that our current racial hierarchy is a result of past hostilities.

The intentional assimilation policies enacted by the federal government sought to fold American Indians into White culture. The American government moved west with little regard to maintaining the peoples' cultures they were trampling resulting in a cultural genocide against American Indians (Banks, 1995). Settlers moving west also subjected American Indians to the idea of the Norman Yoke, an economic concept coined by Adam Smith and based on the idea that people have the ethical duty to use and take advantage of environmental resources on acreages that are unoccupied (Brayboy, 2013). Both Manifest Destiny and the Norman Yoke were propagated by the United States government to justify stealing land and natural resources from Indigenous peoples that became part of the cultural genocide that contributed to the intergenerational impacts of historical trauma and continues to haunt Native communities.

The third tenet of TribalCrit centers on the belief that American Indians inhabit a minimal place in both governmental and ethnic aspects of their personhood (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy reasoned that American Indians are both legal/political and racialized

entities but that society rarely considers the legal/political aspect of Indigenous populations. Brayboy (2005) further attests that Native Americans must fight for the privilege to be mutually categorized as a legitimate political entity and a legitimate ethnic unit. One scholar contends that the historical confusion between what constitutes being Indian is a result of federal and state governments wavering between anthropological standards and political standards (Lowery, 2009). The author suggests that two kinds of knowledge influence Indian policy including anthropological standards that classify peoples as a separate entity, and individual, and personal systems that regulate everyone based on the degree of their whiteness (Lowery, 2009). The unwillingness by the United States government to develop and use a consistent political vision for what constitutes Indian identity was used to advance assimilation policies targeting American Indians.

Marshall (2018) discovered that one of the primary points of contention with Indigenous education is that American Indians have a limited role in guiding the direction of their schooling and are often omitted by superintendents and school boards when discussing issues related to Indian education. One scholar who examined U.S. History textbooks and discovered that there was limited or no discussion about American Indian governance. The scholar learned that books used in academic settings oftentimes omit any references to contemporary American Indian governments propagating the idea that Indigenous governments are extinct. The omission negates the difficulties American Indians have endured over the last century, as are their achievements and deficiencies in maintaining and compelling the U.S. government to honor their intergovernmental agreements (Padgett, 2015). Omitting these critical facts result in American Indian

students being denied the opportunity to explore and debate the genesis and growth of their governance.

The fourth tenet of TribalCrit is fixed in a yearning Native peoples' have for tribal sovereignty, their desire to control their lands and natural resources, to engage in self-governance, and to decide how they identify (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy (2013) suggests that tribal autonomy consists of a multitude of aspects including communities and tribal nations having the capacity to regulate their present physical territory and environmental resources and control their tribal homeland boundaries in addition to being viewed by America and other countries as an equal government body. Brayboy (2005) referred to self-rule as the ability to sever the oppressive bond that exists between the federal government and tribal nations by abolishing the habit of tribal governments needing authorization from the federal government on issues associated to American Indian communities.

Self-identification was described by Brayboy (2005) as the capacity for American Indians to resolve what it means to be Indigenous without adverse weight from the predominant culture. The concept of sovereignty: the right of a people to have autonomy and to exercise self-rule, and self-education, including the freedom to cultural and language expression according to local customs is central to all parts of American Indian life, but is particularly critical to Indigenous investigators, scholars, and those charged with the responsibility of providing schooling to American Indian children (Barnhart & Kawagley, 2010; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001).

The fifth tenet of TribalCrit addresses the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power viewed through an American Indian perspective. The scholar explains that the

ideas of customary beliefs, what is and can be known by an individual or group and authority and influence are perceived differently when funneled through an American Indian lens (Brayboy, 2005). American Indian education has long been the colonizers' weapon used to assimilate tribal society into the majority populations' values and belief systems (Rains, Archibald, & Deyhle, 2000).

Scholarly literature describes aspects of traditional American schooling practices that contradict with Indigenous belief systems, such as forcing Native children to follow a school calendar based on Christian traditions and relying on linear schooling practices (Locust, 1988). Traditional ceremonies are circular in nature, whereas most American schooling is linear in nature. The struggle between traditional American Indian life and contemporary schooling is grounded in the confusion between Native peoples' emphasis on circular completion in contrast to Western educational ideologues that rely on linear education models that use linear lessons and linear time modalities. Traditional American Indian education is highlighted by children learning through observing elders who help them discover how their learning is part of a bigger picture while working towards completing the circle (Locust, 1988).

Brayboy explains knowledge as the capacity to identify alterations, modify, and advance with transformation (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy theorizes three kinds of learning that are fundamental to Indigenous populations: cultural knowledge is the capacity to comprehend one's membership with an exact tribal nation; academic knowledge refers to learning that occurs at academic institutions and survival knowledge that includes the capacity and inclination to adjust when adaptation is required. The scholar suggests that

the three types of knowledge can standalone or work together to advance social issues critical for Indigenous communities.

Scholarly literature notes that teachers can help students develop critical perspectives of American history by using transformational academic knowledge. Transformation learning is grounded on the ideas, theories, leitmotifs, and enlightenments that confront traditional scholarly learning and that grow the historic and scholarly learning norms (Banks, 1995). Haynes Writer (2008) notes that scholars have made cultural adjustments to curriculum that is used with American Indian schoolchildren, but those deeds have largely been in vain because they are anchored solely in a historic framework.

TribalCrit followers argue that the primary goal of education is to eliminate long periods of Native children being exposed to assimilation learning models and be connected with learning models that honor, display admiration and recognizes the way of knowing of Indian people (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). Several researchers claim that Native ways of knowing should be authenticated inside the learning environment and curriculum decisions ought to contain an extensive Native cultural underpinning (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2010; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002).

The concept of power is an important aspect of TribalCrit and for obtaining sovereignty. Brayboy (2013) argues that power is sacred for many Indigenous peoples and, if used judiciously, can help define goodness, and truth, what is genuine, and what stimulates the liveliest of gratification to the senses and stirs emotion, but will decrease over time if power is misused. Understanding the relationship between power and

sovereignty is essential for Indigenous populations ability to define their place in society, and gaining true sovereignty is dependent on the group's sense of identity.

The sixth tenet of TribalCrit centers on the relationship between integration policies and learning establishments (Brayboy, 2005). The practice of assimilation is grounded on the notion of eliminating Native identities and molding Indigenous people into American citizens (Padgett, 2015). One research team claims that national education policy has aimed at assimilating American Indians (Johnson-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Brayboy (2005) spurns integration and assimilation of American Indian schoolchildren in learning establishments because integration and assimilation ineluctable annihilate cultural truth by compelling American Indian children to adopt scholastic learning at the detriment of learning about ones' culture. Scholarly literature claims that the Western learning model is influential, persuasive, and deep-rooted in the learning materials used in schools across America (Banks, 1995), causing the continued misrepresentation of Indigenous culture.

Brayboy, Castagno, and Solyom (2014) surmise that tribal nation-building is an important purpose of Indigenous education. Tribal nation-building encompasses the growth and strengthening of tribal societies by influencing and controlling governmental, monetary, legal, spirituality, and learning processes. One scholar asserts that tribal nation-building is perpetrated through educational systems influenced by Indigenous belief systems that resist assimilation and strive to sustain and, in many cases, revitalize languages and cultural practices deemed essential (Marshall, 2018).

The seventh tenet of TribalCrit emphasizes the significance of Indigenous values, dogmas, customary traditional practices, and ideas for the future; it respects the flexibility

of the whole and acknowledges the distinctions inside people and between individuals and factions (Brayboy, 2005). Common Western teaching pedagogies underscore the significance of rivalries between students to achieve at different rates, whereas Native ways of knowing are based on a strong cultural belief system stressing the worth of collaboration (Brayboy, 2005), and group success (Demmert, 2001; Klug & Whitfield, 2003; Sorknes & Kelting-Gibson, 2007), that were born from Native peoples binding together in order to survive the atrocities they experienced (Locust, 1988). Some scholars suggest that a key aspect of tribal nation building is focusing on group success over individual prosperity (Brayboy, Castagno & Solyom, 2014). In other words, a fundamental trait of Indigenous peoples' survival is the willingness of individuals to engage in a form of reciprocity by sacrificing individual success for the betterment of the entire community.

The eighth tenet of TribalCrit lays the foundation for storytelling and verbal learning as valid forms of information when researching issues concerning Native American people. The scholar suggests that stories are fundamental to establishing theory (Brayboy, 2005), and other scholars highlighted the distinction between hearing and listening to stories as valuable data when studying American Indian populations (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). Listening is a deed of partaking in a discussion without being engaged, whereas hearing is a method of assigning worth and demonstrating interest, enthusiasm, and being sympathetic to the variety of options and subtle means embedded within a story (Brayboy, 2005). Using TribalCrit as a lens, stories that detail American Indians should be a vital source of information when designing learning experiences for all students and is critical when teaching Native students. A critical

function of storytelling is for cultural preservation that allows for the transfer of moral and survival values

Scholars suggest that schooling materials and practices ought to rely on traditional American Indian learning practices that incorporate oral stories (Brayboy and Castagno, 2009). Indigenous populations use oral stories to transfer essential knowledge about culture and provide cultural learning opportunities for younger generations. The use of oral practices to transfer the histories and traditional beliefs of societies has been used across the history of humankind (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Scholars suggest that capturing the stories of tribal elders is a worthy endeavor that can assist with cultural preservation that allows for the transfer of survival values that otherwise would be lost with the passing of elders (Repp, 2009).

The ninth and final tenet of TribalCrit is an obligation to action and egalitarianism. Brayboy (2005) espoused that the intent of TribalCrit is to motivate investigators, professors, and intellects beyond theory. Investigators who use TribalCrit as a theoretical lens should be devoted to acts that create helpful transformation in American Indian communities (Brayboy, 2005). Scholars suggests that activism and civic dialogue are essential as students become more socially and critically conscious (Gonzales, 2017) and are used to advance the social and political situations of Indigenous people (Endres, 2011). One scholar argues that Indigenous activism and alliance building is critical for the protection of tribal sovereignty which is an essential component of social justice (Mitchell, 2018) and includes acknowledgment of how they perceive beauty, tranquil, attachment, ingenuity, and how they come know what is truth (Eason & Robbins, 2012). Some scholars tie views on social justice to educational settings and

suggest that a commitment to egalitarianism entails that all students, notwithstanding of ethnicity, achieve scholastically homogeneously, and meet high academic standards in safe and secure learning environments (Scheurich & Skrla, 2004). Educators surmise that American Indian experiences that recognize the connections between vision and dreams to their natural surroundings while living a life based on gratitude, humility, and harmony create the foundation for social justice (Eason & Robbins, 2012).

Culturally Responsive Teaching with American Indian Children

The Meriam Report (Meriam et al., 1928; Prucha, 2000) called for firm efforts and shifts for educating American Indian schoolchildren. Both conventional and Indigenous rights movements testify to the mounting body of evidence that culturally responsive frameworks can improve academic success for American Indian children (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). Educators toiling in American Indian communities have long recognized the connections between culturally responsive practices and an affirmation of tribal sovereignty (Beaulieu, 2006; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). Tribal autonomy is the foundation for which all discussions of Native people's existence should be based (Lomawaima, 2000) and should also include educational autonomy (McCarty and Lee, 2014).

The learning expedition of Native people is one straddling two dissimilar value structures and perspectives. It is a journey in which the American Indian sacred view unavoidably collides with the reality of existing in the larger American society (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Locust, 1988). Several scholars contend that students who are educated about and comfortable within both the majority culture and their Native beliefs are better able to balance the demands of both worlds (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Delpit, 1988,

1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 1995b). Scholarly literature indicates that Indigenous students should have a chance to explore their Native culture and language to protect and maintain their ancestral identities while learning about traditional values from elders (Agbo, 2001; Agbo, 2004; Agbo, 2007; Brayboy & Castagno, 2009).

Teaching American Indian students presents a crucial need for teachers to be adroit in culturally sensitive curricular execution and Indigenous-centered teaching practices (Raas, 2012). There are unique steps that need to be put in place to implement the curriculum in a way where schoolchildren's knowledge is considered in the learning procedure as integral and authorized knowledge (Ladson- Billings, 1995), and advocate that educators use literary works composed by Native authors and select topics pertinent to American Indian life (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). Evidence supports the significance of emphasizing American Indian culture and language in school for teachers of American Indian children (Matthew & Smith, 1994). Some studies with Native children found that tribal specific teaching and learning practices promoted a cultural and life-sustaining environment that was experienced and developed through the Native child's connection with their natural world (Cajete, 2010). Researchers contend that the current lived realities of American Indian children require schools to use teaching and learning practices that not only sustain culture but actually revitalize the culture (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Sorknes and Kelting-Gibson (2007) learned from a study designed to gather the perceptions of Montana teachers regarding effective strategies for engaging American Indian students that embedding American Indian traditions and culture into learning materials was important for helping Native students develop pride in their customs. The

scholars suggest that their discoveries add the thoughts of Montana teachers to the works of both Gilliland (1999), and Cleary and Peacock (1998) to create a more complete understanding of Indigenous education.

Smith (1999) posits that proving the validity of Indigenous knowledge, including that Native people have unique ways of interpreting their lived experiences, as well as maintaining control over those understandings are some of the challenges Native people endure. Scholars argues that Indigenous learners need to have the opportunity to assemble their knowledge and make sense of the content so they can internalize the information through their lived experiences while being encouraged to maintain their Native identity (Gilliland, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Some studies highlight the importance of understanding Indigenous ways of knowing (Pepion, 1999), and claim the learning needs and interests of Native children need to highlight Indigenous ways of knowing and traditional teaching methods that use relevant materials with Native students' views of human, natural and spiritual worlds (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Demmert (2001) proclaimed that an abundance of Indigenous schoolchildren has failed in the current Western learning structure and promote adopting an Indigenous way of knowing model that grounds Native children in their traditional roots.

The operational definition for CRT for my study braids together the tenets of Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), and TribalCrit to read: Culturally Responsive Learning (CRL) is linking students' cultural understanding, past observations and participation in events, perspectives and

learning styles to scholarly astuteness to make learning more individualized, through a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm.

Culturally Relevant Models

Burnette, Renner, and Figley (2019) offered the framework of historical oppression, resilience, and transcendence (FHORT) to impart investigate disparities associated with mental health issues including depression and suicide. The framework is a culturally grounded, and strength-based framework crafted with Indigenous communities designed to predict whether an individual experiences wellness and harmony amid the mind, body, soul, and spirit (Burnette & Figley, 2016).

One research team argues that culturally responsive principles have crossed-over into successful prevention models that connected cultural identity, and self-esteem by braiding traditional culture, parenting/social skill-building, and strengthening family relationships into the intervention (Goodkind et al., 2012). The authors learned that American Indian adolescents benefited from participating in culturally based mental health interventions that incorporates the development of problem-solving skills, positive intellectual reprogramming, and seeks social supports (Goodkind et al., 2012). The outcomes support the conclusions represented in a study that identified support-seeking coping strategies are associated to reduced depression and anxiety symptoms among U.S. adolescents (Wright et al., 2010). Other studies acknowledge the significance of the intrinsic assets of Native communities for Indigenous youth and suggest that impending innovations mix Native culture and traditional healing practices (Pavkov et al., 2010).

Hodge, Limb, & Cross (2009) linked colonization to mental health within Indigenous communities and suggested abandoning Western mental health remedies in

exchange for healing processes that rely on Indigenous knowledge foundations. Some studies contend that traditional cultural practices that use cultural values to heal intergenerational trauma may help American Indian students reduce suicidal thoughts (Hill 2009; Yurkovich, Hopkins, & Rieke, 2012), and suicidal ideation may be reduced by participating in spiritual activities (Garroutte et al., 2003). The impact of cultural influences, like having a connection to a person's Native culture, possessing a robust Native spiritual orientation, and cultural continuity, can be protective factors against suicide among American Indian youth (Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997).

Wexler and colleagues (2016) claim that American Indians suffer from lack of culturally appropriate mental-health interventions, and argue for the development of partnerships between scholars and Native communities that permit Indigenous peoples opportunities to draw their own conclusions about what constitutes important societal issues, as well as permitting them to craft remedies that reveal community preferences. Increasing access to culturally centered innovations, growth and execution of school and community intervention models, teaching and growing a consciousness of suicide, and linking children to their traditions are all identified in literature (Goldston et al., 2008; Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Some investigators argue that cultural and ethnic groups benefit when practitioners use a more situated view when applying cultural learning styles (Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1999). Scholarly writings suggest that culturally responsive principles are also valid when applied to bullying prevention programs (Cannon, 2009; Leonard et al., 2005; Robinson & Lewis, 2011; Sachau & Hutchinson, 2012; Santamaria, 2009) resulting in the need to develop bullying prevention models that take culture and culturally relevant

instruction into account and that a bullying intervention model should be tailored to address the particular cultural characteristics of the site (Kowalsky et al., 2014; Botvin et, al., 1995). Li (2008) stresses the importance of culture and institutional context in bullying prevention programs. Li (2008) found that culture played a role in the aggressive behavior of adolescents and that culture must be accounted for when designing prevention programs. Kowalsky and others (2014) confirm that little research has been conducted in the fields of cross-cultural bullying. The authors note that disparities in bullying prevention results indicate that more than likely a universal bullying prevention and intervention model will not be effective (Kowalsky et al., 2014).

The components and means for bullying perpetration and victimization are consistent across cultures, but there are cultural differences that support using Indigenous culture into bullying prevention programs. Evans, Fraser, and Cotter (2014) argue that for bullying prevention measures to be effective they need to be culturally sympathetic. Some literature states that interventions models aimed at minority children should include ways to enrich ethnic pride and foster cultural identity (Felix-Ortiz & Newcomb, 1995).

Traditional Blackfoot Learning Process

A Blackfoot way of knowing epistemology first appeared in the literature in the late 1990s. Pepion (1999) interviewed Blackfoot elders to learn how they believed Blackfoot knowledge was transferred. Pepion (1999) recommended through his study that, the four bands of the Blackfoot gather a collection of educators and individuals of considerable insight to start the process of describing how a Blackfoot way of knowing relates to scholarly endeavors. The investigator further advocates that Blackfoot scholars scribe academic materials explaining a Blackfoot way of knowing and begin

disseminating their ideas at scholarly events (Pepion, 1999). Bastien (2004) learned that the epistemology of American Indians was found in their ceremonies and that creating knowledge centered on ways of existing in harmony with the natural world. Bastien (2004) interprets Blackfoot epistemology as personifying your understandings and in coming to comprehend what's in your heart is where a person starts to comprehend a lived knowledge. An essential aspect of acquiring sacred knowledge was coming to understand one's kinship alliances, and it is through these relationships that a Blackfoot comes to know. Thus, the essence of education to the Blackfoot is living the sacred knowledge and connecting with the alliances. The scholar learned that the process of acquired knowledge only happened through careful listening and then applying the lessons and wisdom learned to lived experiences. Bastien (2004) stated,

> The ways of knowing, acquiring knowledge, and truth are dependent upon the skills of observation - isstaokakitsotsip. The observational skills of Niitsitapi include the knowledge that has been accumulated in the retelling of the story over time and applying knowledge to the present. Knowledge is a process of observing, reflecting on the connections among your observations, and applying the experiences of the ancestors and interrelationships of alliances to your observations and experiences. (p.138).

Women played an important role in preserving and transferring Blackfoot history as oral storytellers. Educating Blackfoot children about family history was the responsibility commonly reserved for women. Blackfoot societies, like many Native societies were often connected by matrilineal treads resulting in bestowing on grandmothers and other elder women of the tribe being responsible for early education

(Portman & Herring, 2001). Eli (2013) argues that Blackfoot women help their children develop their self-identity and shape their worldview by sharing family stories and transferring sacred knowledge tied to ceremonies and traditions. The scholar states:

> The role of a Blackfoot Woman Storyteller is that of an educator who reinforces Blackfoot ideology, proper cultural practices and behavior through oral storytelling while still teaching a basic survival system to younger generations. Oral storytelling involves the layering and mapping of Blackfoot history, traditional spirituality, and information that impacts the nation for the collective consciousness of the Niistapiiks (p. 99).

Traditional Blackfeet learning is understood to begin during infancy with direct parenting by the mother that over time transitions to grandparents before returning to the parent at the beginning of adolescence (Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999). The time spent with grandparents is vital as traditional knowledge is transferred between generations (Bastien, 2004; Hall, 2018; Pepion, 1999), through ceremonies and creation and mythology stories that provide the basis for Blackfoot culture. Bastien (2004) asserts, “These stories also provided the values, mores, rules, and laws that guided the culture. More importantly, it provided a thinking and decision-making process since the stories were highly metaphorical and infused with similes" (p. 51).

Former Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau (2001), the first American Indian elected to a statewide office in Montana, claims that American Indians had an educational system that relied on elders transferring their knowledge to children through stories and myths that centered on survival. The Tribal Nations of Montana Handbook for Legislators (2016) champions the importance of storytelling to

Montana's tribes "Some individual tribal stories are so sacred and powerful that they are treated with respect and accompanied by ceremony" (p. 31).

Researchers contend that storytelling is a legitimate source of transferring tribal philosophies, beliefs, and traditions between generations (Brayboy, 2005; Raymond, 1999). Bastien (2004) surmises, “The cultural integrity of most North American tribes as perceived by the grandfathers is held in the stories of our ancestors and the teachings of the stories” (p. 122). A person has the unique ability to use their past experiences as a bridge to their future through their cultural stories that help them make sense of their existence (Yellow Bird, 2012).

Scholars believe that Blackfoot cultural traditions and spiritual practices are chronicled in stories that explain their origin (Hernandez, 1999) and are transferred through oral traditions embedded in ceremonies that are reenactments of the origin and creation stories retold the same way they were told centuries ago and are the basis for understanding a Blackfoot way of knowing (Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999). Pepion (1999) learned that the survival of traditional rituals is dependent on understanding and remembering the stories, and surmised through his visits with elders that "Reenact the ceremony and I'll hear your prayers, is the essence of ceremony as it was given to the people through their genesis and way of knowing” (p. 84). A Blackfoot way of knowing shares several characteristics with Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory claims that humans learn from one another through observing, imitating, and modeling others. (Bandura, 2012). A Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm is based on the understanding that Blackfeet children learn from observing, imitating, and modeling others through traditional stories.

Some investigators believe that by learning traditional stories and retelling them honors alliances and helps blend traditional and contemporary ideas that helps Native people obtain balance in their life (Edge, 2011). Blackfoot cultural practices runs parallel to the lived experiences of being Blackfoot (Bastien, 2004), and by allowing Pikani children to receive knowledge as part of their interactions with their alliances, they are better able to make sense of their existence (Hall, 2018; Hernandez, 1999).

The Blackfoot maintained winter count to chronical important historical events (Raczka, 1979; Scott, 2006; Tovías, 2014). Raczka (1979) claims that the term winter count comes from the "North Peigan tribe of the Blackfoot Nation and is the longest surviving record of the Blackfoot, dating from 1764 – 1924" (p. 4). Scholars suggest that the principal purpose of winter count was to maintain a sequential structure that people could trust to recall peculiar events (Tovías, 2014). The 'keeper of winter count' usually a male, entered in their records, a word or phrase related to what they believed were the most important events experienced by the whole tribe, individual tribal bands, or personally impactful. The word or phrase would become part of an oral history (Scott, 2006) passed between generations, or would be represented by a small picture painted on a bison hide (McClintock, 1968), that would be used as a reminder of the events (Tovías, 2014). The original Blackfoot winter count was difficult to understand until it was determined that the pictographs began on the lower left-hand side of the bison hide and continued across to the right corner before moving upward in a counterclockwise spiral (Raczka, 1979).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the literature surrounding 1) strength-based versus deficit based interventions, 2) school connectedness and cultural connectedness, 3) resiliency theory and cultural resiliency theory, 4) self-efficacy, 5) culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy and culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy 5) culturally responsive teaching, 6) culturally responsive intervention models, 7) TribalCrit and 8) traditional Blackfoot learning, and how they come together to provide the foundation for creating and using a strength-based, culturally centered paradigm.

The literature provides the basis for determining how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

"School can be difficult for our children as they balance the expectations between the Western world and traditional ways" Blackfoot Elder

Introduction

The purpose of my investigation is to examine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities, and traditional stories, and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

Role of the Researcher

My part was both a participant and an observer due to the nature of action research. I have been an educator for 28 years, 19 years as a middle school and high school principal with 7 of those years as a school administrator for Browning Public Schools. I currently have a MA in Education with an emphasis in curriculum and instruction and educational leadership. This cycle was the third action research study I conducted on this topic. The first cycle probed teachers understanding about school connectedness for American Indian children and their caregivers. The second cycle examined the perceptions that child psychiatrists has about the relationship between American Indian culture and adolescent development.

For my final study, I administered the surveys, conducted observations, observed and participated in cultural ceremonies, acted as the interviewer, and introduced the values identified in the Hoops of Values to the students enrolled in the Blackfeet immersion classrooms.

Setting

Part I of my study was conducted in Montana and Alberta, Canada, and took place in Blackfeet tribal buildings, in the homes of Blackfoot elders, and at culturally relevant sites and ceremonies across the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Part II of my study took place at Napi elementary school located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Browning, Montana. Napi elementary school is part of Browning Public Schools. Browning Public Schools is governed by an eight-member publicly elected board of directors that establishes district policy that is monitored by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Napi elementary school consists of 450 students in the 4th through 6th-grade, and the student population is 98% American Indian. Napi elementary school is the largest American Indian student who attended 4 through 6th-grade school in Montana. The school has two building administrators, 34 certified staff, and 15 classified employees.

Participants

The participants for Part 1 of my study consisted of 26 Blackfoot elders. The participants for Part 2 of my study included 41, 4th and 5th-grade students enrolled in Browning Public Schools. All of the student participants for my research were registered in a Blackfeet immersion classroom. Browning Public School District #9 established the Blackfeet Immersion model at the beginning of the 2015 – 2016 school year. The school district requires parents to give individual consent in order for a child to participate in the Blackfeet Immersion classroom. Nearly one hundred percent of the students attending Napi Elementary qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Data Collection

Data were collected from June 2019 until December 2019 in Blackfeet tribal buildings, in homes of elders, at culturally relevant sites and ceremonies, and Napi elementary school. For the initial phase of my study, I conducted 26 elder interviews, including 12 formal interviews and 14 informal interviews. The 12 structured elder interviews were conducted in the homes of participants or at sites determined by the participants. The 14 informal interviews were conducted while attending traditional Blackfoot ceremonies located at sites across the Blackfoot Confederacy. The formal elder interviews lasted from 45 minutes to nearly 3 hours, and informal interviews continued throughout my observations and participation in traditional ceremonies. The interviews were digitally recorded when permitted. I began each formal elder visit with an explanation of my study, as well as an honorarium of $50 and a bag of pouch tobacco.

I also attended and participated in nine traditional ceremonies, including a bundle opening and bundle transfer, a pipe opening, sweats, and face paintings. For these ceremonies, I had to rely on memory to create fieldnotes as an electronic recording is prohibited. After each ceremony, I dictated my notes into a digital recorder in order to capture relevant information. The traditional values discovered during elder visits and at ceremonies were used to create The Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values, the definitions of each traditional value, and as the basis for the student coding categories.

For the second phase of my study, I administered the presurvey via a paper copy on three separate days in the classrooms of the innovation teachers during the week of September 8 through September 13, 2019, and the post-survey during the week of December 1 through December 6, 2019. It took approximately 20 minutes for the

students to complete both the pre and post-surveys. I conducted 41 interviews with 4th and 5th-grade students enrolled in Blackfeet immersion classrooms. The students were interviewed in groups of two, three or four, at Napi elementary school during regular school hours. The interviews lasted approximately 7 minutes and were audio-recorded.

I also observed or participated in 8 classroom innovation activities, including describing the study and teaching innovation lessons. The innovation lessons lasted for approximately 30 minutes. I captured classroom events through field notes and by transcribing digitally recorded activities.

Research Design Part I

The framers of the Blackfeet Educational Standards (2005) struggled to identify and find consensus about contemporary and traditional Blackfeet values. The authors claim that "The Blackfeet Education Standards and other tribal and school documents contain several references to values. Definitions and consensus regarding contemporary and traditional values are missing" (Blackfoot Standards Implementation Guide, p. 6).

One Piikani scholar emphatically argues that understanding traditional Blackfeet values, cultural practices, and the Native language is critical for school leaders working with children on the Blackfeet Indian reservation. To accept the argument posed by Hall (2018) one would also have to agree that Native children that are bridging the gap between their lived experiences and the ideas of the dominant culture would benefit from teachers that understand and apply community accepted values that are embedded in culturally relevant materials taught through a Blackfoot way of knowing.

Elder Visits Method

Portraiture

Positionality is an important concept for a non-Indigenous scholar conducting research with American Indians to acknowledge. A fundamental argument made by Smith (2012) is that non-Indigenous scholars have traditionally shaped Indigenous based examinations through a Western lens ignoring or at least minimizing the impacts of colonization. I mentally wrestled with what would be the best way to capture a narrative that places an Indigenous way of knowing at the center of my story. I initially proposed to use an ethnographic approach introduced by Edge (2011) and Pepion (1999), but while reading several scholarly works, I came across a poignant statement that caught my attention and ultimately influenced the direction of my study. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) suggests, "Ethnographers listen to a story while portraitists listen for a story" (p. 13). I found the ideology difference between listening to a story and for a story to be compelling—I contend that merely listening to a story when compared to listening for a story minimizes the lived experiences of the storyteller. To this end, a key aspect of my study was using the principles of portraiture to capture the lived experiences of the participants. Portraiture is a qualitative approach introduced by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffmann Davis (1997).

All scholars, whether conducting quantitative or qualitative examinations influence the data they collect and interpret—Portraiture is no different in this sense and perhaps is even more evident as the researcher navigates the relationships with the participants to construct a narrative; at each stage of the study the involvement of the portraitist as an instrument of inquiry is present. Although the participation of the

portraitist is evident and explicit when using portraiture, so too is their commitment to skepticism and critique. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) states, "One might even say that because the self of the portraitist is so essential to the development of the work, she must be that much more vigilant about identifying other sources of challenge to her perspective" (p. 13).

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) suggests that portraiture is a qualitative approach used to document and detail the social sciences by combining components of ethnography (De La Mare, 2010), with life history and naturalist inquiry (Dixon, Chapman & Hill, 2005). Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) implies that a central goal of portraiture is to seize the intricacy, and nuances and come to know the patterns and process for change and growth. Portraitists aim to capture richly detailed stories that describe the intersects between human experiences and the situated context shaped through discourse between the portraitists and the subjects.

Portraiture is a strength-based framework (Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997) that acknowledges that Western researchers commonly rely on imperialistic ways of knowing (Smith, 1999) to conduct scholarly endeavors in Native communities. The portraitist acknowledges their positionality by recognizing that their values, life experiences, and biases influence what data is collected and the interpretations that come from research activities. Portraiture is also significant for my study because it rejects the scholarly practice of focusing on negative attributes in favor of searching for goodness. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) champion, "Portraiture resists this tradition-laden effort to document failure" (p. 9). A fundamental aspect of portraiture is recording how the participants define goodness resulting in the subject's ways of knowing being honored.

Formal Interviews (Elders)

In order to gain a contextualized understanding of how Blackfoot elders come to know and understand what values are transferred during ceremonies, cultural activities, or through traditional stories, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were theoretically based on Rubin and Rubin's (2012) responsive interviewing and centered on predetermined topics, but the interview questions were neither wholly predetermined nor completely conversational (Merriam, 1998). The topics were conceived from the ideas of identity formation expressed by Wilson (2008) stating, "Identity for indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors, who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land" (p. 80). Smith (1999) says, "Indigenous peoples have philosophies which connect humans to the environment and each other, and which generate principles for living, which is sustainable, respectful and possible" (p. 109). The interview format created a free-flowing conversation that allowed elders to shape the direction of the exploration while I was able to build on ideas revealed by the participants naturally.

An essential aspect of my study was blending the ideas expressed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), Smith (1999), and Wilson (2012). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest the duty of a portraitist is to map out the physical, historical, and personal contexts embedded in the research. Smith (1999) notes the importance of acknowledging that Indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world, which is unique. Smith (1999) mentions that privileging the dominant group's ways of knowing promotes a lack of consideration as it relates to marginalized groups' ways of knowing and constructing and pursuing knowledge "is deeply embedded in multiple layers of imperial

and colonial practices" (p. 2). Wilson (2012) identifies three styles of Indigenous storytelling, including 1) sacred storytelling, 2) storytelling centered on Indigenous legends, and 3) storytelling related to personal experiences or the personal experiences of others. For the purposes of my study I focused on capturing the personal experiences of the participants. Wilson (2012) states, "Elders often use experiences from their own lives or others' lives to help counsel or teach" (p. 98). I viewed elders as both my cultural guide and my cultural teacher, and I relied on the words of Linda Tuhiwai Smith to guide my discovery. Smith (1999) contends that,

> It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which rages over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying (p. 29-30).

To formulate a contextual understanding of how elders viewed their "physical context," I asked them about their connection to the land. Answers to these questions gave me insights into how elders positioned themselves within it their physical environment and how they perceived the relationships between the land and spirituality. Lawrence -Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain that "historical context" refers to elders' "journey, culture, [and] ideology" (p. 52). To develop a historical understanding, I asked elders about their cultural journey, specifically what they learned from their ancestors about being Blackfoot and how those experiences shaped their understanding of and connection to the culture. I also probed how they positioned themselves culturally within the broader context of the tribe, as well as how they positioned themselves within the broader society. Finally, I collected information about the "personal context" the elders

and I engage in during interviews. As participants answered interview questions, I created a free-flowing discourse by asking clarifying questions—summarizing and repeating what the interviewee had said allowed me to confirm the accuracy of my understanding in comparison to the participants' and to generate follow-up questions that encouraged the interviewee to describe further and clarify their thoughts (Merriam, 1998). The complete elder interview guide is attached as Appendix D. A sample of interview questions are included in Table 4.

Table 4

Elder Visit Questions

What comes to mind when I say the phrase Blackfoot values? What does it mean to you?
What do you think are some of the positive thing's youth learn from attending ceremony or by participating in cultural activities?
In your mind what is the significance of an Indian name?
How do you feel when you hear the Blackfoot language?
What are some of the positive things the youth attain by hearing and learning Blackfoot?
How optimistic are you about young people learning the Blackfoot language?
Can you explain the connection if there is one between the environment and spirituality?
What are your thoughts about the land around us?
Before we close, do you have any additional comments to share about the culture?
Thank you for sharing your views with me. Do you have any more questions about the project and its goals?

Informal Interviews/Observations (Elders)

I also conducted informal interviews with elders while attending traditional ceremonies and other cultural events. The informal interviews were spontaneous "open-ended" and "conversational" (Merriam, 1998, p. 73), dialogues designed to capture the thoughts and actions of elders participating in or with culture and were not digitally recorded. Attending and participating in traditional ceremonies and cultural activities

allowed me to step into the culture and build essential relationships. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) believes that informal interviews were critical for her development as a portraitist. The scholar states:

> Portraits are constructed, shaped, and drawn through the development of relationships. All the processes of portraiture require that we build productive and benign relationships. It is through relationships between the portraitist and the actors that access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility...developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed (1997, p. 135).

Relational accountability is foundational for using an Indigenous based research paradigm. I noted in chapter one of this dissertation I intended to use a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm to guide my study. Wilson (2012) suggests that for relational accountability to be prevalent during an examination, "the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)" (p. 99). Relationship negotiation is a central component of portraiture, and since relationships are complicated, developing, and everchanging (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997), my observation and participation in ceremonies and cultural activities were adapted accordingly.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) writes, "When we speak about creating a believable story, we inevitably must consider the whole—not just the pieces of the puzzle but the assemblage," (p. 245). During informal interviews, I asked questions that were relevant to the ceremony, as well as having spontaneous conversations about other topics related to both traditional and contemporary issues experienced by tribal members. I also paid close

attention to the actions and behaviors of other people attending ceremonies and cultural activities to identify both complimentary and contradictory data.

Research Design Part II

Conceptual Model

Part II of my study was designed as an Indigenous based mixed-methods approach that braided a traditional mixed methods approach with Indigenous ways of knowing. Getty (2010) notes that "An Indigenous research paradigm is a model, or conceptual framework, based on an Indigenous ontological foundation or worldview and epistemological approach" (p. 11). An Indigenous influenced research paradigm assures that the "theoretical perspective is derived from Indigenous research philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, values, and methodology" (Chilisa & Tsheko, 2014, p. 223). Indigenous research paradigms serve to decolonize the marginalized voice while building reciprocal relationships that capture an Indigenous way of knowing through an Indigenous worldview that places Indigenous knowledge at the vanguard of the examination. Scholars contend that Indigenous research models should be crafted to guarantee that Indigenous knowledge is seen as property and proper safeguards are used to avoid misunderstandings and exploitations; to clarify understandings about Native Americans; to share and give voice to Native American peoples' stories; to recognize and honor Native peoples' ownership rights of the knowledge; to transfer the research conclusions back to the Indigenous group; to support their longing to be viewed as subjects instead of objects of investigations, and to determine their current and prospect place in society (Chingwe & Makuwira, 2018 as cited by Porsanger, 2004).

My study was concerned with assuring that the methodologies used were culturally specific and ethically appropriate to honor the values and worldviews expressed through the words of the participants. Decolonizing the word is a critical aspect of using an Indigenous research paradigm that aims to include the participants as co-researchers. In order for scholars to decolonize the word, they must acknowledge that oppressors frequently alter the meaning of words to fit their worldviews. The language of the oppressor puts the oppressed in a linguistic box that denies them their linguistic skills and forces them to adopt the language of the oppressor as a form of control (Chilisa & Tsheko, 2014). Indigenous populations are commonly blamed for the destructive societal issues that plague both reservation and urban populations. Scholars have traditionally marginalized the Indigenous voice by failing to include their values and worldviews as part of the solution. This study, on the contrary, purposely used the precise words of participants when developing instruments and reaching conclusions.

A traditional mixed methods approach is highlighted by the researcher using both qualitative and quantitative methods at roughly the same time, permitting the investigator to merge data from both approaches to confirm conclusions while finding comprehensive solutions to complex real-world issues (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). According to Ivankova & Wingo (2018), "Researchers have five broad reasons for using mixed methods: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion" (p. 980). Researchers suggest that a mixed-method design allows for a more sophisticated analysis of findings (Creswell, 2002; Fielding, 2012). Scholars note that one of the procedures for mixed methods data analysis is related to simultaneous statistical inquiry (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007), in which both qualitative and quantitative data are

merged. The authors further hypothesize that this data analysis typically includes the simultaneous, but independent, gathering and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative information that allows the scholar to make sound conclusions related to the identified examination problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

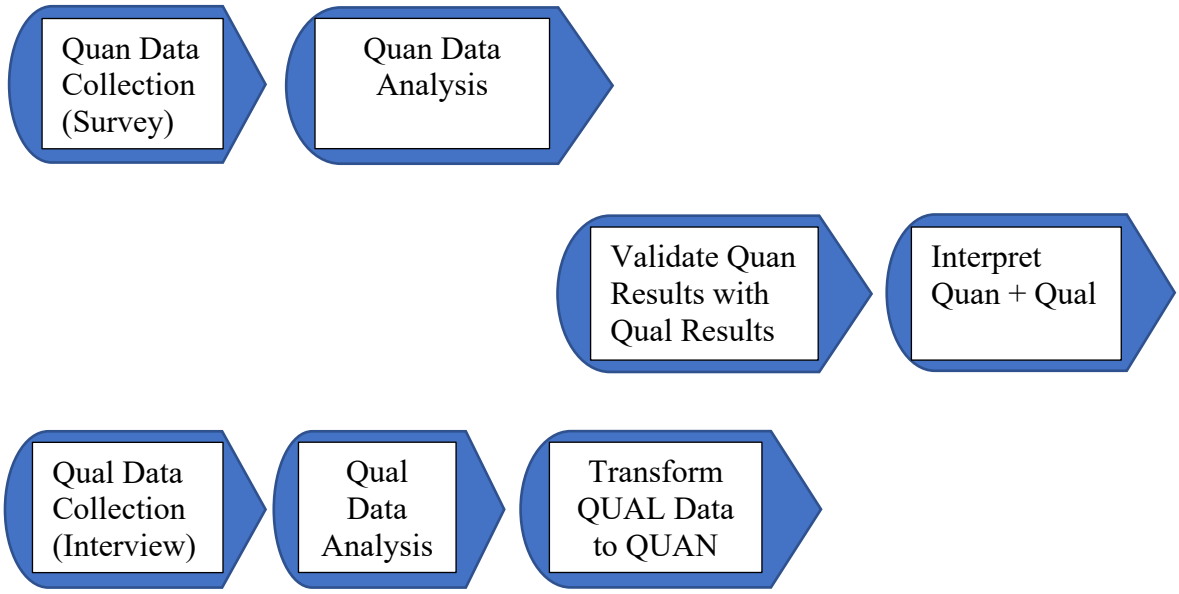
Triangulation Model

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggest that there are four main types of mixed methods designs, including "Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design, and the Exploratory Design" (p. 59), and that the Triangulation model is the most commonly mixed methods design. Scholarly articles suggest that a fundamental reason for using a Triangulation design is to collect different but complementary data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The scholars identify four variants of a Triangulation design, including the convergence model, the data transformation model, the validating quantitative data model, and the multilevel model.

To develop a robust and richer understanding of how the perspectives of Blackfeet youth come to know and understand cultural connectedness and school connectedness, as well as developing a contextual understanding of the role cultural values play in developing a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm, I designed an Indigenous centered data transformation study shown in Figure 1. The transformation model adheres to the fundamental principles of collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data separately and simultaneously but includes the transformation of one kind of data into the other form of data. The transformation process occurs by either developing codes to quantify qualitative data or to qualify quantitative data. (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012).

Figure 1

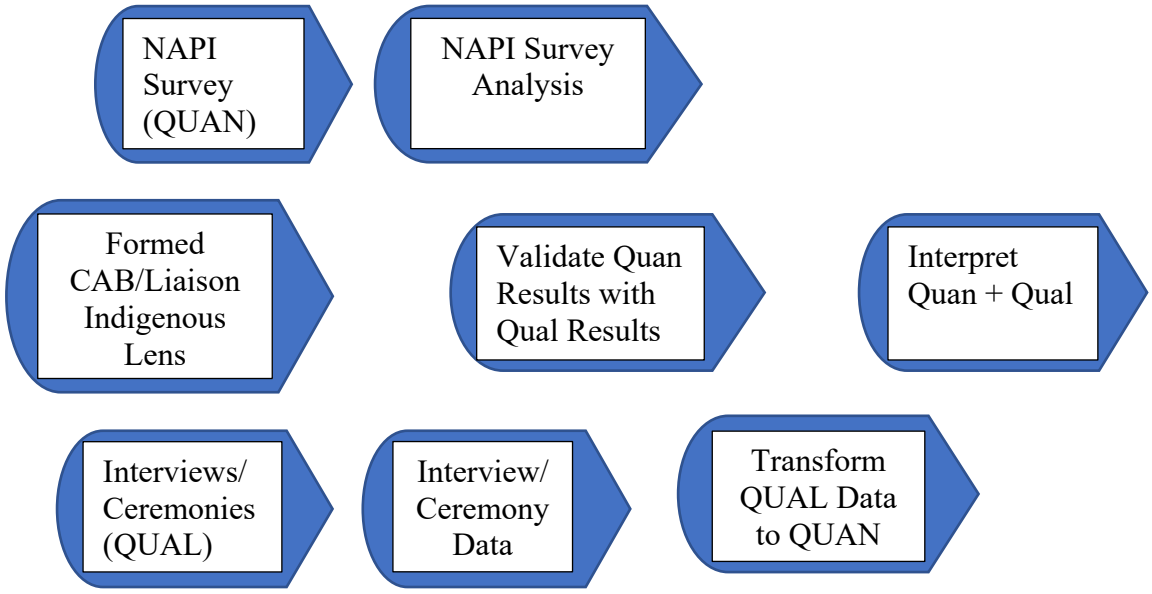
Triangulation Design: Data Transformation Model



My Indigenous centered mixed-methods study shown in Figure 2 was designed to honor the importance of building relationships while valuing the knowledge that is stored in Indigenous language, cultural practices, spirituality, and traditional teachings and stories. The mixed-methods approach was used simultaneously at each stage of this examination including during the creation of research questions, research design, data collection and analysis, and interpretation and discussion of the findings to determine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of traditional values, and the degree of impact a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm has on cultural connectedness and school connectedness.

Figure 2

Indigenous Triangulation Design: Data Transformation Model



Assimilation Teaching and Learning

Scholars contend that assimilation teaching and learning practices are commonly used by educators in America (Brayboy and Castagno, 2009), resulting in American Indian youth experiencing acculturation stress that is contributing to adverse mental health issues (LaFromboise & Malik, 2016). Assimilation is a type of cultural interaction that is associated with acculturation. Though both assimilation and acculturation denote changes as a result of interactions among diverse cultures, there are substantial disparities amid them. Assimilation refers to the means through which people and varied cultural groups attain the fundamental habits, mindsets, and ways of living of another cultural group (Lash, 2018; Waldinger 2003, 2007). Scholars have consistently criticized assimilation because of its extensive link with ethnic cleansing and for placing the language and culture of White America over other cultural groups (Ladson-Billings

1999). Acculturation, on the other hand, is frequently linked to political subjugation or world-building and is attached to the method of change in traditional practices that happens when the cultural structure of a distinct group supplants that of another cultural group (LaFromboise & Malik, 2016; LaFromboise, Albright & Harris, 2010).

Assimilation schooling practices are also deeply embedded in school-based bullying prevention programs and has resulted in scholars advocating for using culturally responsive school practices when developing bullying prevention models (Cannon, 2009; Leonard et al., 2005; Robinson & Lewis, 2011; Sachau & Hutchinson, 2012; Santamaria, 2009) that are customized to address the unique cultural characteristics of the implementation site (Kowalsky et al., 2014; Botvin et, al., 1995).

Blackfoot Way of Knowing Paradigm

To address the assimilation teaching and learning practices commonly used in mainstream educational environments, I intentionally used a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm to implement this research project. A paradigm is understood as a philosophical or theoretical framework of any kind. A Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm is a philosophical framework based on a traditional Blackfoot learning process. A vital aspect of a traditional Blackfoot learning process is having children learn knowledge through traditional stories (Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999). The Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm is framed by the Blackfeet Educational Standards (2005); a Blackfoot way of knowing proposed by Bastien (2004); Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) offered by McCarty and Lee (2014); Culturally Responsive Teaching pioneered by Gay (2010); and, Tribal Critical Race Theory crafted by Brayboy (2005).

Blackfeet Immersion Classrooms

The Blackfeet immersion classrooms were selected for this study because both teachers are enrolled members of the Blackfeet Nation, actively participate in cultural activities, and include as part of their everyday instructional practices a multitude cultural activities such as taking attendance with the student's Blackfoot name, smudging, using traditional prayers, and actively using both Blackfoot and the English language. The cultural activities used by the teachers are integral parts of defining and measuring the effectiveness of using a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm to inform cultural connectedness and school connectedness.

Browning Public Schools and Olweus

Napi elementary school has been using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) for eight-years. In 2011, Browning Public Schools Board of Trustees, the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, and the Blackfeet Tribal Health Program agreed to implement the OBPP in all Browning Public Schools. The memorandum of understanding called for the parties to comply with the program requirements as outlined on the OBPP Schoolwide Implementation Checklist.

The OBPP is one of the most widely applied bullying prevention programs used in elementary schools and middle schools across Europe and the United States. OBPP is recognized by the Center for Study and Prevention of Violence and the Substance Abuse; Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as a model program (Olweus, 1991, 1993, Olweus & Limber, 2010a, 2010b) The OBPP is a whole-school approach that is designed to reduce

existing bullying problems, prevent new bullying problems, achieve better peer relations, and create a sense of community (Olweus, 1993; Olweus & Limber, 2010b).

The OBPP has been extensively investigated in Europe, and, more recently, investigators began probing the effectiveness of the OBPP in the United States (Limber, Nation, Tracy, & Flerx, 2004; Olweus & Linder, 2010b). The researchers discovered significant differences between the intervention and comparison schools in such things as student reports of bullying other students, self-reported delinquency, vandalism, school misbehavior, and school-administered sanctions. However, a study in Washington state revealed substantial program effects for relational and physical victimization among white students but not among students of other races/ethnic backgrounds (Olweus & Linder, 2010b). Scholars have noted that more attention needs to be placed on the effectiveness of general bullying prevention programs versus culturally focused prevention programs for minority youth to determine how minority students understand, encounter and become a bullying perpetrator and how they perceive and interact with prevention and interventions models (Botvin et, al., 1995; Limber et al., 2018).

Olweus & Limber (2010) claim that "the OBPP is built on four basic principles. “Adults at school should: (a) show warmth and positive interest in students; (b) set firm limits to unacceptable behavior; (c) use consistent positive consequences to acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behavior and non-physical, non-hostile consequences when rules are broken; and (d) function as authorities and positive role models" (p. 126). Missing from the four basic OBPP principles are any reference to the significance of developing and using a culturally centered implementation paradigm that reflects the unique culture of the implementation site. Also missing from the OBPP principles is any

connection to the seven Indian Education for All (IEFA) Essential Understandings or an application of a fundamental understanding of the IEFA act that all teachers, regardless of subject matter, include in their instruction the lived experiences of American Indian populations.

Part II: Research Implementation

Research Phase 1: Building Relationships and Cultural Guidance

This research project began by building school district based and community-centered relationships focused on establishing research parameters that placed a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm at the center of the studies activities and findings. I began relationship building by participating in a face painting ceremony. I also formed a three-person Community Advisory Board (CAB) that was eventually extended to five members who were provided the opportunity to view and offer their individual insights regarding the student data.

A cultural liaison also guided me throughout the examination. The cultural liaison was my cultural guide to identify elders, select ceremonies to attend, and for providing cultural clarification. The liaison is culturally engaged and attends and participates in traditional Blackfoot ceremonies. The liaison works for the Blackfeet Tribe and served on the Browning Public Schools, Board of Trustees.

I also attended multiple Blackfoot Elders Advisory Committee meetings. The Blackfoot Confederacy was established in 2000 when the Amskapi Piikani, Kainai, Pikani, and the Siksika signed a declaration confirming their combined commitment to work together on common issues as one Confederacy. The Blackfoot Elders Advisory committee is an integral aspect of the Confederacy and includes both male and female

elders from all four bands of the Blackfoot Confederacy. The guiding vision of the Confederacy was an essential part of conceptualizing and Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm and states Siksikaitsitapi, honoring and utilizing the past, into the present, for the future Blackfoot way of life. Visits with Blackfoot elders and my attendance and participation in ceremonies provided the basis for the creation of the Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values and the 19 categories developed during the student qualitative analysis.

Study Permission

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board, the Blackfeet Nation Institutional Review Board, and Browning Public Schools. The superintendent, school board, Napi elementary school principal and assistant principal were approached and agreed to permit the study. I obtained all parental consent signatures and student assent signatures resulting in all target students and their families agreeing to participate in the research.

Research Phase 2: Cultural Connectedness Survey Design

To measure identity, traditions, and spirituality as components of a cultural connectedness scale, I used a Blackfeet-adapted version of the Cultural Connectedness Scale Short (CCS-S) crafted by Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay, Craig, and Hinson (2017). Snowshoe's (2017) original Cultural Connectedness Scale (CCS) Short (CCS-S) version had ten items spread across the three subscales: identity, traditions, and spirituality. Of the original CCS-S items, five had a dichotomous response scale of no, or yes, four had a 5-point Likert response scale ranging from never to every day, and one had a 5-point Likert response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The CCS-S demonstrated good scale score reliability (Cronbach's a = .70, 95% CI .641– .752]).

The Blackfeet version was adapted under the guidance of my 3-person Community Advisory Board (CAB) to reflect Blackfeet or Blackfoot culture. For example, the original Cultural Connectedness Scale-Short Version (CSS-S) question number 1 states: I know my cultural/spirit name, and was adapted to state: I know my Indian name; question number 6 states, I have a strong sense of belonging to my [Aboriginal/FNMI] community or nation and was adapted to state: I have a strong sense of belonging to the Blackfeet Nation; and I added a question stating: If a traditional person/Elder speaks to me about being Blackfeet I would listen to them carefully. The pre-survey respondents (n = 41) and the post-survey respondents (n = 41) answered ten questions, four of which were related to the identity subscale; three connected to the traditional subscale; and, three related to the spirituality subscale. All ten questions had a yes/no or N.A. response scale. The ten items included in the Blackfeet adapted Cultural Connectedness Scale are attached in Table 5.

Table 5

10-item Blackfeet adapted Cultural Connectedness Scale-Short Version (CCS-S)

Identity (4 items)

I want to find out more about my culture such as its history, traditions, customs and language

I have a strong sense of belonging to the Blackfeet Nation

If a traditional person/Elder speak to me about being Blackfeet I would listen to them carefully

It’s important that I know my Blackfeet language

Traditions (3 items)

I have participated in a cultural ceremony

I have a traditional person/Elder who I talk to

Someone you are close with uses sage, sweetgrass, cedar, or sweet pine

Spirituality (3 items)

I know my Indian name

I believe things like animals and rocks have a spirit

The Eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me

Research Phase 3: School Connectedness Survey Design

To measure school connectedness, I used the MAC 5-A-Short Version (Karcher, 2011) six-item school connectedness subscale. The subscale is designed to reflecting how invested youth are at school, how much they enjoy school, and how successful they feel at school (e.g., ‘‘I work hard at school’’). The scale focuses on the importance a youth places in school and the degree to which he or she actively seeks to be successful in school. The school connectedness subscale had acceptable reliability in our sample (Cronbach’s a = .75, 95% CI .702–.798). The subscale was not altered by the CAB for this study. The six items are attached in Table 6. Respondents rated the items on 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) by indicating whether they:

a) 5 – Strongly Disagree

b) 4– Disagree

c) 3 – Undecided

d) 2 – Agree

e) 1 – Strongly Agree

Table 6

6-item School Connectedness Scale

I work hard at school.
I enjoy being at school.
I get bored in school a lot.
I do well in school.
I feel good about myself when I am at school.
Doing well in school is important to me.

Research Phase 4: Introduction of Study, Hoop of Values, Stories

My initial interaction with the immersion classroom students was introducing the study. I explained the purpose of the study, presented and explained the three research questions, and explained how I would be capturing data through surveys and interviews with the students. I also introduced the Hoop of Values, and explained how we would use traditional stories.

Research Phase 5: Blackfoot Way of Knowing Paradigm Innovation

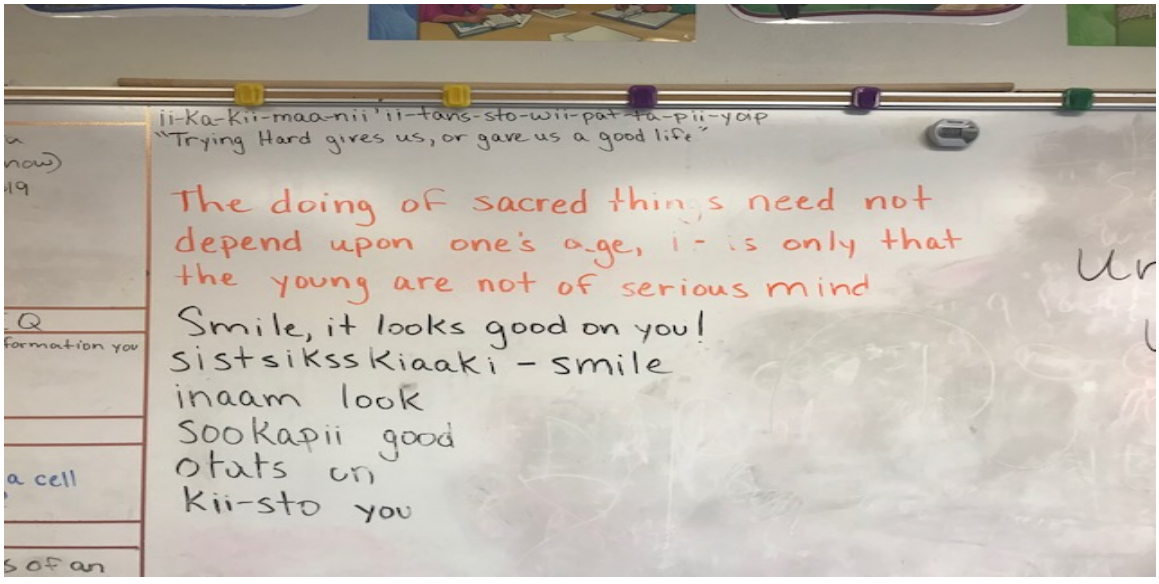
My innovation centered on having students experience the values identified in the Hoops of Values through a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm experienced through a traditional story delivered once weekly in two elementary Blackfeet immersion classrooms. The length of each session was approximately 30 minutes in length and was initiated during the OLWEUS bullying prevention class time. It's essential to note that the Immersion classrooms used for my innovation do not offer full immersion experiences

but instead blend Blackfeet culture with modern-day schooling practices and use both Blackfoot language and English language.

The Blackfeet cultural activities used daily by the innovation teachers are essential parts of defining a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm. For example, the innovation teachers used the student's Blackfoot name to take attendance, offered students the opportunity to participate in smudging, as well as engaging in traditional prayers, and sang songs using Blackfoot language. The innovation teachers also had numerous Blackfoot sayings posted on bulletin boards and whiteboards. An example of the 5th-grade Immersion classroom whiteboard is attached as Figure 3. Most of the instruction was conducted in English and centered on meeting the School District or Montana Office of Public Instruction mandates.

Figure 3

Immersion Classroom Whiteboard



My innovation added to the immersion classrooms by introducing the values identified in the Hoops of Values. The Hoop of Values is an integral part of the Blackfeet

Education Standards (BES). The BES embodies the Pikuni Code of Education (PCE). The PCE states, "Since education is, in part, the transmission of culture and values, we declare that education within the territorial boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation shall include the transmission of the Pikuni language, culture, and values" (p. 7).

The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council adopted the Blackfeet Educational Standards (BES) (2005) in 2004 for the explicit purposes of developing and integrating Blackfeet language and cultural standards and benchmarks into K-12 schools, colleges, and other educational programs located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The BES was the result of a collaborative process between the Blackfeet Community College (BCC), Blackfeet Nation elders, school district educators, parents, and students.

The BES was developed for:

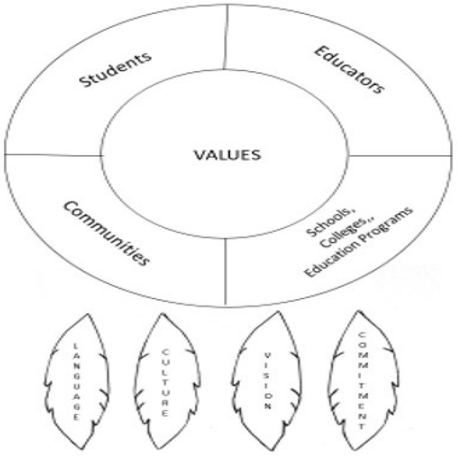
- “Honoring and celebrating Blackfeet values, culture, language, and traditions;
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities and raising expectations for teaching and learning Blackfeet culture and language;
- Providing a set of common tribal standards for teaching and learning Blackfeet culture and language;
- Furthering the intent and implementation of the Pikuni Code of Education and Indian Education for All (MCA 20-1-501);
- Recognize the cultural importance of tribal Elders and other eminent persons;
- Motivating school and community stakeholders to communicate and participate in the design and implementation of culturally responsive education and way of life; and,
- Seeking unity and common purpose throughout the Blackfeet Nation” (p. 4).

The BES model is conceptualized as two interlocking circles with the middle circle indicating “VALUES” surrounded by an outer circle divided into four quadrants embedded with the terms, “Students, Educators, Communities, Schools, Colleges & Education Programs.” Hanging from the bottom of the outer circle are four feathers with

the terms, “Language, Culture, Vision, and Commitment.” The whole model is presented in Figure 4. The BES is divided into four areas, including Cultural Standards for All educators on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation; Cultural Standards for Educational Programs and Institutions on the Blackfeet Nation; Cultural Standards for Communities in the Blackfeet Nation; and, Cultural Standards for all Students on the Blackfeet Nation.

Figure 4

The Blackfeet Education Standards (2005) framework as pictured in the Blackfeet Education Standards Implementation guide.



The authors of the BES identify Blackfeet value zones as "personal, family, traditional, and contemporary" (p. 4). The authors relied on two important documents issued by the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council. The first was a Blackfeet Nation Education Proclamation stating, "The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council is committed, in its educational endeavors to the preservation and integrity of Blackfeet language, history, traditions, values, and culture for current and future generations (p. 4)." The second was Blackfeet Nation Resolution #59-2005 expressing the concern by the Tribal Council that the loss of traditional values would negatively influence the Pikuni way of life. The

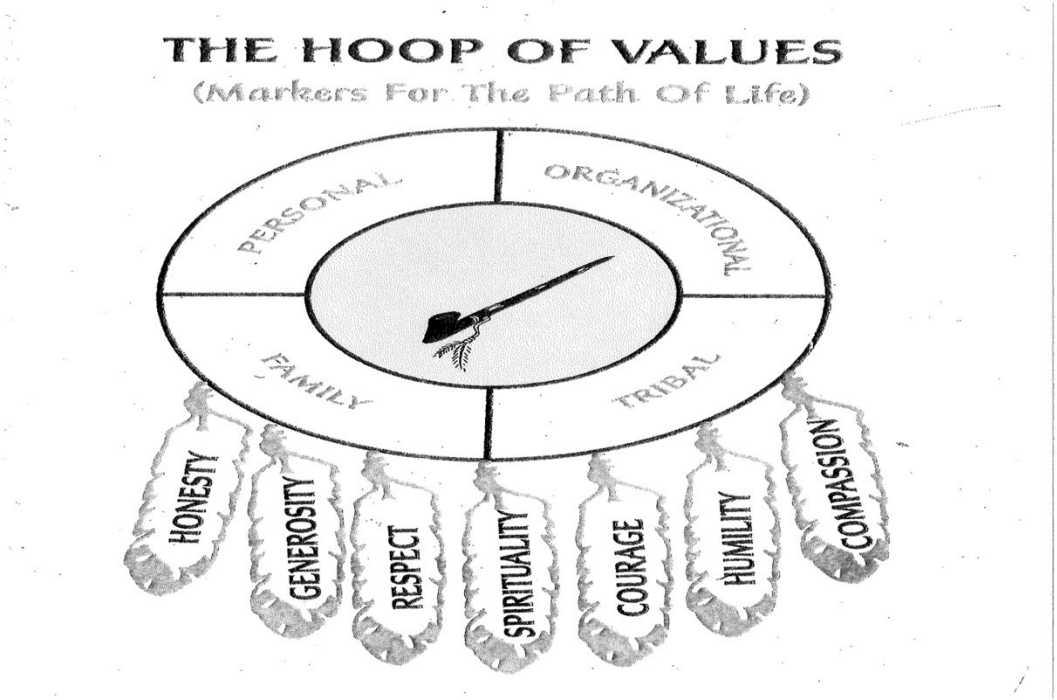
authors of the BES braided together their understanding of contemporary and traditional values to form the Hoop of Values (Markers for the Path of Life).

Hoop of Values

The framers of the Standards included the Hoop of Values as part of their work and identified the values as "Honesty, Generosity, Respect, Spirituality, Courage, Humility, and Compassion divided into four quadrants including "Personal, Organizational, Family, and Tribal." The Hoops of Values framework is a vital aspect of my research innovation. The Hoop of Values is displayed in Figure 5.

Figure 5

The Hoops of Values framework as pictured in the Blackfeet Education Standards (2005) Implementation guide.



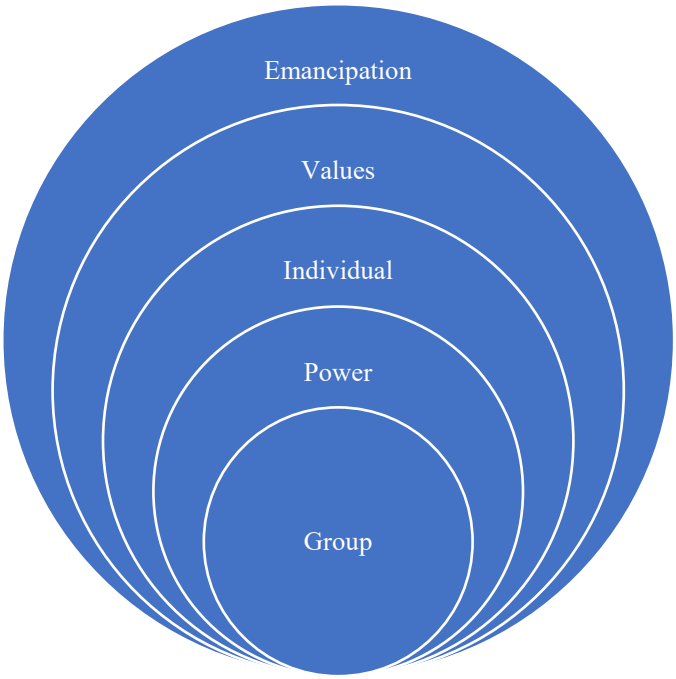
Cultural Values Teaching Framework

To address the situational consequences of historical oppression experienced through assimilation teaching practices, I introduced a Cultural Values Teaching Framework. The Cultural Values Teaching Framework is rooted in Critical Theory with an explicit goal of offering a way to achieve emancipation from lateral oppression while adhering to a strict application of essentialism. Essentialism is explained as the conviction that all individuals are thought to reason, and function as a solitary faction that has similar understands and comes to know in similar ways (Ladson-Billings, 2013). The Cultural Values Teaching Framework is a strength-based, and holistic framework that places the struggle between oppression and power at its center. A fundamental aspect of the Cultural Values Teaching Framework is the belief that individuals come to know and understand values that are both culturally engrained, and situationally formed in a specific group of people.

The Cultural Values Teaching Framework is guided by seven additional principles including the belief that oppressed peoples use-values against their oppressors to survive and persevere; the belief that the values used by oppressed peoples against their oppressors are transferred between generations through situational experiences; the belief that oppressed peoples have a unique way of coming to know and understand their values; the belief that oppressed peoples use values to broaden enculturation; the idea that oppressed peoples use values as a way towards empowerment; the belief that understanding values is fundamental for creating identity; and, the notion that values contribute to individual and group purposefulness. The Cultural Values Teaching Framework is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Cultural Values Teaching Framework



My intervention was based on using a TribalCrit grounded Cultural Values Teaching Framework to infuse the values identified in the Blackfeet Education Standards "Hoops of Values" into a culturally sustaining and revitalizing paradigm identified as a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm. Scholarly literature indicates that most of the culturally responsive teaching for Native youth centers on core academic disciplines (Searle et. Al., 2018). Some scholars suggest that additional investigations are needed to understand how students of different races and ethnicities understand, experience, and engage in bullying, and the extent to which such students are receptive or non-receptive to particular prevention and intervention strategies" (Limber et al., 2018, p. 70) and Botvin et al., (1995) state "comparison of a culturally focused prevention approach to a

more generic approach would address whether a culturally focused intervention is more effective and would be an important contribution to the literature" (p. 184).

Research Phase 6: Innovation Implementation Process

Following my initial introductory lesson where I introduced the study, explained the Hoop of Values, introduced traditional stories, explained winter count, and graphic organizers, I began to introduce the values affixed to the Hoop of Values (Honesty, Generosity, Respect, Courage, Humility, Compassion). The value of spirituality was not taught as a standalone value because the implementation teachers were concerned about the appearance of students being required to participate in perceived religious activities. I learned during my visits with elders that they believe spirituality is a way of life. The elders identified using a Blackfoot name and smudging as essential aspects of Blackfoot spirituality. Having students experience spirituality is a necessary part of defining a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm. To accomplish this part of my study, I relied on the established practices used daily by the innovation teachers, such as taking attendance with the student's Blackfoot name, offering students the opportunity to participate in smudging, and saying traditional prayers.

I introduced each value, one per class session, over eight weeks through a traditional story titled Napi and the Rock. I began each instructional session by reviewing the Hoop of Values as well as reviewing the previous week's "value" lesson. Following our review, I introduce the new "value" by probing the students for their interpretation and understanding of the value. I would then read aloud one or two pages from Napi and the Rock, highlighting possible examples of the "value" expressed through the story. To capture how the entire group of students interpreted each value represented in the story, I

and the classroom teacher engaged them in the creation of a group graphic organizer that linked story content with their lived experiences of the value or values identified. The graphic organizer continued from week to week and included both traditional and contemporary interpretations. Li (2007) claims that a story map is a graphic technique explicitly designed to facilitate story organization. Berry (1999) surmises that graphic organizers better help students communicate their ideas. Li (2007) further contends that story maps promote story organization, which provides students with a bird's eye view of the story and (Mathes, 1997) believes that story maps represent an organized accumulation of knowledge.

Following the completion of the eight introductory lessons, I provided the immersion teachers with a comprehensive list of traditional stories as well as the resources to continue teaching the students the Hoop of Values. The traditional stories were selected from the Mythology of The Blackfeet Indians (2007); the Sun Came Down (1985); and Napi, The Trickster (2018) and included selections from Tales of The Old Man; Star Myths; Ritualistic Origins; Cultural Origins; and other miscellaneous stories. An example of a Graphic Organizer created during the innovation is attached as Figure 7, and Figure 8.

Figure 7

Graphic Organizer

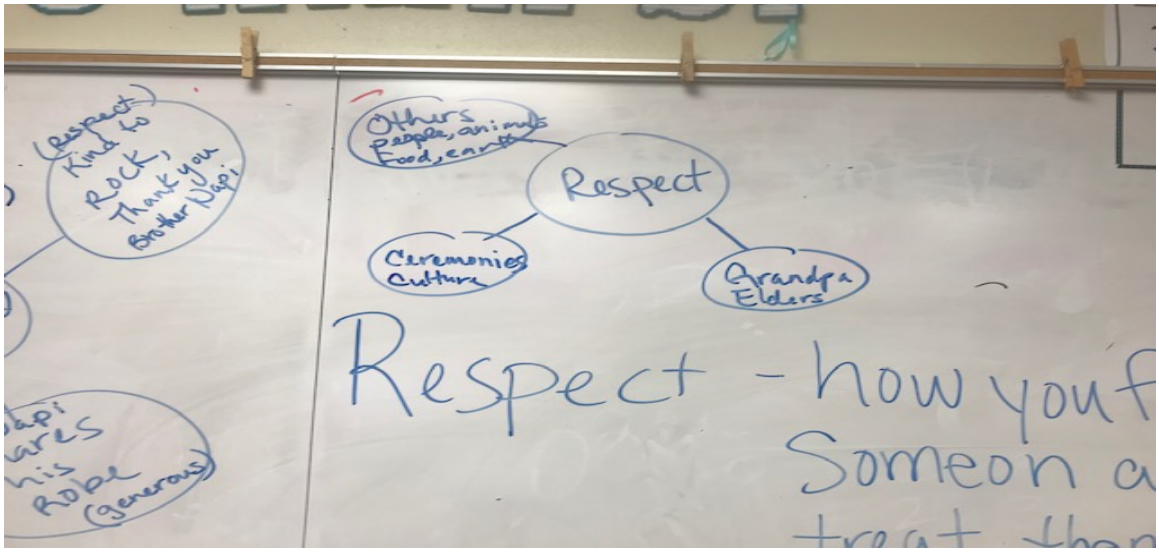
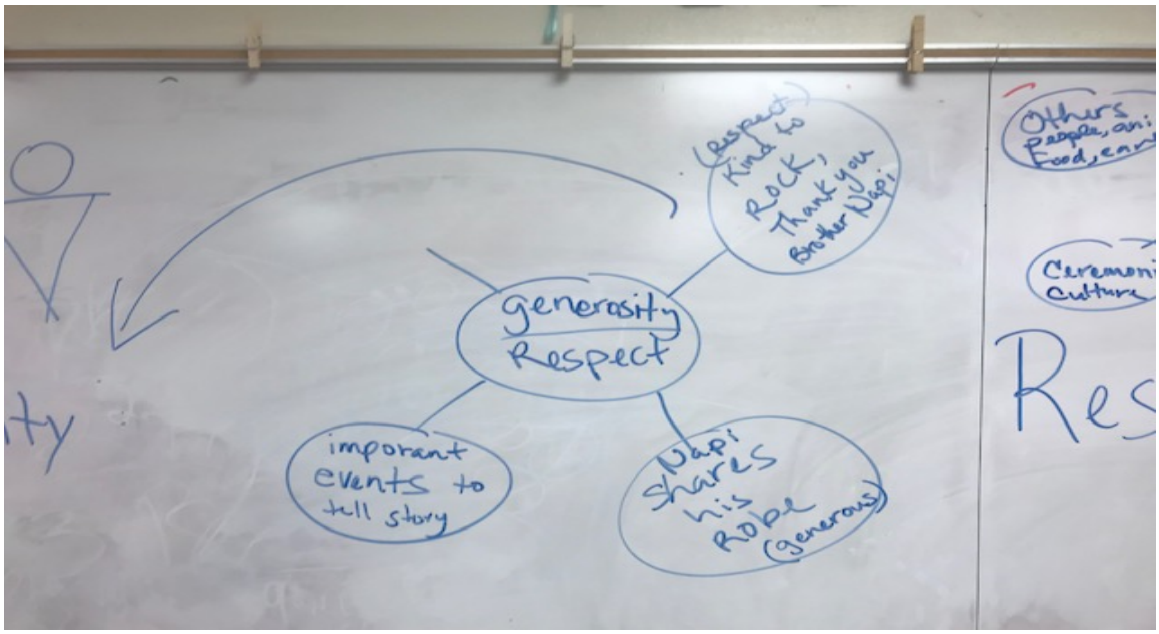


Figure 8

Graphic Organizer



I concluded each lesson by encouraging the students to add a picture representing their interpretation of each value to their winter count. Winter count was a vital part of

the oral history for the Blackfoot. Winter count is represented by a small picture painted on a bison hide (McClintock, 1968), that would be used as a reminder of the events (Tovías, 2014).

Research Phase 7: Post Survey Administration

The Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness post-survey (yes/no and N.A. format) was presented, with care taken to ensure the students filled in their demographic details accurately. The post-survey instrument included additional demographics questions designed to identify the number of years students had been enrolled in a Blackfeet Immersion classroom. I explained that the participants could select (yes, no, or N.A.). I defined and provided examples of what N.A., represented. I read each survey question and reminded the students to ask for help if they had any difficulties with words, phrases, or questions. The school connectedness post-survey (5-point Likert format) was presented following the completion of the cultural connectedness questionnaire. I began by explaining the difference between the points on the scale. I read each survey question and reminded the students to ask for help if they had any difficulties with words, phrases, or questions. The entire process took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Research Phase 8: Quantitative Data Analysis

All pre and post-survey data were analyzed through SPSS version 26 to conduct a paired t-test on the survey results. I also established the degree of internal consistency of Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey instrument used in this study through the application of Cronbach's Alpha. Mohajan (2017) suggests that "The most common internal consistency measure is Cronbach's alpha (α), which is usually interpreted as the mean of all possible split-half coefficients" (p. 13). The survey was considered reliable

based on its reliability coefficient, which is 0.845. In other words, the survey has an 84.5% reliability score.

Research Phase 9: Student Interviews

To develop a contextual understanding of how Blackfeet children come to know and understand cultural connectedness and school connectedness, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the students that completed the cultural connectedness and school connectedness surveys administered as a pre and post-survey. A team of scholars examining the relationships among the cultural connectedness scale short version (CCS-S), self-efficacy, sense of self (present and future), school connectedness, and life satisfaction and First Nations mental health argue,

> Similarly, measures of school connectedness that capture FN ways of knowing and community-based indicators of success should be considered in future studies, as existing measures tend to reflect Western-based educational outcomes that do not address the history of colonialism and its residual impacts on academic achievement for FN youth (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay, & Hinson, 2017, p. 83).

The semi-structured interviews included one question from each of the three Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness short-scale subscales: identity, traditions, and spirituality, as well as two questions from the school connectedness survey. I also asked probing and clarifying questions for each of the original interview questions. The student interviews took place at school in groups of two, three, or four students through a talking circle format. Talking circles are rooted in traditional practices of American Indian people (Coates, Umbreit, Vos, 2003). The circle encourages a respectful way of communicating. Talking circles connect to American Indian spirituality (Drewery, 2004),

that is circular (Vick, Smith, & Herrera, 1998) and comes together to form a sacred hoop or medicine wheel (Anyon et al., 2014) Jenson, Altchul, Farrar, McQueen, Greer, Downing, & Simmons, 2014). The interview questions are included in Table 7, and the student interview guide is attached as Appendix C.

Table 7

Student Interview Questions

Original Question	Follow-Up Question(s)
Do you know Your Indian name?	Can you say it to me? What does your Indian name mean? Why is your Indian name important to you?
Is learning Blackfeet language important to you?	Why is knowing Blackfoot language important to you?
What is your favorite cultural activity you have participated in?	What do you like about it?
How do you know when you are doing well in school?	How does it make you feel?
What is your favorite activity to do at school that makes you happy?	Why does it make you happy?

Research Phase 10: Qualitative Data Analysis (Students)

It is critical for the researcher to be mindful about differentiating between codes and categories and to understand that they stand independent of each other when developing the research story (Saldaña, 2009). I also believed it was critical to use as many of the actual words expressed by the students to gain a holistic understanding of the students' way of knowing with the questions being asked. I intentionally designed my follow up questions to permit the student participants to become storytellers and share

their stories based on their lived experiences. For example, I asked the participants a series of questions related to their Blackfoot name that began by simply asking them if they knew their Blackfoot name and if they could pronounce their Blackfoot name—I made sure to note each participant's emotion when I asked each of those questions. I followed those two questions up with asking them to tell me the story of what their Blackfoot name means, where their Blackfoot name came from; and, why it's important to them. An example of the analytic methods used in my study is shown in Table 10.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 introduces the Indigenous mixed methods research model and provides a detailed description of the components of this study, including its purpose, theoretical framework, population, research site, innovation, community advisory board, and the role of the researcher. This chapter explicitly outlines the data collection instruments, where data was collected and describes the components applied in data analysis. I also provided a comprehensive discussion about the difference between using a traditional ethnographic research approach and my decision to use portraiture as my approach to capture how Blackfoot elders come to know and understand traditional values. Finally, the chapter explains the development and use of a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm to introduce the values affixed to the Hoop of Values included as part of the Blackfeet Education Standards.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

"Learning our language is important, so we will be able to speak and teach other kids to speak" *Pikani* Youth

Introduction

The purpose of my investigation is to examine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. I aim to answer three research questions:

RQ 1: How do Blackfoot elders perceive traditional values transferred through ceremonies, cultural activities, and traditional stories?

RQ 2: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' cultural connectedness?

RQ 3: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' school connectedness?

This chapter presents the results of the data collected and analyzed from elder interviews, traditional Blackfoot ceremony attendance and participation, from student surveys, student interviews and classroom observations. The elder interviews were semi-structured and designed to capture how Blackfoot elders come to know and understand traditional values. The elder's interviews and Blackfoot ceremonies provided the basis for establishing the Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values, and their adjoining definitions and for developing the descriptive codes and categories for the student interviews. Student

surveys were administered as both a pre and post innovation instrument and consisted of 16 questions, 10 of which used a yes/no or N.A. response format and 5-point Likert scale questions. I developed the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey in partnership with a Community Advisory Board (CAB). The student interview questions were semi-structured and were derived from the 16 survey questions. I also observed and participated class innovation activities, as well as traditional Blackfoot ceremonies. A robust discussion about the data analysis, findings and interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative data is presented throughout this chapter.

Part I

Qualitative Analysis

The materials I analyzed included twelve fully transcribed interviews with Blackfoot elders, as well as 14 informal interviews with Blackfoot elders, and my field notes form observing and participating in nine (9) traditional Blackfoot ceremonies. I ultimately identified six (6) overarching categories of responses: Traditions, Spirituality. Place, Language, Name and Protocol shown in Table 15. In what follows, I present findings that pertain to the six categories and present quotations from the elders to illustrate my findings. To preserve confidentiality for the elders I interviewed, I refer to them simply as Elder 1, Elder 2, Elder 3 and so on. When I rely on my field notes I specify that activity was explained to me during an informal interview conducted at ceremony, or I witnessed the action, or it was my interpretation All of my own interpretations were confirmed by my elder liaison or directly from a Blackfoot elder.

To begin the precoding process of sifting through my qualitative data I used two-column notes to determine patterns of words and phrases used by the participants

associated with emotions and values. To transition between first and second stage coding I used an operational model diagraming process to build a visual representation of emotion and values codes identified in the interviews and during my observations and participation in ceremonies and classroom activities. Saldaña (2014) contends through Dey (1993) that when "We are dealing with complex and voluminous data; diagrams can help us disentangle the threads of our analysis and present results in a coherent and intelligible form" (p. 304).

I transitioned from initial coding to a pattern coding process explained by Saldaña (2014) in concert with a tree-structure of emotions described by Parrott (2001). Saldaña (2014) claims that "Pattern Coding, as a second cycle method, is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts" (p. 316). Parrott (2001) created a tree-structure of emotions map that identifies 6 primary emotions, 26 secondary emotions, and 116 tertiary emotions.

I also used a second pattern coding process in concert with authenticity guidelines based on the Five Great Values identified by Sanchez (2007) and the Hoops of Values proposed by Browning Public Schools and the Blackfeet Nation. Saldaña (2014) claims that "Values Coding is the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview" (p. 187). Value coding aims to bring clarity to how a participants' values, attitudes and beliefs are understood and relate to the aim of the study. Sanchez (2007) noted that he used a multitude of traditional Native Americans values and traditions based upon the Five Great Values (John Bryde, 1971; Reiten, 1995), in order to create Indigenous centered authenticity guidelines used to assess the accuracy of Native

American trade books/storybooks that depict Native peoples (Sanchez, 2007). The five values identified by Sanchez are Generosity and Sharing, Respect for the Elderly and Women, Getting along with nature, Individual Freedom and Courage (Padgett, 2015).

In 2005, Browning Public schools and the Blackfeet Tribe crafted and adopted the Blackfeet Education Standards. The standards were developed for purposes of integrating Blackfeet language and culture into all K-12 schools, colleges, and other educational programs located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The framers of the Standards included the Hoop of Values as part of their work and identified the values as "Honesty, Generosity, Respect, Spirituality, Courage, Humility, and Compassion divided into four quadrants including "Personal, Organizational, Family, and Tribal." The authenticity guidelines and the Hoop of Values allowed me to maintain the integrity of Tribal Critical Race Theory and to validate Blackfoot knowledge, including that Indigenous peoples have ways of viewing the world which are unique by using a tool that is based on Indigenous perspectives and values.

To further narrow the categories I used a Codeweaving process to determine if the emotions expressed by the participants could be weaved together with the values described by the participants and witnessed by me during ceremony observation and participation and classroom observations. Saldaña (2014) says that, "Codeweaving is the actual integration of key code words and phrases into narrative form to see how the puzzle pieces fit together" (p. 368).

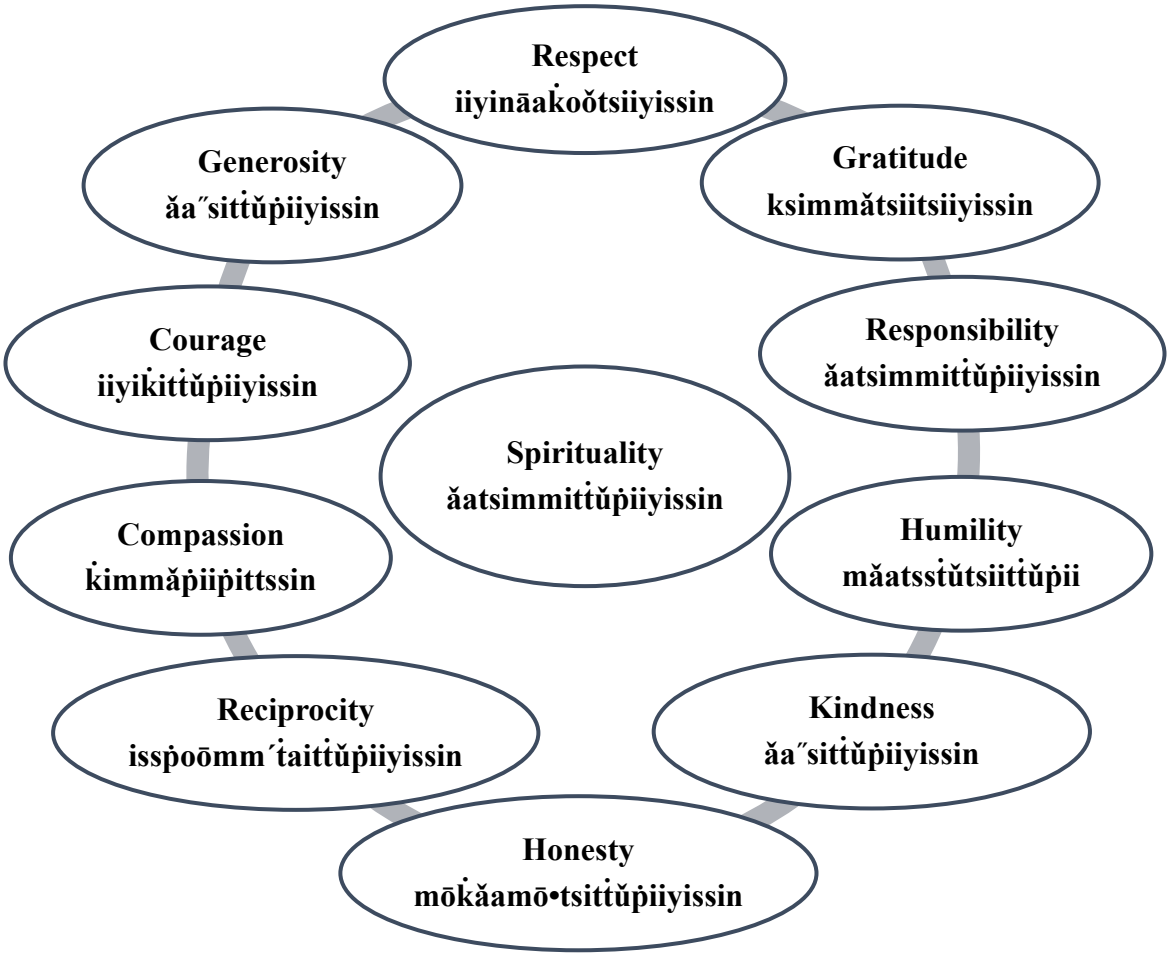
My initial Codeweaving process included building Venn diagrams for emotion codes and value codes expressed by the participants and Venn diagrams for the Five Great Values and the seven values identified in the original Hoop of Values. I ultimately

identified six overarching categories of responses: knowledge, spirituality, place, language, name, and protocol shown in Table 8.

I listed the value codes express and statements made by the participants in their entirety to build a deeper understanding of how the Blackfoot elders come to know and understand traditional values—I wove them together to determine similarities resulting in ten values embodying spirituality. The ten traditional values identified are presented in both English and Blackfoot and include: Respect (iiyināaḳoǒtsiiyissin), Gratitude (ksimmătsiitsiiyissin), Responsibility (ăatsimmitṫŭṗiiyissin), Humility (măatssṫŭtsiitṫŭṗii), Kindness (ăa″sitṫŭṗiiyissin), Honesty (mōḳăamō•tsitṫŭṗiiyissin), Reciprocity (issṗoōmm´taitṫŭṗiiyissin), Compassion (ḳimmăṗiiṗittssin), Courage (iiyiḳitṫŭṗiiyissin), and Generosity (ăa″sitṫŭṗiiyissi). The values are shown in the Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values identified in Figure 9.

Figure 9

The Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values



I used statements made by Blackfoot elders in their entirety, as well as my observations and participation in traditional ceremonies to build a deeper understanding of how elders come to know the meaning of traditional Blackfoot values. The difficulty of coming to know how Blackfoot elders relate to their values is difficult to capture because their values are understood through the Blackfoot language, but not in the way we understand words in the English language. Elder 1 explained the conflict this way:

> Translation is hard because most words in English are nouns and the expression is very rigid and set. In Blackfoot, most words are verbs and are fluid. Blackfoot is a

language that reacts with the world around us in a fluid manner. A person that wants to translate words has to understand both languages and how to express these words in two different sets of reality.

I asked the same elder what would be the Blackfoot word for responsibility, and the elder said:

> It's kind of hard to say what responsibility translates to in Blackfoot. Iipoohsapihtsiiwa – literally means it's my direction but can be said to mean it's up to me. Nita'po'takssin - it's my work. Nomohpsskssksimo'tookowa - I was given the authority/responsibility to take care of this. As you can see there are a number of ways to say it.

When requesting a translation for the values of generosity and kindness I noticed that the same Blackfoot word (ăa″sittŭp̀iiyissin) was provided for both even though elders clearly expressed a difference between the two values. Elder 1 explained the reasoning this way:

> Well, you see that the Blackfoot word for generosity and kindness is the same but the meaning of the words are different to us based on the situation we are experiencing the actions of the words. Like if you're at ceremony you could ask an elder to show you the difference between generosity and kindness and they can show you.

A Blackfoot bundle holder talked about the difficulty of transitioning between an English language mindset and a Blackfoot language mindset:

> The problem is because for myself I try to put it in thinking in English whereas a fluent Blackfoot speaker puts it in Blackfoot thinking—like moose. The fluent

speaker already knows it doesn't mean moose—A lot of people say: How do you say moose in Blackfoot? It doesn't mean moose—my grandpa said it means long black nose coming—that's what he referred to it as, but I'm trying to think of it in English and Western concepts. These young kids that are learning the language have an advantage to people like me whose brains have already been washed of how to think Blackfoot. Speakers say think like a Blackfoot not like a Westerner. The definitions of the traditional Blackfoot values are shown in Table 15.

Table 8

Categories, Values and Definitions

Categories					
Knowledge	**Spirituality**	**Place**	**Language**	**Name**	**Protocol**
Traditional Value Center					
Spirituality (ăatsimmittŭṗiiyissin)					
Spirituality is the act of connecting to the creator.					

Value	**Traditional Interpretation**
Respect **iiyināakoŏtsiiyissin**	Respect – is the act of appreciating our creator, ancestors, the stars and the land.
Generosity **ăa˝sittŭṗiiyissin**	Generosity is giving freely.
Courage **iiyikittŭṗiiyissin**	Courage is the act of facing challenges.
Compassion **kimmăṗiiṗittssin**	Compassion is the act of responding with understanding, and patience.
Reciprocity **issṗoōmm´taittŭṗiiyissin**	Reciprocity is the individual sacrificing for the good of the whole.
Honesty **mōkăamō•tsittŭṗiiyissin**	Honesty – is the way you treat yourself in relationship to the creator.
Kindness **ăa˝sittŭṗiiyissin**	Kindness is expressing sincerity.
Humility **măatsstŭtsiittŭṗii**	Humility is offering recognition and praise to the group.
Responsibility **Iipoohsapihtsiiwa**	Responsibility is knowing and fulfilling your tasks.
Gratitude **ksimmătsiitsiiyissin**	Gratitude is the act of being appreciative of the sacrifices of our ancestors.

Elder Interview Categories

Knowledge

One of the first questions I asked the elders was what comes to mind when they hear the phrase traditional Blackfoot values—the concept of values was not foreign to most of the elders, but how they came to know and understand the term values transcended a contemporary interpretation, and most certainly transcended the intent of the values listed as part of the original Hoop of Values. Scholarly literature notes traditional values perceived and used by American Indians (Bryde, 1971; Tippeconnic III & Fox, 2012), and Sanchez (1997a; 2001; 2007), offers a refined version of the 5 Great Values conceptualized by Reiten (1995) used to evaluate the cultural accuracy of how American Indians are portrayed in textbooks (Padgett, 2015). These scholarly articles used in concert with the Hoop of Values was a critical stating point to identify traditional Blackfoot values embedded in the words of the elders and through my experiences at traditional ceremonies.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines (value) as, "something (such as a principle or quality) intrinsically valuable or desirable." The responses I gathered from the elders I spoke includes aspects of the definition offered through the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, but it is the interpretation of the phrase "intrinsically valuable or desirable" that separates their understanding. People in the Western world view values as something desirable to teach their offspring or to be included as part of how we interact with other members of society; whereas, the elders I visited with used words like survival, and extinct to describe their understanding of values. Elder 16 talked about the historical nature of how tribes lived:

> Native Americans lived in small groups—and to insure their survival they had to teach their kids to be resourceful, to be honest, to be humble, to be courageous, because they had to fight off enemies, they had to provide for everybody, so they had to be generous. You must teach your children to be your elders—your caretakers in your old age—that's why we have these vales—for survival, because survival was the ultimate goal. Native American people lived in harmony with nature but when European settlers came it caused turmoil and now, we're the product of that turmoil and now we need to overcome that and get back to our roots—we have to learn those values again if we are going to survive by teaching our kids to survive.

Elder 3 expressed similar views:

> We lived in small bands and in order to survive we had to practice and teach our young people to rely on our survival values—words like courage and compassion and humility are part of who we are as a people. We had to trust each other.

Red Horse (1997) supports this claim and states "Traditional communities are small enclaves with attributes that mirror those of the past" (p.244). Elder 2 talked about where the value system and belief systems live and how they helped with survival:

> The diseases—the smallpox—measles—tuberculous—starvation—the relationships with governments—the rations—the broken promises of treaties—Christianity and the massacres all had an impact on our values. This has been our strength to survive. So as infants we are learning our value system and belief system and about our elders and the spirituality—what do we hold sacred? How does our way continue? So where does it live? It lives in a value system and belief

system that teaches us what is sacred knowledge and what is traditional knowledge.

Likewise, Elder 9 also talked about the atrocities faced by their ancestors, “Our people faced many years of atrocities and if we wouldn’t have taught our young people to be courageous and to sacrifice for the good of everyone we would have been extinct;” Elder 6 said, “The values we practice come from our Creator;” And, likewise, Elder 8 talked about the importance of kindness and being thankful to the Creator:

> We have a responsibility to treat each other with kindness and respect and to be thankful for the Creator giving the Blackfoot people courage to persevere. That is what you see at these ceremonies—people praying together and helping one another get closer to our Creator.

Elder 13 talked about the value of focusing on the whole group instead of on the individual:

> When you look at a sense of belonging you need to get rid of that I attitude. Indian people took care of themselves as a ‘we’ group while the white majority coming into American was about Manifest Destiny—I got to make myself the biggest or most powerful. When you buy into a program it becomes more of a ‘we’ attitude instead of an I attitude because when you get all of those people in a ceremony its now a ‘we.’

Elder 15 explained how values are passed down from grandparents, “A child’s grandparents have the responsibility to pass along our survival values so that our young can carry on our traditions;” and, Elder 2 spoke about how residential schools harmed value formation and the importance of understanding that relationship:

> We are the first age group of parents that didn't have to surrender our children to the residential schools. So, what was our existence? If you look at this Indian policy to rid the Indian of their identity—this was the whole goal. You accomplished this by separating the parents from the children, so the parents no longer have influence of the child. This becomes a timeline that you can see the disconnect of family. The missionaries would go to each reserve and pick up kids because they got $79 for every treaty child. When you talk about the continuity you can see the collapse—and you can see the spiritual abuse, the physical abuse—sexual abuse—and the loss of self-respect—so how can you expect moms and dads to do great things when that's been their experience. When we talk about genocide the definition is to extinguish the culture through the children. We have to know that there was a deliberate breakdown of the family and the extended family and it harmed the value system and personal identity.

Spirituality

The theme of spirituality was deeply embedded in both the words of the elders, and in my observation of ceremonies. Elder 1 explained, “When I think of Blackfoot values I think about our spirituality.” Elder 10 similarly said, “All things come from our sacred knowledge.” Elder 4 stated, “Our survival comes from our spirituality.” Indigenous cultures frame spirituality as a way of being and is defined as “the belief in the fundamental interconnectedness of all-natural things” (Native Spirituality, 1992, p. 30). Elder 11 explained after looking at the Hoop of Values, “The words on that page mean nothing without understanding the connection to the Creator—the words aren’t even written in Blackfoot.”

The connection between smudging and spirituality was talked about passionately by elders. Bassett, Tsosie, & Nammauck (2012) define smudging as "(a purification practice that involves burning a bundle of dried herbs such as sage)" (p. 19). Elder 5 said, "We smudge to connect to our Creator." Elder 13 said, "When you're praying—when you light your smudge you're waking everybody up in the upper world—the spirit world—they're called to attention to help you—to support you during the ceremony;" Elder 7 said, "In ceremony, when we make that smudge all of the doors are open;" Elder 8 noted, "Smudging connects us to Natoosii. Portmann, & Garrett (2006) suggest that "The smoke is considered a very powerful cleansing spirit and is used to purify people, ceremonial grounds, homes, and sacred objects, or to send messages to a greater spirit" (p. 464).

Elder 1 said, "The smoke goes through us to our Creator;" Elder 4 said, "We smudge when we are going to connect with the spirit world;" Elder 12 said, "The significance of the smudge is if you want to engage in that level of spirituality it opens it for you;" The Elder continued and said "The time you have your sweats is when you want your prayers to be the strongest;" Elder 21 talked about using prayer and smudge to help overcome difficult life situations, "When you're struggling you go see an elder—pray and light your smudge and it will take your prayers up. Even if you've never smelt sweetgrass it creates a calmness in you;" And a Blackfoot bundle holder talked about transferring knowledge at ceremony:

> We did a sweat because I had a close relative pass, so we had a cleansing ceremony so my Holy Grandfather to our bundle came and performed a ceremony. Every time we have a sweat or a ceremony we don't like to have the

elder leave right away because their stories teach us every time we sit down and learn more and more because we have to remember that our traditions are passed on through our language and we have a responsibility to learn them so we can be at their level to pass them on.

Place

I asked the elders what the significance of their connection to the land was. Elder 2 spoke about the culture being embedded in the land and the stories that help teach sacred lessons:

> Culture starts with the landscape—It starts with the territory. The stories that are part of the land. It's just not visiting the sacred places but its knowing the stories—it creates a sense of belonging. It's just not a geographic boundary but it's where life lessons are demonstrated.

Elder 13 talked about the connection between place and spirituality and how all other people come from the *Pikani*:

> Speaking from my standpoint of things we were told as children is that we were always here. We are the only tribe and bands that are in their original territory—that makes us very unique—Right at the heart of it here in Montana. We're lucky where we're at really—because we can brag that we are in our original territory—it goes back to knowing who you are and where you come from and all of those other people came from us. And we can boldly say that is what the old people told us—that's why we're the *Amsskaapi Pikani*. That's why we're what they call the *Pikani* because we were here and everyone branched off from us and there is an old story that goes with that that says the old man had three sons and he sent them

out to these different areas—one went north, one went east and one went south. When they came back, they each had their stories and that's how the *Piegan, Siksika* and *Kainai* came about. The land base is shrinking terribly and has since the 1600's began to shrink but once we can say we are unique in that aspect that we are in our original land we can see the landmarks. We can see Chief Mountain—We can see the Sweetgrass Hills—We know where the Sand Hills are located. That's how Big Sandy got its name, that belongs to things that came from our traditions and our way of life. Same thing when you go to the east and the south those things are landmarks that our people were given and took care of at one time and will forever be ingrained in our DNA. The land—but also made sure there was a hand in the sky and the stars all connects in one-way or another. So the physical part is not only in the land but in the cosmos as well. That's where we become the people that are connected to the stars and connected to the universe that way—that's how we got here. My grandmother always use to say from the stars we came and to the stars we shall return. We will return and if you see that you can see the wheel start in motion—spiritual—mental—physical—emotional. If one of those little pieces of the pie aren't working very well the wheel doesn't turn very well.

Elder 14 talked about the original land mass and how the Blackfoot gave land to other tribes across Montana, "The Pikani in Montana were the most populist—we controlled most of the territory until the 49 parallel came into play; similarly, Elder 13 said "We don't own the land we just use it. It becomes a big task and responsibility to take care of the physical part of the land;" and, Elder 4 talked about being the original

people, “Our Blackfoot ways are in our DNA—it’s who you are meant to be—its right here in this land. The real people (*Niitsitapi*) that's who we are—the original from this continent. We have our own creation stories that come from right here in this place. Natoosii gave us our creation—our origin of how we were made.”

I experience the connection between the land and spirituality while attended the Akokatsin ceremony. I sat between two elders watching as groups of three or four bundle holders walked slowly around the grounds praying. One of the elders said softly, “Can you feel the spirits in the wind blowing off those mountains over there?” I looked up at the mountains for few moments and then assuring him that I indeed could feel the stiff gusts of wind blowing in our faces. The other elder gave a short laugh and said, “No, can you feel the spirits in the wind?” Somewhat confused about the meaning of the question I confessed that I wasn't sure what she was referring to. The elder paused for a few moments, coughed, and then said, “When I breathe in the air coming off the mountains my body is filled with the spirts of my ancestors.

Blackfoot Name

I asked the elders what they perceived to be the significance of an Indian name. Elder 12 expressed the connection between a Blackfoot name and spirituality this way:

> We were given a specific culture from the Creator. In that culture it's a spirit of culture where the Creator connects with us. When we have a Blackfoot name, we know that's the world we are engaging in. There was an elderly gentleman and every time I would go to him to have my face painted, he would say, what’s your name? And I would tell him, and he would paint my face. After I got to know him on a regular basis, he would still ask me my name. I remember thinking why he is

asking my name—he knows my name. I thought it was a human to human thing, but as I learned more about our way of culture and engagement in spiritual connection, I came to understand that what he was saying was what is your name and he was acting on behalf of the Creator—to be humble in front of the Creator. So, when he would say what is your name? And I would tell him my name and then the Creator would recognize me distinctly as me—I was grateful the elder taught me about my responsibility. When I started painting people's faces it made me have an understanding of why we have a name. I would tell the people—What's your name? And I could tell they were looking at me and saying to themselves—you know my name. I wouldn't budge though because it's the persons responsibility to get the deeper understanding about their name. People although we think we are on this human experience with human beings it seems to me that our culture is really a spiritual connection to our Creator. So the Name seems really simple but when you start to talk about it in the context of who would ever walk up to you in your office and say what's your name, but in ceremony when the elder says what's your name there's a reason why they are saying that—it's for you to announce yourself to the Creator and to ask for help. So, to me, to have a Blackfoot name is so you're recognized directly by the Creator and is pretty important and a very distinct way we were given to be able to call for help. I think your Indian name is your spirit. If I called you by your Blackfoot name and then by your English name you would feel differently—not better or worse. It's how your being comes to life. If people are calling me by my Blackfoot name it has meaning—it has feeling—and has a spirit with it.

Elder 10 talked about the importance of getting an Indian name at young age: "Getting an Indian name when you turn 9 or 10 is way different than getting an Indian name when you're first born because you have it with you and you continue with it and you have balance;" likewise, Elder 13 said,

> When you're praying—when you light your smudge, you're waking everybody up in the upper world—the spirit world—they're called to attention to help you—to support you during the ceremony. So, when you call someone by their Indian name that spirit recognizes that Indian name.

Blackfoot Language

The United State government purposely attempted to eradicate American Indian languages during the boarding school area in an effort to assimilate Native peoples. The attack on the language caused cultural confusion that continues to impact Native children striving to learn traditional values. Elder 15 explained her experience:

> We are from an era where our parents and grandparents didn't teach us Blackfoot because they feared we would be punished at the boarding schools. When we would come home on break my dad would say they sent us the wrong kids—these kids are speaking English and I don't know who they are.

Elder 7 talked about the historical dangers of speaking Blackfoot, but also recognized the importance of learning the language:

> The punishments were severe for speaking the language like forced starvation—A lot of people didn't have the freedom to speak our language. That's the beauty of what they're doing in the schools today by allowing them to speak Blackfoot—because I think they're waking up an energy that could have been a troubled

> energy with all of the abuse those people suffered from and we have to go through that energy to calm it and now that those spirits are hearing the calming of the prayers and the Blackfoot words they are recognizing it and that is helping calm it. If you look at the language this way, you'll understand that our values are part of it—you can learn the English words but for the values to be experienced you must know them through Blackfoot.

Elder 1 talked about teaching and learning the Blackfoot language and how you can cause harm to a Native child by placing English as a superior language:

> When you teach a Native language, the language should be taught in the medium of the Native language instead of in a medium of the English language—if you don't, you're placing English as a superior language and you're causing physiological harm to the child.

Elder 24 talked about the pride that young people are experiencing by learning Blackfoot and how it is helping them build their identities:

> Our young people are starting to learn the language. It's a way of identifying—they can speak their own language—the language they were given from Natoosii—the Creator. These kids are learning the language and they are identifying who they are and they're proud.

Elder 1 talked about his early upbringing and explained his experiences learning Blackfoot and proper English:

> I spoke nothing but Blackfoot growing up. I lived with my grandparents for about the first three years of my life. We spoke Blackfoot 100% of the time and so did the neighbors and all of the other kids did too. We didn't learn English until I was

seven—through catechism we are learning proper English. The Catholic priests learned Blackfoot and used our language selectively to meet their needs, but other than that we had to speak English. When I worked at the University, I developed a deeper understanding about the language and how it relates to our beliefs, traditions and philosophies—having a deep understanding of our language helps you have a deeper understanding about our philosophies.

Elder 6 explain the connection between the language and the transfer of sacred knowledge:

> The language is where our culture lives—it's where the sacred traditions are understood and experienced. If you go to ceremony, you'll hear prayer—you'll hear song—all in Blackfoot—it's because that's how our Creator notices us and it's how we know the sacred knowledge.

Blackfoot Protocol

I asked elders what they believed was the importance of having children attend ceremony with their parents or grandparents. Elder 7 talked about learning the traditional values of respect and responsibility that are part of understanding and following protocols experienced during ceremonies and how grateful they are for the opportunity to connect with their Creator:

> When you go to ceremony you see that there is a certain way to do things. You notice there is a main teepee, and an outside area where you begin to learn, and as you gain more knowledge you move forward and gain more responsibility. To me, kids should be at ceremony because they're not going to learn the language anywhere else specifically concentrated. They're not going to learn the respect of

each other as a people and they're going to see there is an order of movement. The more ceremonies you go to the more you see there is an order of respect—respect is a good word—I like to use the word responsibility. When you go to ceremony you see people helping each other—you see the respect for us as a people. We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with our Creator.

Elder 13 talked about the difference between being born into the culture versus learning about the culture through ceremony:

When we were young growing up, we were born with it. My grandparents had a thunder pipe, so we knew the protocol at birth. We were given our baby names right at birth. All these ones that are going there now wouldn't be allowed in the 40s and 50s to bring their kids. The kids were told to play around outside until the ceremony was over because they didn't want them to make a mistake and didn't want them interfering. They didn't want them to stop the ceremony—they were very strict. When a ceremony happened, that door was closed and stayed closed—there was no running in and out—no breaks like they do now—you didn't leave that bundle. Everyone just didn't get up and walk out. Somebody sat beside it during the whole thing. I was taught to sit there for 8 to 10 hours. If I needed to go to the restroom, I had to ask my Holy Mother for permission. You just didn't get up and walk out. I see that happening now and there's a whole change in the social structures and protocols in those ceremonies. The holy people were the bosses and that's the way it went. The former bundle holder sat at the end of the door to monitor the rest of the ceremony and if anybody got out of line you told them the way it was, and no one was offended. We were raised to not cut our

hair—and if we did it went to a special place; the same with our skin—right down to scratching our head we had to use a stick—you couldn't use your fingernails. We were taught you don't cut over an open flame with a knife—you don't lick a knife—you don't stir with a knife. Those things were taught when we were growing up. We taught our children automatically those things—the love of animals—the love of dogs—the love of horses. Those things were engrained in us as children. We carried that on with our children and when we became bundle keepers, we taught them the same thing. You don't stand up and eat—you know your protocol. The ones in those places now who bring all those kids in are trying to teach them now which is good. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with it but for me it was a different venue—a different era. I was born with it.

Elder 11 explained the value of respecting the commandments learned during ceremony: "The ceremony teaches you the elements of what you would call commandments. You have to abide by the commandments that these ceremonies have taught you.—the commandments have always been there they come from our stories;" Elder 21 said, "In ceremony, kids learn to love—to respect—to take care of yourself—to honor yourself—you have to learn to respect yourself."

During my conversation with Elder 16 at a bundle opening he mentioned the individual and group tasks learned during ceremony:

Its only at ceremony where you can learn your tasks—learn how you can give back to the Creator. You watch all of the teaching that happens here—how grandmothers teach their young—how respect is taught—it's not teaching loudly, but sternly and lovingly—the little ones that come to ceremony experience what

respect and responsibility looks like and sounds like—you watch, and you'll see people helping each other—people being humble in front of the Creator.

Elder 6 talked about the significance of focusing on the 'we' instead of the I that is embedded in ceremony and is weaved together with the idea of reciprocity:

> The ceremonies were designed not to be conducted by one or two people they are conducted by a group of people that believe this is who they are and that's the identity of a group—group analysis shows us that most of the nations in the world that have group interaction are more successful.

Elder 26 spoke about the respect shown during ceremony and how it helps create a sense of worth:

> You notice at ceremony the elders personally greet people—it's a sign of respect—we're there to show love for one another—our community and our people. Everyone is going through something and you never know what someone is going through—you show respect and give it back and it makes you feel good inside—you feel your worth.

Part II

The data analysis for Part II of my study included pre and post student surveys, student interviews and classroom observations.

Descriptive Statistics

For this Indigenous based mixed method study, I used descriptive statistics to describe the survey data, as well as data collected during student interviews in quantitative terms. Descriptive statistics provides summaries about the sample and the

measures collected during the study. Descriptive statistics helped the researcher reduce the data size into a more manageable format allowing for more precise conclusions.

The pre-survey was given to 41, 4th and 5th grade students participating in a Blackfeet immersion classroom located within the same school. The Blackfeet immersion classroom is designed to blend Blackfoot culture with modern-day schooling practices. The post-survey was administered to 41 4th and 5th grade students that completed the pre-survey. The survey asked several demographic questions including age, sex, ethnicity, and years of immersion classroom participation. The participants consisted of 23 males (56.1%) and 18 were female (43.9%). There were 21 (51.2%) participants that listed their age as 9-years old, and 20 (48.8%) that listed their age as 10 or 11. Of the 41 participants, 37 (90.2%) listed their ethnicity as Native American, and 4 (9.8%) reported their ethnicity as both Native American and White. There were 20 (48.8) that indicated they had participated in an Blackfeet immersion class for 2 years; 6 (14.6) for 3 years; and 15 (36.6) for 5 years. The complete descriptive statistics are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Count	Percentage
Gender		
Male	23	56.1
Female	18	43.9
Age		
9	21	51.2
10 & 11	20	48.8
Ethnicity		
AI	37	90.2
AI/C	4	9.8
Years of Participation in an Immersion Class		
2	20	48.8
3	6	14.6
5	15	36.6
$N = 41$		

Quantitative Data Analysis Process

A paired t-test was used to compare the means of the pretest and the posttest to determine any significance. The study design for this test involved measuring each subject twice: pretest and the posttest following the application of the innovation. The paired comparison t-test was used to test if the means of the pretest and the posttest of the measures differ significantly. The full results for the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey are shown in Table 11 and the full results of the school connectedness survey are shown in Table 12.

Qualitative Data Analysis Process

To develop a richer and more robust understanding of the role culture plays in cultural connectedness and school connectedness and to capture a Blackfoot way of knowing I conducted students interviews to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Students were asked 5 semi-structure questions, one from each of the three subscales (identity, traditions, spirituality) included as part of the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness short survey and two questions from the school connectedness survey. I developed five overarching pillars of responses: Indian Name, Blackfoot Language, Blackfoot Traditions, School Success, and School Happiness. I further generated 19 categories attached to the Pillars in Figure 6 and Figure 13. In what follows, I discuss each set of findings that pertain to the categories and present quotations from the students to illustrate my findings. To preserve the confidentiality for the students I interviewed, I refer to them as Student 1, Student 2, Student 3 and so on. The complete student interview guide is attached as Appendix C.

I maintained my commitment to using an Indigenous methodology that was mindful of respectful relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility. Wilson (2008) notes, "The responsibility to assure respectful and reciprocal relationships becomes the axiology of the person who is making these connections" (p. 79). Wilson identifies three forms of storytelling commonly used by elders to share their experiences but fails to address the ways indigenous youth; especially young adolescents come to know and share their stories. I was mindful to interview the students in groups of 2, 3 or 4 in a talking circle format so that students could feel at ease sharing their words.

One way I addressed my Indigenous research goals was by using the participants exact words when developing codes and categories to honor their world view. I read through each transcript in their entirety a minimum of four times, identifying descriptive words that were then similar grouped into categories that became the basis for each Pillar. An important part of my analytic methodology was centered on building respectful relationships that honored the lived experiences of the participants, being committed to honoring the culture as a strength; as part of being reciprocal to the community, and to use ethical research practices.

The method of data analysis used in my study is based on a two-cycle process described by Saldaña (2009) in which the researcher uses interviews, observations, field notes and so on to create codes and categories that use the "words" of the participants. I used the interviews with the elders during part 1 of my study to establish the codes and categories used during my Part II coding process. An example of the analytic methods used in my study is shown in Table 10, and the Pillars and accompanying categories are shown in Figure 6.

Table 10

Student Interview Coding Process

Original Student Interview Text		
I like when our teacher uses our Indian name when he takes role—It makes me proud and helps me connect to our Blackfeet culture. My Indian name is important because it came from an elder's dream about the stars. I like cutting dry meat so I can hear the stories from my gram and eating berry soup at the bundle openings. When we smudge in our class it calms me down and it lets me connect to our creator. I learned how to bead last summer.		
Descriptive Codes	Descriptive Codes	Descriptive Codes
Smudging Creator Dream Ceremony Berry soup	Stories Dry meat Culture Beading	Ancestors Proud Connect Stories Stars
Category	Category	Category
Spirituality	Culture	Identity
Pillar	Pillar	Pillar
Blackfoot Name	Blackfoot Traditions	Blackfoot Language

Survey Results

Cultural Connectedness Survey

RQ 2: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot Way of Knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' cultural connectedness?

To answer research question number one, I used a Blackfeet adapted version of the Cultural Connectedness Scale-Short Version (CSS-S).

Cultural Connectedness Analysis

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform cultural connectedness. The results for the paired-t test are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Cultural Connectedness Paired t-test

	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2 Tailed)
Spirituality	2.71	0.46	2.90	0.30	3.11	40	p = .003
Tradition	1.93	1.01	2.56	0.74	4.58	40	p < .001
Identity	3.71	0.51	3.90	0.30	2.72	40	p = .010
Cultural Connectedness	8.34	1.57	9.37	0.94	5.23	40	p < .001

N = 41

There was a significant difference in the scores between the pre survey (M=8.34, SD=1.57) and the post survey (M = 9.37, SD = 0.94); t (40) = 5.23, p < = .001. These results suggest a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm significantly influences cultural connectedness. Specifically, my results suggest that when adolescents are exposed to a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm their cultural connectedness increases significantly.

Cultural Connectedness Qualitative Data Analysis

To capture how Blackfeet youth come to know and understand cultural connectedness I conducted semi-structured interviews using a talking circle format. The participants were asked one structured question and several follow-up questions to each of the 3 subscales (Identify, Tradition, Spirituality) included as part of the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey.

The interviews produced 3 Pillars and 11 categories. The Pillars and categories are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Cultural Connectedness Pillars

Cultural Connectedness Pillars

Pillar		Category				
Blackfoot Name	→	Pride	Cosmos	Dreams	Identity	Ancestors
Blackfoot Language	→	Transfer		Identity		Vanquish
Blackfoot Traditions	→	Spirituality		Culture		Journey

Cultural Connectedness Pillars

Cultural Connectedness Pillar 1: Blackfoot Name

The Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness pre survey indicated that 38 out of 41 students knew their Indian name and the post survey indicated that 38 out of 41 knew their Indian name. To develop a more robust understanding of how the student participants came to know and understand their Indian name I asked the students a series of questions related to their Indian name including: 1) Do you know and can you pronounce your Indian name (Identified in the graph as K/P), 2) Do you know the meaning of your Indian name means, 3) Do you know why you were given your Indian name, and 4) Can you tell me the importance of your Indian name. The results from the interviews shows that 37 out of 41 students knew and could pronounce their Indian name; 36 out of 41 knew the meaning of their Indian name; 36 out of 41 could explain why they were given their Indian name; and, 37 out of 41 could articulate why their Indian name was important to them. The students' words provided unique insights into their

perceptions about their Indian name. The results for Pillar 1 are shown in Figure 7. Figure 8 displays each of the categories identified as part of Pillar 1. Student quotes from the interviews supporting Pillar 1 and the associated categories follow Figure 11 and Figure 12

Figure 11

Pillar 1 (Blackfoot Name)

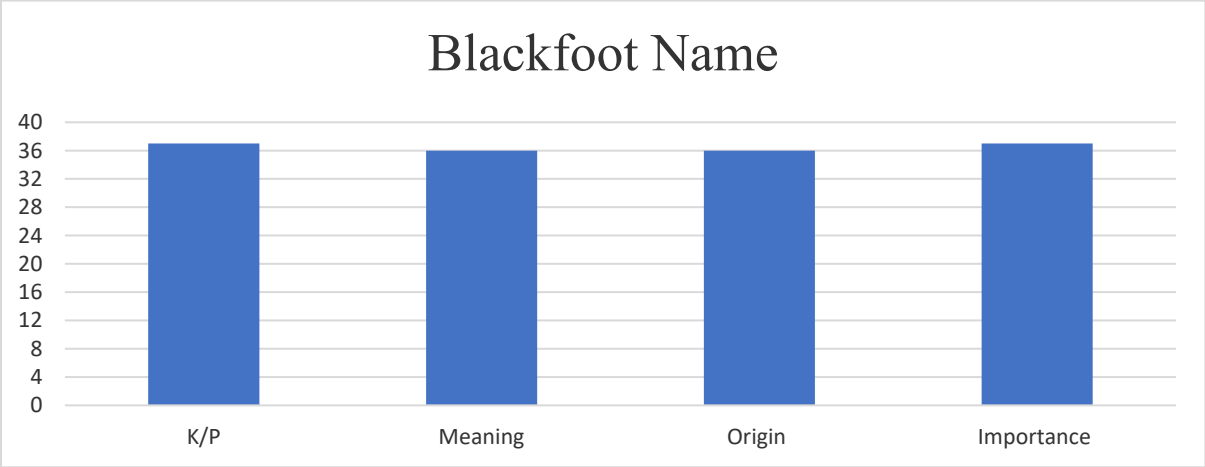
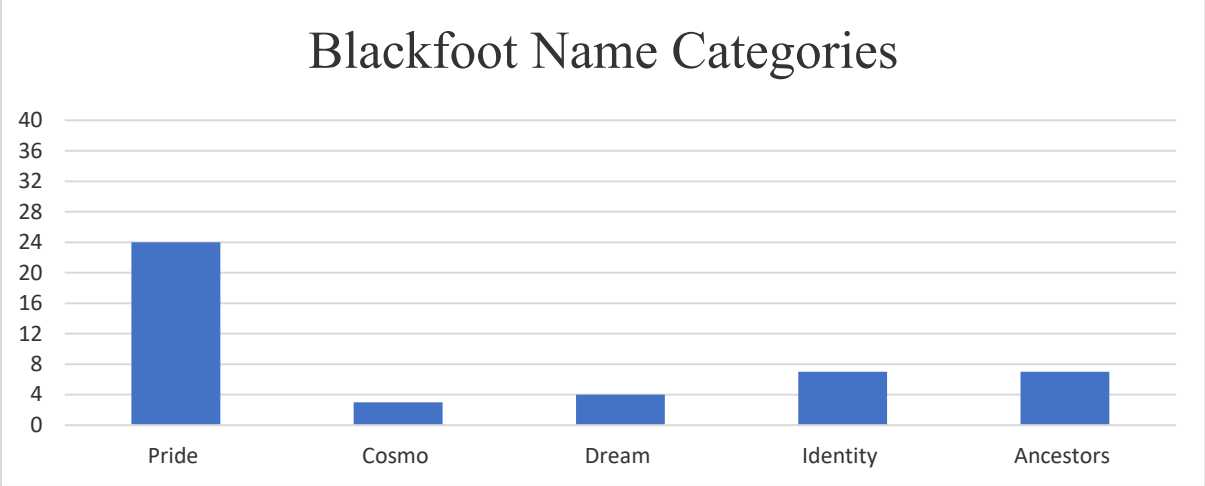


Figure 12

Pillar 1 (Blackfoot Name) Categories



Pride

Twenty-four of the students interviewed expressed enthusiasm when asked questions about their Blackfoot name. For example, student 6 said when asked if they could pronounce their name "absolutely" and then proudly stated her name; Student 14 said, "I've been able to pronounce my Blackfoot name since I was four;" Student 31 stated; "My Blackfoot name is who I am;" And, eighteen students pronounced their Blackfoot name without being prompted.

Cosmos

Three out of forty-one students explained that their Indian name was related to the cosmos: Student 9 said, "My Indian name is important to me because it comes from the stars and that's where we come from," similarly, Student 16 responding when asked about her Indian name, "My name was passed down through a star story;" And, likewise, student 31 said, "My mom told me that my Indian name is from the stars."

Dreams

Four out of forty-one students claimed that their Indian name came from a dream: Student 10 stated, "I think my Blackfoot name is important to me because it came from a dream and it was my grandpa's idea;" Student 11 stated, "My Indian name is important because it came from an elder's dream who gave it to my mom;" Student 34 said, "My gram had a dream about my Indian name and told my mom and it was given to me in the womb;" likewise, Student 40 stated, "My Indian name comes from a dream."

Identity

Seven out of forty-one students referenced the connection between their Indian name and their identity: Student 2 responded when asked about the importance of his

Indian name, “Because it’s part of our knowledge and who we are;” Student 15 said, “I was given my Indian name because I was not very patient and I was always running around;” likewise, Student 17 said, “My Indian name makes me feel good about myself;” Student 18 said, “I was given my name because I like black bears;” Student 29 said, “My Indian name was given to me because I like to dance a lot;” Student 33 said, “I feel good when I hear my Indian name;” Student 40 replied when asked why her Indian name is important “I feel more connected to my Blackfeet culture.”

Ancestors

Nine out of forty-one students mentioned the connection with their ancestors: Student 10 said, “My name is important because I got it from an elder;” Student 7 said, “I was presented with my name so I could pass it down to my kids;” Student 23 said, “My name was passed down from my papa;” And, several student participants articulated the relationship between their Indian name and their deceased ancestors. Student 14 said, My Indian name came from one of my relatives that passed.” Student 17 said, “My Indian name is important because it was given to me by elders who have passed.” Student 26 said “I was named after my great grandpa who passed before I was born.” Student 33 stated “My Indian name came from my mom’s grandpa who passed some time ago.” Student 41 said “It was given to me by my grandpa who passed.”

Cultural Connectedness Pillar 2: Blackfoot Language

The Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness pre and post survey showed that 41 out of 41 students indicated it was important for them to learn their Blackfoot language. To develop a more robust understanding of how student participants came to know and understand the importance of Blackfoot language I asked them if learning their Blackfoot

language was important, and if so, could they explain the importance. In all, 37 out of 41 students indicated during the interview process that they believed learning Blackfoot language was important. The results for Pillar 2 are shown in Figure 13. Figure 14 displays each of the categories identified as part of Pillar 2. Student quotes from the interviews supporting Pillar 2 and the associated categories follow Figure 13 and 14.

Figure 13

Pillar 2 (Blackfoot Language)

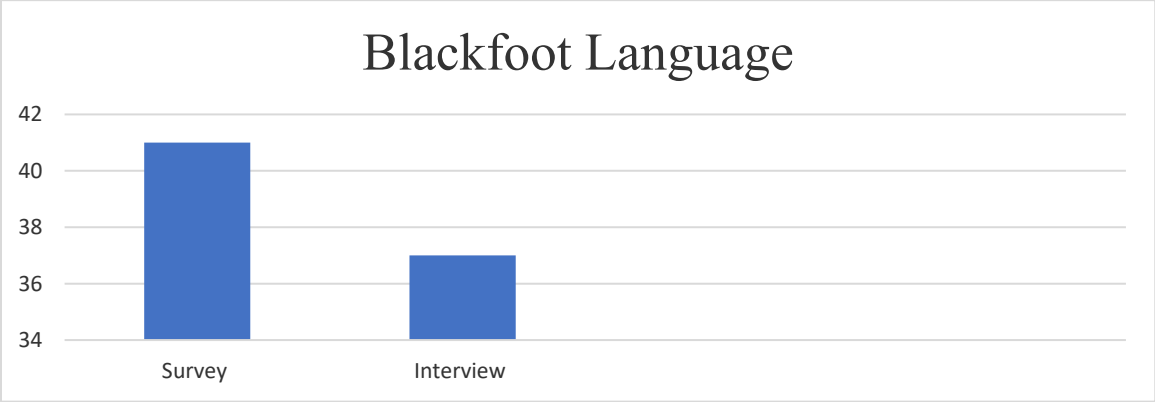
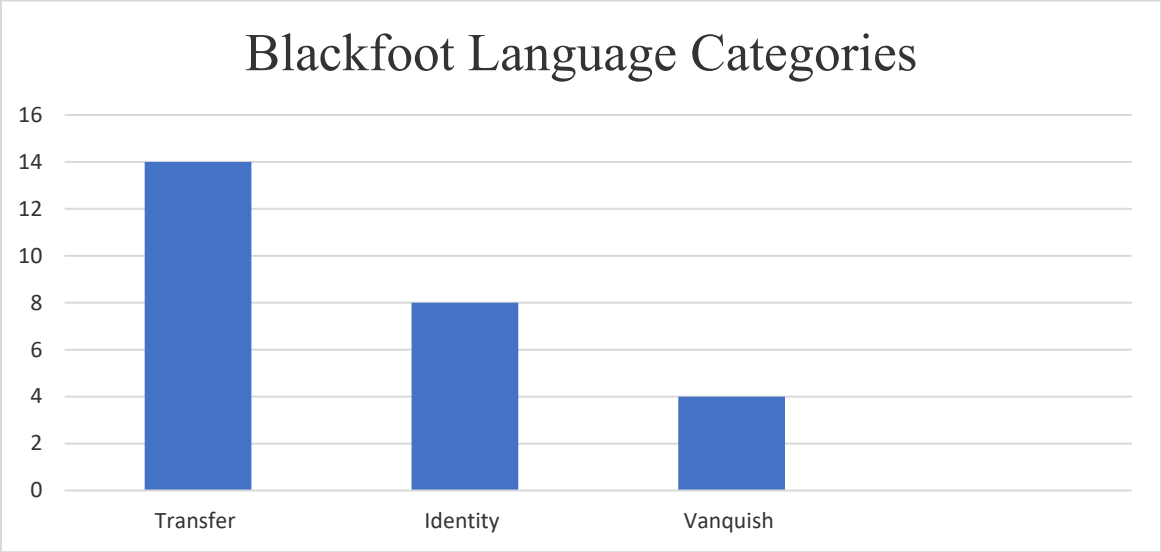


Figure 14

Pillar 2 (Blackfoot Language) Categories



Transfer

Fourteen out of forty-one students identified the importance of passing on the Blackfoot language: Student 5 said, “learning our language is important so I can pass it on;” Student 8 said, “learning our language is important so we will be able to speak and teach other kids to speak;” Student 11 said, “So I can pass it on to my kids and my grandkids;” Student 16 said, “So we can pass it on;” Student 19 said “So we can pass it on;” Student 21 said , “I want to teach it to my brother so he’ll know;” Student 22 said “So I can teach it to other people; Student 23 said, “I want teach my baby sister;” Student 24 said “I use or language to pray and teach it to my little brother;” Student 26 said “ So I can teach tiny people to learn it;” Student 33 said, “ I like to teach my mom and my dad and gramma. I think we should really start using our Blackfeet words when we say stuff because our language is starting to die;” Student 37 said “So I can teach my kids;” Student 38 said, “Yes, so I can teach my little niece and I can teach my other niece too and I’m going to teach them how to do Blackfeet when they get older;” Student 39 said, “Yes, because I teach my parents and my sisters;” Student 41 said, “Yes, because we should start carrying on our Blackfoot language so our kids can know it. Because some of the elders have died out, some of them have gone to the other-side and we don't have many speakers left.”

Identity

Eight out of forty-one identified the connection between language and culture. Examples of student quotes include, Student 1 said, “Because it’s our culture;” Student 7 said, “Because I want to learn Blackfeet;” Student 9 said, “So we can speak to Canada people;” Student 14 said, “Because it’s part of our culture; Student 25 said, “So I can

continue our ways;" Student 30 said, "So we can know our tasks;" Student 32 said "So we can learn about our culture;" Student 40 said, "Because it's our language."

Vanquish

Four out of forty-one expressed their concern about the language dying out: Student 3 said, "Yes, because not very many people speak Blackfoot anymore;" Student 4 said "Yes, because our language is dying out;" Student 6 said, "Yes, because if it dies out our culture will die out;" Student 34 said, "Yes, so we can bring back the language."

Cultural Connectedness Pillar 3: Blackfoot Traditions

The Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness pre survey indicated that 18 out of 41 students had participated in a cultural ceremony and the post survey indicated that 32 out of 41 had participated in a cultural ceremony. To develop a robust understanding of how student participants engaged in cultural activities my third interview topic centered on cultural participation. I asked students to describe their favorite cultural activity or ceremony they had participated in. In all, the interviews revealed that 24 out of 41 students could explained their favorite cultural activity or cultural ceremony. The results for Pillar 3 are shown in Figure 15. Figure 16 displays each of the associated categories identified as part of Pillar 3. Student quotes from the interviews supporting Pillar 3 and the associated categories follow Figure 15 and Figure 16.

Figure 15

Pillar 3 (Blackfoot Traditions)

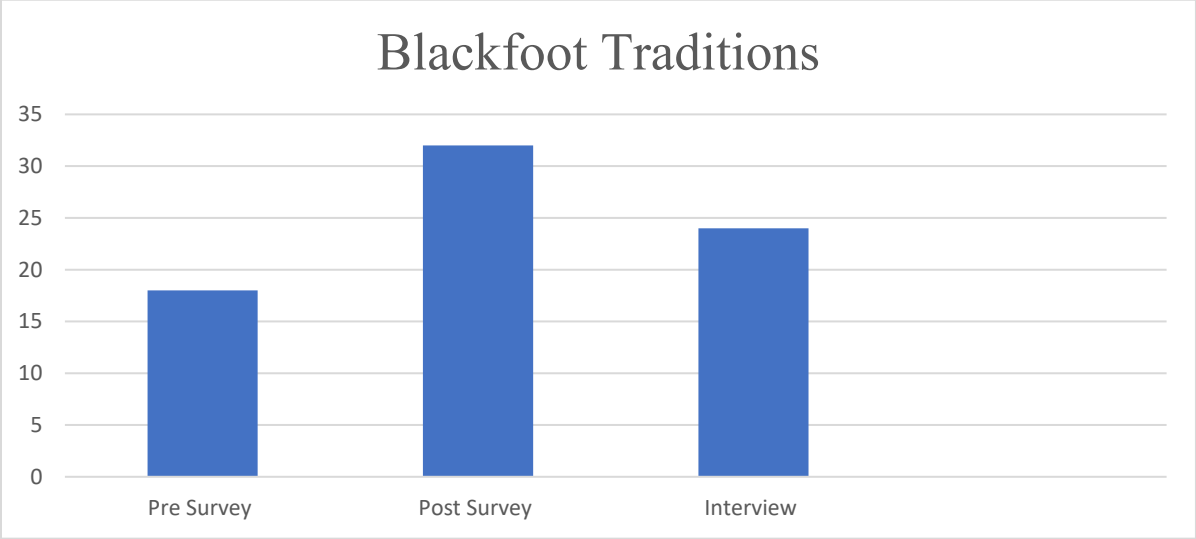
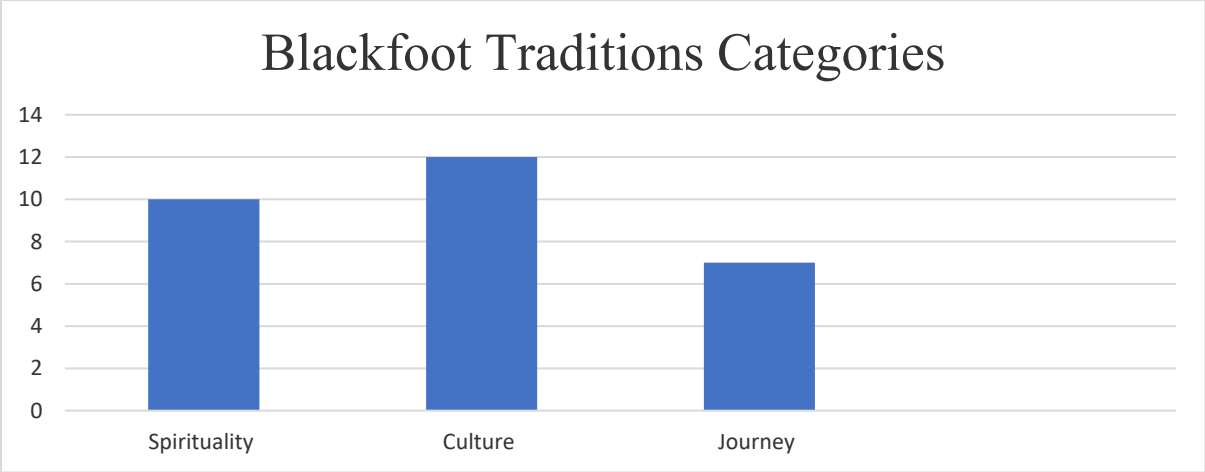


Figure 16: Pillar 3 (Blackfoot Traditions) Categories



Spirituality

Ten out of forty-one students talked about aspects of Blackfoot culture that relates to spirituality: Student 9 said, "A sweat lodge ceremony is meaningful to me;" Student 15 said "I like going to bundle openings and getting the berry soup;" Student 17 said, "Indian naming ceremony;" Student 22 said, "getting the berry soup at ceremonies and

holding the berry up to say the prayer;" Student 25 said, "Going to the sun dance—people get piercings that are sacrifices for people and they don't eat or drink for four days;" Student 27 said, "A ceremony is where we pray;" Student 33 said "My favorite is attending a bundle opening;" Student 30 said, "I like hearing the prayers in the Blackfoot language;" Student 35 said, "I like bundle openings and seeing the elders smoke the pipe—I also like getting my face painted;" Student 37 said,

> My favorite one is called a sun dance—it's where a lot of teepees are in a circle and there are these two master teepees that are connected and are really big. It's fun there because when you go there, they have these things called the rations and they dance around the whole camp.

Student participants also identified the connection between the land and spirituality: Thirty-nine out of forty-one students indicated through the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey that they believed things like animals and rocks have a spirit. During an observation of the innovation classroom I noticed the students identify "earth" and "environment" as areas to show respect. The same students also identify how NAPI showed respect to a rock during the reading of a traditional story.

Culture

Twelve out of forty-one students interviewed identified traditional cultural activities: Student 2 said, "Cutting dry meat;" Student 5 said, "I like playing stick game with my uncle;" Student 9 said, "I like cutting dry meat so I can hear the stories from my grandma;" Student 14 said "I think my favorite activity is stick game with my grandpa;" Student 21 said "I like stick game with the elders;" Student 22 said, "The big camp is my favorite ceremony because there are lots of my relations there;" Student 23 said "I like

going to powwows and dancing with my mom and dad;" Student 25 said, "I like going to round dances;" Student 26 said "I think my favorite cultural activity is stick game because you can see my family that I don't see much;" Student 27 said, "I like the run and scream;" Student 32 said "I like making dream catchers and flutes; Student 37 said, "I really don't participate in ceremonies, but I would like to start. I know how to bead, and I like to bead."

Journey

Seven out of forty-one students claimed that they had never attended a ceremony: Student 1 said, "I have never participated in a ceremony but I did get an Indian name;" Student 10 said, "I have never went to a ceremony I don't think;" Student 16 said , "I have never gone to a ceremony but I want to;" Student 17 said "I don't think I have never gone to a ceremony;" Student 24 said, "We don't go to ceremonies, but I would like to;" Student 31 said, "I don't think we can attend ceremonies;" and, Student 37 said, " We don't believe in going to ceremonies.

School Connectedness

RQ 3: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot Way of Knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' school connectedness?

To measure research question number two, I used the MAC 5-A-Short Version (Karcher, 2011) six-item school connectedness subscale.

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform school connectedness. The paired t-test results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

School Connectedness Paired t-test

	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2 Tailed)
School Connectedness	24.83	3.05	23.76	3.87	1.46	40	p =.151

N = 41

There were not significant differences in the scores between the pre survey (M = 24.83, SD = 3.05) and the post survey (M = 23.76, SD = 3.87); t(40) = 1.46, p = .151. These results suggest a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm does not significantly influences school connectedness. Specifically, my results suggest that when adolescents are exposed to a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm their school connectedness does not significantly increases.

To capture how Blackfeet youth come to know and understand school connectedness I conducted semi-structured interviews using a talking circle format. The participants were asked 2 structured question and additional follow-up questions covering the MAC 5-A-Short Version. The interviews produced 2 Pillars and 8 categories. The Pillars and categories are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17

School Connectedness Pillars

School Connectedness Pillars

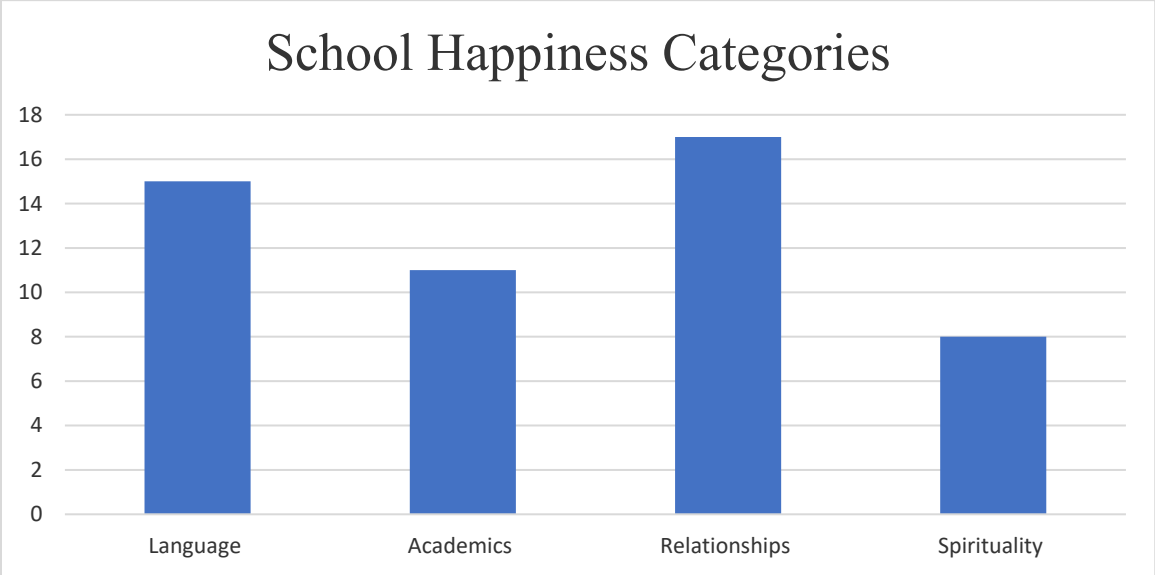
Pillar		Category			
School Happiness	→	Language	Academic	Personal	Spirituality
School Success	→	Grades	Caregiver	Teachers	Intrinsic

School Connectedness Pillar 1: School Happiness

Student participants were asked to describe what makes them happy at school. The responses show that students identified four categories including Language, Academics, Relationships, and Spirituality. The number of students selecting each category is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 18

School Connectedness Pillar 1 (School Happiness)



Language

Fifteen out of forty-one students related school happiness to Blackfoot language: Student 4 said, “When we get learn Blackfeet and definitely science;” Student 6 said, “When we do writing and learning Blackfeet;” Student 8 said, “When we learn Blackfeet;” Student 11 said, “Learning Blackfoot makes me happy;” Student 12 said, “When we learn language;” Student 14 said, “I like learning Blackfoot;” Student 15 said, “I like singing Blackfoot songs;” Student 19 said, “Hearing our language makes me calm;” Student 27 said, “I like learn the Blackfeet language;” Student 28 said, “I like

reading in Blackfeet because it helps us learn our culture and I like math because it gets us ready for high school." Student 29 said, "Playing outside and doing Blackfoot language makes me happy;" Student 33 said, "I like when my teacher calls me by my Blackfoot name;" Student 36 said, "Hearing our language." Student 38 said, "Learning our language;" Student 41 said, "When they tell us stories in Blackfeet."

Academics

Eleven out of forty-one students related their school happiness to core academics: Student 1 said "I like Math;" Student 2 said, "Music makes me happy;" Student 6 said, "I like doing Math;" Student 7 said, "Reading;" Student 10 said, "When we get to do math because the teacher makes it fun;" Student 11 said, "I like math;" Student 13 said, "When we have math;" Student 19 said, "I really like math; Student 20 said, "Math is my favorite thing to do at school;" Student 21 said, "When we do ELA;" Student 34 said, "I like science and math because we do fun things and we get to work with are partners."

Relationships

Seventeen out of forty-one students related their school happiness to a personal relationship: Student 3 said, " I like recess so I can see my friends and science too;" Student 5 said, "Recess, so I can see my cousins;" Student 8 said, "I like recess and lunch;" Student 14 said, "Seeing my friends;" Student 15 said, Having lunch with my friends makes me happy; Student 16 said, "My teacher is really respectful;" Student 17 said, "Lunch or recess because I get to see my friends that aren't in my regular class;" Student 18 said, "I like our lunch ladies;" Student 21 said, "Recess, because we can run and play with our friends;" Student 22 said, "Being with my teacher and learning;" Student 23 said, "Playing with friends;" Student 26 said, "Seeing my teacher and my

friends;" Student 28 said, "Seeing my teacher and my friends;" Student 31 said, "It makes me happy seeing my friends;" Student 33 said, "Seeing my friends and teachers;" Student 35 said, " My teacher is my really nice;" Student 37 said, "My teacher always says good morning;" and, Student 40 said, " My teachers are really nice."

Spirituality

Eight out of forty-one related their school happiness to spirituality: Student 4 said, smudging cleans the bad from our school;" Student 9 said, "When we smudge and say our prayer;" Student 16 said, "When we say the prayer after we smudge;" Student 23 said, "When we say the prayer over the speaker;" Student 30 said, "Smudging makes me feel good about myself during the day and science because we do really fun projects;" Student 32 said, "When we smudge and say our prayer. I like it when we say the prayer over the speaker too;" Student 36 said, "Smudging at the start of class makes me happy;" and, Student 37 said, "When my teacher tells us stories about where we came from."

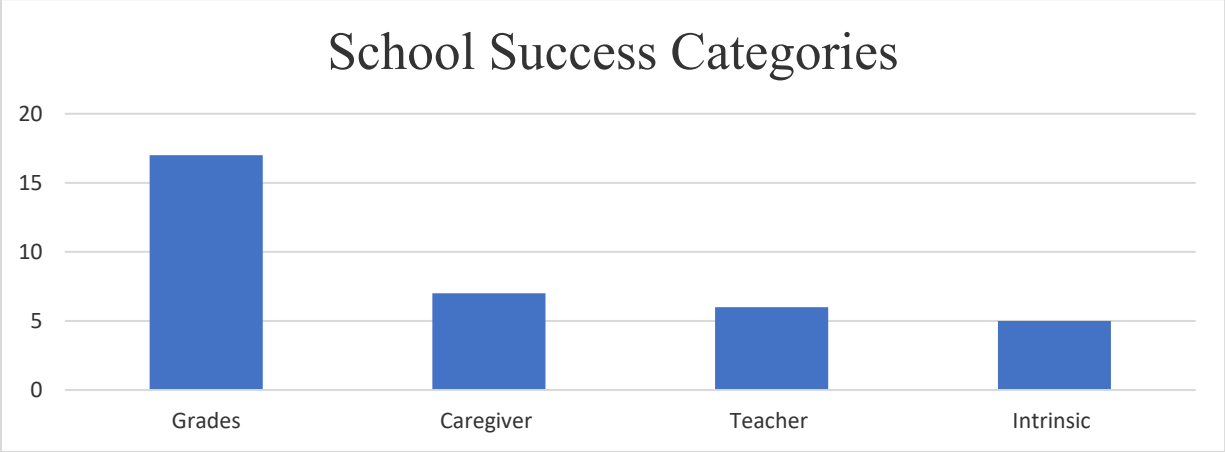
During several classroom observations I witnessed the teacher light and place a piece of sweetgrass in a small box and then take the box around to each student who fanned the smoke over their body. The teacher concluded the ceremony by fanning the smoke around the door of the classroom and leading the students in a prayer.

School Connectedness Pillar 2: School Success

Student participants were asked to describe how they come to know when they were doing well in school. The responses show that students identified four categories including Grades, Caregiver, Teacher, and Intrinsic. The number of students selecting each category is shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19

School Connectedness Pillar 2 (School Success)



Grades

Seventeen out of forty-one students identified grades: Student 1 said "My grades;" Student 2 said, "My grades;" Students 5 said, "Cause I see my grades;" Student 6 said, "When I get the grade report;" Student 7 said, "My grades; Student 9 said, "When my parents get a note from the school telling them my grades;" Student 10 said, "When the report cards come home;" Students 12 said, "When I get a grade report;" Student 17 said, "Report cards;" Student 18 said, "Teacher conferences;" Students 19 said, "When you work really hard to get good grades;" Student 20 said, "Because during parent teacher conferences they tell what score you have and how you are doing;" Student 21 said, "When I follow what I'm told and when I look at my grades;" Student 22 said, "When you're getting compliments and you see your grades;" Student 25 said, "Getting good grades;" Student 26 said, "Getting good grades and paying attention and being good;" and, Student 32 said, "When my mom tells me the teacher called her and said I'm getting all A's."

Caregiver

Seven out or forty-one students said their caregiver told them if they were doing well in school: Student 4 said, “When my dad gets a letter and says great job;” Student 8 said, “Teachers send home a certificate to tell your parents if you are doing well or not doing well;” Student 13 said, “When my mom says good job;” Student 14 said, “When my dad compliments me;” Student 26 said, “When my parents say let’s hop off your game and get to work on your school stuff;” Student 28 said, “When something comes in the mail at home and my mom opens everything and my mom smiles at me and I ask her why she is smiling and she says because you’re doing pretty good in school;” and, Student 30 said, “My gram tells me she’s proud of me.”

Teacher

Six out of forty-one students relied on their teacher to inform them if they are doing well in school: Student 3 said, “The teacher will tell me;” Students 13 said, “My teacher rewards me.” Student 15 said, “When my teacher says good job;” Student 29 said, “When my teacher says you’re doing good;” Student 31 said, “The teacher tells me I’m doing good;” and, Student 33 said, “When the teacher encourages me.”

Intrinsic

Five out of forty-one students reported intrinsic motivation as they key to determining their overall school success : Student 11 said, “When I’m listening and it makes me feel good;” Student 16 said, “I tell myself I’m doing a good job;” Student 23 said, “ I know because I try my best and I’ll try to learn the language;” Student 24 said, “When my friends say good job;” and, Student 27, “I pay attention.”

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

“You have to teach your children to be your elders—your caretakers in your old age—that's why we have these values—for survival, because survival is the ultimate goal” Blackfoot Elder

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the Indigenous based mixed-methods examination, which includes a brief description of its purpose, a review of the research questions that guided the study, a synopsis of related literature, a description of the methodology, and the findings. The summary is followed by a discussion of the findings, which is presented through a structured review of answers from the three research questions. I also offer a discussion of the limitations and recommendations for further studies. The theoretical contribution of this study to the existing body of literature is also addressed in the implications section of the chapter. Finally, I conclude chapter 5 with a brief conclusion of the study.

Summary of Literature

Privileging the dominant groups’ ways of knowing promotes a lack of consideration as it relates to marginalized groups’ ways of knowing and constructing, and pursuing knowledge are profoundly rooted in the colonizers’ mindset and displayed through imperialist practices (Smith, 1999). The imperialistic practices ultimately lead to a form of cognitive imperialism that rejects the legitimacy of languages, cultural practices, and traditions that are subservient to the dominant cultures’ worldview (Battiste, 1998).

American Indian peoples' identity yokes to their cultural identity; without one, the other becomes meaningless (Penland, 2010). The inequalities that exist between the educational experiences and opportunities of Native students and non-Native students can be reduced by making educational experiences that are culturally relevant to their family and community (McCarty, 2012) resulting in American Indian schoolchildren who have a robust sense of oneself (Agbo, 2004; Cleary & Peacock, 1998), have stronger cultural association (Trujillo, Viri, & Figueira, 2002), exhibit higher-levels of school connectedness (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Demmert, 2001; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Klump & McNeir, 2005) and increased cultural connectedness (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017).

Numerous scholars suggest that schooling practices that emphasize culture in the educational journey encourages students to appreciate his or her culture more (Fox, 2015), increases motivation to learn, and have fewer student disciplinary issues (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014). Culturally responsive teaching is understood by many scholars as a culturally centered philosophy of education (Nieto, 2013) that reaffirms the importance of teachers developing and nurturing personal connections with students by gaining an appreciation for the lived experiences of each student and how their culture influences the way they come to know. Brayboy (2005) developed TribalCrit to address the colonization atrocities experiences of American Indians. TribalCrit maintains the activist nature of CRT (Padgett, 2015), but places colonization and assimilation ahead of racism as fundamental across society (Brayboy, 2005). The Blackfoot have used sacred teaching methods that relate to understanding

one's connections with their ancestors—by acquiring sacred knowledge passed through stories and by observing elders living survival lessons (Bastien, 2004).

The primary purpose of this study's review of the literature was to provide the basis for discovering how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The review of the literature explored relevant issues related to using a strength-based intervention model based on traditional American Indian values. The discussion continued with a review of the literature concerning CRT (Gay, 2010) and TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), which served as the lens for this study. The review of the literature was concluded with a discussion of traditional Blackfoot learning practices.

Conceptual Model

My study was designed as an Indigenous based mixed-methods approach that braided a traditional mixed-method approach with a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm. I viewed the construct of Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) offered by McCarty and Lee (2014); Culturally Responsive Teaching pioneered by Gay (2010); through the lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) developed by Brayboy (2005).

Summary of Study

Part I of my study was designed to address shortcomings addressed by the framers of the Blackfeet Education Standards by visiting with Blackfoot elders to identify and

record values they believed are transferred during ceremonies, cultural activities, and through traditional stories.

Juneau (2001) claims that Native Americans had their educational system that relied on elders transferring their knowledge to children through stories and myths that centered on survival. Brayboy (2005) the pioneer of TribalCrit argues that storytelling is a legitimate source of transferring Tribal philosophies, beliefs, and traditions between generations. American Indian elders have used a traditional learning process to transfer essential knowledge that rejects the notion of memorizing basic knowledge. The tribal nation's history is embedded in traditional stories and their origin legends where Indigenous children learn about their heroes and heroines and of the lessons they used to survive (Raymond, 1999).

The histories, cultures, traditions, and ceremonies of each of the Indian tribes were passed down primarily through storytelling over hundreds of generations. The Tribal Nations of Montana Handbook for Legislators (2016) suggests that tribes in Montana used storytelling to transfer scared knowledge during ceremonies. The clash between gaining individual rights while surrendering self-determination would come to alter the way American Indians transferred their way of knowing to future generations causing American Indian people to lose parts of their cultural identity (Brave Heart, 1998).

Part II of my study examined the degree of impact a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm had on cultural connectedness and school connectedness. Cultural connectedness and school connectedness are identified as potential protective factors against suicidal ideation and depressive episodes for American Indian youth. My

innovation was based on having students experience the values identified in the original Hoop of Values through traditional Blackfoot stories delivered once weekly through a cultural values teaching framework in two elementary immersion classrooms.

Scholars and numerous data sources suggest that student bullying is a national epidemic (Thapa et. Al., 2013; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016) and is contributing to young people experiencing severe mental health issues (McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015). Likewise, Montana youth are experiencing adverse mental health issues associated with bully behaviors (MyVoice Survey, 2016; Montana OPI Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017) that are oftentimes resulting in increased levels of suicidal ideation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, 2011). Scholarly literature indicates a strong association between bullying behaviors and youth suicide (Reed, Nugent, & Cooper, 2015; Gini & Espelage, 2014; Espelage & Holt, 2013). Several scholars contend that American Indian youth experience significantly higher rates of bullying victimization when compared to their White counterparts (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Melander, Sittner Hartshorn, & Whitbeck, 2013) resulting in suicide rates nearly 2.5 times higher than other youth populations (O'Keefe et al., 2014; Wexler et al., 2015).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my investigation is to examine how Blackfoot elders perceive the transfer of values through ceremonies, cultural activities and traditional stories; and to what degree a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness for students attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. I answered three research questions:

RQ 1: How do Blackfoot elders perceive traditional values transferred through ceremonies, cultural activities, and traditional stories?

RQ 2: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' cultural connectedness?

RQ 3: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' school connectedness?

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How do Blackfoot elders perceive traditional values transferred through ceremonies, cultural activities, and traditional stories?

I described earlier in my dissertation the difficulty the framers of the Blackfeet Education Standards expressed with identifying the values included as part of the original Hoop of Values, predominately relying on literary works composed by non-Indigenous scholars. In contrast, I relied solely on my visits with Blackfoot elders, and by attending and participating in Blackfoot ceremonies and cultural activities.

My examination resulted in identifying and contextualizing ten traditional values encasing spirituality. The values are displayed in the Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values. I purposely used the word Hoop to bring attention to the concept of the values encasing and connecting with spirituality. I also intentionally include the word Traditional in the title to explicitly recognize that the values identified in my study are culturally based and are part of the traditions that helped the Blackfoot survive an attempted cultural genocide.

Several scholars suggest strength-based interventions are pertinent to American Indians (Drywater-Whitekiller, 2010; Burnette & Figley, 2016) who have relied on

traditional values to overcome centuries of oppression (Vizenor, 2008; Burnette &Figley, 2016) resulting in the development of strong resiliency skills (Wang, Zhang, & Zimmerman, 2015; Greene, 2009). I note in my review of the literature that scholars have struggled to define what constitutes a strength based model for American Indians (Stiffman et al., 2007), instead, relying on archaic deficit-based approaches that propagate the impression that American Indians are overwhelmed with the lasting impacts of assimilation atrocities and on-going colonization attempts that marginalize their survival strengths. Scholars suggest that American Indians have relied on survivance to renew and sustain their culture.

I argue that being able to contextualize traditional values in their situated place is compulsory for defining the characteristics of a strength-based innovation or intervention for American Indians. A strong sense of belonging is related to the strength of cultural associations and a sense of connectedness with an individual's tribal history (Garrett & Garrett, 1994) and can help American Indian children develop resiliency skills (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Resilience theory suggests that strengthening protective factors helps to counterbalance the adverse effects of risk, and helps individuals overcome adversity (Wang, Zhang, & Zimmerman, 2015; Greene, 2009).

Research Question 2: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' cultural connectedness?

The goal of research question number two was to assess the degree of impact a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm had on a student's cultural connectedness. Cultural connectedness was contextualized for my study as the level of understanding, and involvement one has with Blackfeet culture (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson,

2017). There was a significant difference in the scores between the pre survey (M=8.34, SD=1.57) and the post survey (M = 9.37, SD = 0.94); t (40) = 5.23, p = .000. These results suggest that a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm significantly influences cultural connectedness. Specifically, my results suggest that when adolescents are exposed to Blackfeet culture their cultural connectedness increases. I also learned that each of the three subscales (spirituality, tradition, identity) that makeup the overall cultural connectedness scale was significantly impacted by the Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm. The student interviews also produced three pillars including: 1) Blackfoot Name, 2) Blackfoot Language and 3) Blackfoot Traditions.

Blackfoot Name. The data from the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey indicated that 38 out 41 students knew their Indian name. Likewise, statistics from the interviews showed that nearly all of the students could pronounce their Indian name; could explain the meaning of their Indian name; knew why they were given their Indian name; and, could articulate why their Indian name was important to them. During my visits with Blackfoot elders I learned that a Blackfoot name is closely tied to spirituality and when used during prayer allows the person to be identified directly by their Creator. I witnessed during observations of the innovation classroom that students were more attentive during instructional activities and more responsive and respectful when the innovation teachers used a student's Blackfoot Name.

Blackfoot Language. The Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness pre and post survey showed that all 41 students indicated it was important for them to learn their Blackfoot language. Likewise, nearly all of the students indicated during their interview that they believed learning Blackfoot language was important. Additionally, fifteen out of

forty-one students related school happiness to Blackfoot language. Scholarly literature suggests that American Indians experienced a cultural genocide (Vizenor, 2008), that purposely targeted the eradication of their languages (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017). Blackfoot elders poignantly described the horrific treatment their ancestors experienced at boarding schools for speaking their native language and how those experiences contributed to their fear of teaching the language to their children and grandchildren. During my visits with Blackfoot elders I learned that Blackfoot culture and sacred Blackfoot traditions are understood through the Blackfoot language. The elders expressed that their language is fundamental to their identity, and preserving the language is critical for their sustainability.

Blackfoot Traditions. The Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness pre survey indicated that 18 out of 41 students had participated in a cultural ceremony and the post survey indicated that 32 out of 41 had participated in a cultural ceremony. I attribute the discrepancy between the pre and post survey results to students gaining an understanding of what constitutes a traditional ceremony. For example, I learned through informal discussions during classroom activities that many of the youth didn't realize they were given their Indian name during a ceremony. Likewise, the student interviews revealed that 24 out of 41 students could explained their favorite cultural activity or cultural ceremony. For the purpose of my study I explain traditions as Blackfoot ceremonies or Blackfoot cultural activities. Scholars suggest understanding ceremonial practices are the bedrock of Native peoples' identity (Benally & Viri, 2005). I learned during an earlier cycle I conducted with child psychiatrists that they believe there is a strong connection

between an adolescents' sense of self and having their traditions affirmed. Child psychiatrist #1 said:

> The sense of self and the self-identity comes out of people's individual traditions. I think our traditions get affirmed because we're in the majority, where I think as a minority your traditions don't get affirmed to the same degree, and if you don't have your traditions affirmed by the people that you interact with all the time, then I think they feel negated in that regard. I think without our culture being understood and affirmed then we are going to have difficulty affirming ourselves coming out of that culture.

Many of the traditions described by the student participants were cultural activities done under the guidance of grandparents. I learned from Blackfoot elders that ceremonies and traditional activities are where Blackfeet children come to know their values—come to learn about their tasks and how they connect to their Creator. Blackfoot scholars indicate that traditional Blackfoot learning starts with parents teaching their infants before being shifted to grandparents (Pepion, 1999; Bastien, 2004), where traditional knowledge is transferred (Hall, 2018; Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999) through ceremonies, and traditional stories (Juneau, 2001) before returning to the parent at the beginning of adolescence (Pepion, 1999; Bastien, 2004).

Similarly, I learned from a child psychiatrist during a previous study that there is a connection between an adolescents' self-esteem and having culture pride experienced between generations. Child psychiatrist #2 claimed:

> Well, I think it's always important to feel part of; part of a family, part of a community, part of a culture, and it creates a sense of connectedness and pride,

and I think safety. And I think when you can see pride in multi-generations and feel, you know, I'm part of that, then it improves their self-esteem.

The time spent with grandparents is vital as traditional knowledge is transferred between generations (Hall, 2018; Bastien, 2004; Pepion, 1999) through ceremonies and creation and mythology stories that provide the basis for Blackfoot culture. I observed during a traditional Blackfoot ceremony a grandmother redirect her rambunctious grandchildren by explaining to them the importance of respecting their Creator.

My results show that children gain a deeper connection to their culture when they experience culturally influenced schooling practices and environments that honor their worldview. A deeper connection to one's culture could help explain why some American Indian youth are able to build strong Indigenous-related resilience (Burnette & Figley, 2016) to overcome adverse situations. I learned during an earlier cycle that child psychiatrists believe there is strong connection between an adolescents' cultural identity and their self-esteem. The psychiatrists were asked: How does an adolescent understanding of their cultural identify influence their self-esteem? Child psychiatrist #3 stated:

> My thinking is that kids who have a strong connection to their culture would help with their self-esteem because, as I said, like your developmental task as an adolescent is kind of figuring out like who do I want to be when I grow up, and, you know, what kind of person do I want to be. So, if you're starting that journey with a stable cultural identity and a strong connection to a greater culture, I feel like that's going to be kind of a grounding force for you as opposed to if you don't have a strong cultural identity.

Cultural connectedness has been identified as a contributor to helping young people develop their self-efficacy for completing their responsibilities and reaching their personal goals (Snowshoe, Crooks, Tremblay & Hinson, 2017). Scholarly literature suggests that American Indians have relied on cultural resilience (Heavy Runner and Marshall, 2003) to overcome oppression (Strand and Peacock, 2003), and survive an attempted cultural genocide for centuries (Vizenor, 2008).

My findings add important information to support existing studies and intervention models that view American Indian culture as a strength (Wexler et al., 2015; McLoyd & Randolph, 1985; McShane & Berry, 1986) instead of portraying American Indian life as a deficit related to intergenerational trauma caused by historical trauma and oppression (Wexler et al., 2015). The knowledge gained through this study adds important information for developing an understanding about what constitutes an Indigenous based strength model that incorporates traditional values.

Scholars claim that American Indian children experience bullying at significantly higher rates when compared to other youth (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Melander, Sittner Hartshorn, & Whitbeck, 2013). Scholars note that as a result of oppression and its ensuing influences on the internalized process of oppression, Indigenous people suffer a wound to their soul. Mistakenly, American Indian caregivers get trapped into believing that their children escape oppression and the insidious effects of internalized oppression—but Native children do suffer the ill effects of internalizing oppression, and as a result of lacking the outlets or processes to overcome the difficulties associated with internalizing oppression, they struggle even more than adults, resulting in cultural discontinuity (Gonzales, Simard, Baker-Demaray, & Iron Eyes in Davis, 2013). I

described cultural discontinuity earlier in this dissertation as the social ills that plague American Indian communities. Scholars indicate that cultural discontinuity is "the violence in all forms: lateral violence, sexual violence, physical violence, emotional or character assassination, bullying, intimidating, and so on" (Gonzales, Simard, Baker-Demaray, & Iron Eyes in Davis, p. 46, 2013). I suggest that American Indian youth experience high levels of bullying because of their inability to heal from the effects of internalizing oppression associated with historical oppression that manifests itself through cultural discontinuity.

Children that encounter bullying, experience a diminished self-worth (Perren, Ettakal, & Ladd, 2013), damaged self-esteem (McDougall and Vaillancourt, 2015) and oftentimes experience suicidal ideation (Schreier et al., 2009; Gini & Espelage, 2014; Arango, Opperman, Gipson, & King, 2016; Gunn, & Goldstein, 2017). Youth suicide is one of the most dauting crisis facing American Indian communities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Wexler et al., 2015) that are often located in rural areas that lack culturally sensitive intervention services (Leavitt et al., 2018).

Researchers indicate that strength based mental health intervention models that link cultural practices and cultural values (Hill 2009; Yurkovich, Hopkins, & Rieke, 2012) and help children develop a sense of belonging to their tribal culture, connecting with tribal spirituality, and embracing their culture, can help American Indians overcome suicidal tendencies (Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997). Scholarly literature suggests that American Indian youth may benefit from school-based suicide prevention programing that reaches across a broad spectrum (Leavitt et al., 2018). Additionally, various studies suggest that generic bullying prevention programs are less effective with minority youth

(Limber et al., 2018) and argue for the advancement of culturally centered bullying interventions (Botvin et, al., 1995).

I argued that bullying was only part of the reason that American Indian youth are experiencing a mental health crisis—American Indians have experienced a multitude of intentional acts aimed at crushing their cultural spirit. American Indian children experience modern-day colonization efforts manifested through schooling practices aimed at subjugating their worldview. Public schools are not only the places where children learn critical academic and vocational skills, but also where traditions are learned and values are transferred (Battiste et al., 2000b; 2002). Scholars suggest that cultural connectedness is deemed a protective factor against adverse mental health struggles associated with colonization (Whitbeck, Hoyt, McMorris, Chen, & Stubben, 2001).

Developing an understanding of the relationship between cultural identity and self-esteem is critical for American Indian children. A child psychiatrist indicated during a previous cycle that there are both positive and negative connections between an adolescents' cultural identity and their self-esteem. The psychiatrist were asked: How does an adolescent understanding of their cultural identify influence their self-esteem? Child psychiatrist #3 espoused:

> I think it could influence it a number of different ways, but I think in general if they had a positive identification with a cultural identity that they perceived to be positive, then it would be good for their self-esteem, but if they identified negatively with their culture or they perceived their culture to be negative, it would be negative for their self-esteem.

I indicated earlier in my dissertation that American Indian children are forced to walk in two worlds (Henze & Vanett, 1993), straddling Western traditions and Indigenous traditions, but during my study I learned that they also have to walk in a third world—a psychological world where they mentally try to make sense of the resistance to braiding traditional cultural practices with modern-day schooling practices. I suggest that denying American Indian children opportunities to make strong ties with their traditional culture is a form of lateral oppression that contributes to cultural discontinuity resulting in Native children surrendering their cultural capital.

My study uncovered that American Indian youth gain a stronger connection to their culture when their traditional values are braided with contemporary schooling practices. My conclusions suggest that American Indian children that are exposed to cultural practices and traditions would develop a deeper sense of self-efficacy to overcome the adverse effects associated with bullying and historical trauma and historical oppression.

Research Question 3: How and to what degree does a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm inform an adolescents' school connectedness?

The goal of research question number three was to assess the degree of impact a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm had on a student's school connectedness. Scholarly literature suggests that school connectedness is a youths' affinity and sense of belonging they feel to their teachers and classmates (Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2006). School connectedness was contextualized for my study as the degree that youth feel appreciated and supported by their schoolteachers and classmates (Oldfield, Stevenson, Ortiz, & Haley, 2018; Foster et al., 2017; Crespo, Jose, Kielpikowski, & Pryor, 2013). I

learned during a previous study with a child psychiatrist that teachers and administrators are important for students. Child psychiatrist #4 said:

> I think teachers and administrators can have a big impact. I think if you talk to kids who have done well in the face of adversity they often will cite some important person outside of their family, whether it was a coach or a teacher, or, an administrator that took a personal interest in them or connected with them.

The data from the MAC 5-A-Short Version, school connectedness subscale indicated that Blackfeet based classroom engagement did not significantly impact school connectedness. In fact, student's overall school connectedness declined slightly between the pre-survey and post-survey. However, 17 out of the 41 students during interviews identified a personal connection with teachers or friends as the reason for their school happiness. When children experience a connection to their teachers and classmates, they come to appreciate the worth of those relationships. A child psychiatrist claimed during a pervious study that children perform better in school when they feel affirmed by their teachers. Child psychiatrist #1 said:

> I think it's huge. You figure, particularly in elementary school, you spend more time with your teacher in the daytime than you do with your parents. They have a tremendous impact and influence on kids. That's what I would say. I think it's so essential. Kids who do well in school and feel affirmed by their teachers are kids who go on to grow up and have successful relationships with friends and future partners.

Furthermore, connectedness is broadly conceptualized as reciprocating, participating with, and being emotionally invested with the people that part of the places

and events that constitute their community (Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2006). Blackfoot elders identified reciprocity as a traditional value that is transferred during ceremony and cultural activities. Additionally, student interviews revealed that 15 out 41 students related their school happiness to learning and using Blackfoot language, 11 out of 41 identified student learning activities, and 8 out 41 acknowledged spirituality. The sum of the elder interviews combined with the student interviews lend support to the conceptualization of connectedness as being related to giving back to the people that influence the events that create community within our place.

Fostering school connectedness during adolescence can help to offset the influence of classmates, friends, and intimate partners by offering them a chance to form connections across a broader spectrum of society. I learned during an earlier cycle that child psychiatrists believe an adolescent's connections to their peers influences their self-esteem. The psychiatrists were asked: To what extent does an adolescent's peers influence their self-esteem? Child psychiatrist #3 stated "Typical adolescent development, you're pulling away from your parents, your peer group is the most powerful group. So, peers have probably the biggest impact on self-esteem for adolescents, just developmentally that's kind of typical development for them" and child psychiatrist #4 added:

> An adolescent's peers also have a large influence on self-esteem, and adolescent patients are typically trying to form a sense of identity and trying to figure out "where they fit" in society, and peers can have a large role either in helping someone feel accepted and having a higher self-esteem or in delivering negative messages and lowering self-esteem.

Children who are predominantly connected with friends outside of school participate in riskier youth behaviors and are more prone to express negative perceptions of school, as well as resisting more positive societal connections. During a previous cycle Child psychiatrist #2 described the relationship between an adolescent's peers and their self-esteem stating:

> If your friendship group is about a group that always feels ostracized, feels inferior, then you're going to take on those characteristics. It's an interesting social experiment on a psychiatric milieu to watch how kids gravitate to certain kids. Typically, the kids that are having the most difficulties are attaching to the kids that are having the most difficulties.

On the contrary, young people who express positive perceptions of school, and are engaged in the school environment are more likely to resist illicit youth behaviors that impede academic progress (Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2006).

I indicated earlier in my dissertation that scholarly literature suggests that school connectedness is a protective barrier against youth depression (Joyce & Early, 2014; Millings et al., 2012; Resnik et al., 1997; Shochet, et, al., 2008) for predicting future adolescent mental health issues (Shochet et, al., 2006) as well as understanding mental health strength (Oldfield, Stevenson, Ortiz, & Haley, 2018). Researchers studying the relationship between school connectedness and mental health issues learned that children encountering robust school connectedness have fewer depressive episodes (Joyce &Early, 2014) are more skillful at overcoming the adverse results of bullying (Foster et al., 2017) and protects against suicide for American Indian youth (Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997).

I suggested in chapter one of my dissertation that youth depression and suicidal ideation are a crisis facing American Indian communities, and I further argued that one of the causes is student bullying. I also indicated during the review of the literature that scholars note that school connectedness is a protective factor for American Indian youth against the adverse effects of bullying (Foster et al., 2017) for encountering fewer depressive episodes (Joyce &Early, 2014) and reduced suicidal ideation (Pharris, Resnick, & Blum, 1997). I conclude that helping American Indian youth develop school connectedness would be an obligatory aspect of developing and using a strength-based intervention.

Strengths of the Current Study

There were several strengths of this study. First, the results of the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey indicated that braiding Blackfeet culture with modern-day teaching practices significantly influences students' cultural connectedness. This was the first study to use a cultural connectedness survey adapted specifically to Blackfeet culture. The survey was adapted under the guidance of my community advisory board.

Second, I was able to corroborate the Indigenous based mixed-methods data analysis through the process of triangulation. Specifically, the results of the Blackfeet adapted cultural connectedness survey were supported by the students and elder interviews, as well as my participation in traditional Blackfoot ceremonies.

Third, I was able to identify and define traditional values that Blackfoot elders believe are learned during ceremonies, cultural activities and through traditional stories. To honor the Blackfoot way of knowing I used the exact words used by the elders to craft

the definitions. I also witnessed the application of the values during my attendance and participation of traditional Blackfoot ceremonies. I also had the English version of the values transferred into Blackfoot by a fluent speaker who on several occasions collaborated with other fluent speakers to assure accuracy. Finally, I relied on my elder's liaison to provide clarifications on any areas of confusion.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of the current study, there are a couple of important limitations to note, and the results should be interpreted with these limitations in consideration. The limitations are discussed in detail below. I also provide recommendations for future research.

Scholarly Positionality. I am a non-Indigenous scholar researching an Indigenous population and as a result, my conclusions may be influenced by my own lived experiences. Smith (2012) contends that academic studies concerning Native people are innately slanted and Indigenous communities should maintain some control of the purpose for research within their communities.

Sample. Given that my study only relied on students in a Blackfeet immersion classroom where the teachers incorporate many aspects of Pikani culture that was not part of the innovation and I did not use a control group you can't make causal claims about the results.

Recommendations for Future Research

First, I would recommend conducting a similar study between Blackfeet immersion classrooms and non-immersion classrooms to determine if introducing the traditional values into the Olweus bullying prevention program have an influence on

cultural connectedness. Specifically, future studies should attempt to obtain a larger and more diverse sample. This will likely help strengthen the generalizability of the findings related to the connection between a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm and cultural connectedness. Second, I would conduct a similar study to the original study where I compared the process of having students use a traditional winter count process in comparison to a technology-based winter count process. Third, I would conduct a study across more grade-levels to determine if the degree of impact begins or ends at a certain grade-level. Finally, I recommend creating a Blackfeet adapted school connectedness survey that incorporates Blackfeet culture as a central component of understanding school connectedness.

Conclusion

Part I of my study included discovering the traditional values Blackfoot elders believed are transferred during Blackfoot ceremonies, cultural activities and through traditional stories. The examination resulted in the identification of ten traditional values coming from spirituality included as part of the Hoop of Traditional Blackfoot Values.

The review of the literature indicates that American Indians have survived the atrocities associated with colonization and oppression by relying on and transferring their traditional values from one generation to the next. I suggest that identifying and contextualizing traditional Blackfoot values is an obligatory part of defining what a strength-based intervention is for Blackfoot people. In addition, traditional Blackfoot values are a foundation for nurturing a Blackfoot centered culturally responsive learning environment. Hall (2018), a Blackfeet scholar suggests that school administrators

entrusted with educating Blackfeet children should construct learning environments that embed Blackfoot culture and traditions into schooling practices.

The results from Part I of my study support the argument by Hall (2018) and can be used to embed traditional Blackfoot values across all aspects of Browning Public Schools and as the foundation for creating a culturally sustaining and revitalizing environment that honors the worldviews of the Blackfeet people.

I mentioned in chapter one of my dissertation that Article X section 1(2) of the state of Montana Constitution explicitly reads "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indian and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity" (Montana Code Annotated, 2017, p. 59). I further note that in 1999 the Montana legislator passed legislation called Indian Education for All (IEFA). IEFA aimed at clarifying the intent of convention delegates and contained three distinct components:

1. Every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner; and
2. Every educational agency and all educational personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes or those tribes that are in close proximity, when providing instruction or when implementing an educational goal or adopting a rule related to the education of each Montana citizen, to include particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.
3. It is also the intent of this part, predicated on the belief that all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate

> effectively with Indian students and parents, that educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding and appreciation for the American Indian people (Mont. Code Ann. § 20-1-501, 2017).

Finally, I introduced the Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Plan in chapter one of my dissertation. The Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction plan calls for the creation and adoption of culturally centered suicide prevention models designed to reduce the prevalence of suicide within American Indian populations across Montana. The Montana Native Youth Reduction Plan is guided by a shared vision stating:

> Our vision is to reclaim our sacred responsibility to care for each other as relatives and embrace our cultural values to create welcoming, safe, and healing families and communities where our youth feel their worth, have hope for their future, and cared for when in pain, and live to realize their dreams (Montana Native Youth Suicide Reduction Advisory Council, 2018)

I assert that identifying and combining American Indian traditional values with modern-day schooling practices is a requirement of honoring Article X section 1(2), the Montana Indian Education Act and for developing and adopting culturally centered, strength-based suicide reduction models called for through the Montana Native Youth Reduction Plan.

Part II of my study measured the degree of impact a Blackfoot way of knowing paradigm had on cultural connectedness and school connectedness for 9, 10 and 11-year-old schoolchildren attending school on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The results show that Blackfeet children develop a more robust connection to their culture when traditional values and cultural practices are embedded throughout their school

experiences. The student interviews added a great deal of depth to how Blackfeet children come to know and define their connection to their culture. The review of the literature suggests that cultural connectedness is a potential protective factor against mental health difficulties experienced by American Indian youth.

My data also showed that Blackfeet children do not necessarily develop a stronger connection to their school environment when experiencing Blackfeet traditions and culture. I suggest that one possible explanation for this phenomenon is that student participants completed the pre-survey at the start of the school year when their excitement for seeing their friends and teachers was high and they completed the post-survey just before Christmas, which is a difficult time for many children living on the Reservation. The student interviews did provide insightful information to how Blackfeet children define and value aspects of both culturally based and contemporary school connectedness. The results from this study may be used to inform school leadership and community partners about developing and implementing a culturally responsive school environment that helps Blackfeet youth successfully walk in three worlds.

Postscript

To develop a robust and richer understanding of the information presented in my dissertation, I probed seven community members' perspectives to capture their insights on both research methodology and my conclusions. The postscript participants included members of a school based community advisory board (CAB), innovation implementation teachers, and a cultural liaison. The postscript participants were current or former school district employees or board members, included both male and female participants, and each had prior knowledge of my dissertation study. I began each

conversation by first explaining the research questions, and then detailing the research methodology used to answer the data for the question. Before explaining my conclusions, I provided the community member an opportunity to offer their perceptions of both the method used to capture the data and the conclusions drawn. I also allowed each community member to share any recommendations they would have based on the study results as well as having them provided a general overview of the entire study. The postscript data is presented in the following order 1) Methodology, 2) Results, and 3) Recommendations

Methodology

Collectively, the postscript participants identified the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods as a strength of the dissertation study. My use of proper Blackfoot protocol when visiting with elders and my willingness to use cultural guides were identified as a basis for establishing credibility. The postscript participants praised the effort of adapting the cultural connectedness survey to reflect Blackfeet culture, and two of the postscript participants applauded the process used to help the student participants complete the presurvey and post-survey. The postscript participants universally communicated the merit of using the student's quotes throughout the dissertation to support my conclusions. All of the postscript participants acknowledged the significance of utilizing the student participant's actual words for creating the cultural connectedness and school connectedness categories I developed during the qualitative analysis process.

Results

To understand how community members perceived my study results, I provided a general overview of the quantitative results and detailed the qualitative analysis. Each of

the postscript participants was allowed to offer their insights before I justified my conclusions. None of the postscript participants were surprised that the intervention increased cultural connectedness. The postscript participants indicated that the cultural connectedness pillars and categories provided important context to the quantitative results. Conversely, all of the postscript participants expressed a degree of surprise that the student participants' school connectedness scores somewhat decreased during the study duration. When the postscript participants were asked if they had an explanation for this phenomenon, no immediate reasons came to mind.

To brainstorm potential explanations and to determine if they agreed with my school connectedness conclusions I offered the postscript participants three reasons I identified in my dissertation including:

1. The school connectedness survey was not adapted to express Blackfeet culture;
2. The pre-survey was given at the start of the school year when many children are excited to be back at school, and the post-survey administered in December after children had been in school for several months and it was near Christmas which can be a stressful time for many children, and;
3. The qualitative results show that when the student participants were able to express their school happiness orally, they identified many aspects of school connectedness.

For each explanation I offered, the postscript participants agreed with my conclusions. Additionally, all seven participants indicated the importance of oral storytelling and how the dissertation results support that aspect of traditional Blackfeet learning.

Recommendations

The postscript participants expressed a desire to see the study expanded to include students not enrolled in an immersion classroom, adapting the school connectedness survey to reflect Blackfeet culture, and to capture more student data through storytelling. Several of the postscript participants expressed the importance of understanding Blackfeet cultural when teaching Blackfeet children. The postscript participants espoused the significance of the study and how the results can help nurture an understanding of culturally centered classrooms. A common theme woven between each postscript participant was the hope that the study methods and results are used to jumpstart a much-needed dialogue between and among school district employees and community members about how to go about braiding traditional cultural practices with modern-day instructional pedagogies.

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APPENDIX A

VOUCHER OF DISINTERESTED PERSONS/BOARDING SCHOOL APPLICATION

Vouchers of Disinterested Persons.

VOUCHER No. 1.

I, Mortimer Matthews, a Attorney-at-Law (Business, calling, or profession.), of Glendale, Ohio, do hereby certify that I am personally acquainted with Sister Eva Mary who makes the foregoing application; that I believe her statements therein are true; that I am acquainted with Margaret Burgess (Name of Child.); that She is known and recognized in the community in which She lives as an Indian; that in my opinion She can not receive proper and adequate schooling at home for the reason that the conditions there for one of Her birth would be demoralizing after age.

This 30th day of December 1908 Mortimer Matthews

VOUCHER No. 2

I, Paul Matthews, a Clergyman (Business, calling, or profession.) of Cincinnati, Ohio, do hereby certify that I am personally acquainted with Sister Eva Mary, who makes the foregoing application; that I believe her statements therein are true; that I am acquainted with Margaret Burgess (Name of child.); that She is known and recognized in the community in which She lives as an Indian; and that in my opinion She cannot receive proper and adequate schooling at home for the reason that under present Circumstances she is thrown with others who Consider Her of an inferior race & whose influence will be morally bad for her

This 21st day of December 1908 Paul Matthews

Application for Enrollment in a Nonreservation School.

(For a child not enrolled at an Agency.)

For and in consideration of the United States assuming the care, education, and maintenance in the United States Indian School at Carlisle - Pa. , of Margaret Burgess (Name of child.) , (Sex.) , I, Sister Eva Mary (Parent, guardian, or next of kin.) of Glendale P. O., State of Ohio , do hereby voluntarily consent and agree to Her enrollment in said school for a period of five (Not less than 3.) years, and also obligate and bind myself to abide by all the rules and regulations for Indian schools.

I further say that the said child was born at Victoria on Sept. 19. 1888 (Date.) that the father, John Burgess (Name of father.) white mother Fanny Jones (Is or was.) a — (Degree.) Indian of the Haidah Tribe located at Ketchikan Agency; ~~that he left the tribe about~~ (Approximate date.) ; that the mother, Fanny Jones (Name.) (Is or was,) a full (Degree.) Indian of the Haidah Tribe located at Ketchikan Agency, and ~~left the tribe about~~ still here (Approximate date.) ; that the said child was born and reared in the United States, and now actually resides therein; and that she has attended the following schools:

NAME OF SCHOOL—PUBLIC, GOVERNMENT, OR MISSION.	LOCATED AT—	DATE OF ENROLLMENT.	DATE OF DISCHARGE.	CAUSE OF DISCHARGE.	GRADE.
St. John's School	Ketchikan	1902			
Bethany Home	Glendale O.	1904	1906	to take position	6

This 19 day of December, 1908

Two witnesses:

Sister Edith Constance

Ada E. Barnard

Sister Eva Mary (Parent, guardian, or next of kin.)

P. O.,

(NOTE.—Every blank in this application must be properly filled out by the applicant, in his own handwriting, if possible. The signature, whether by mark or otherwise, must be attested by two witnesses.)

AFFIDAVIT.

I, Sister Eva Mary , do hereby swear that the statements made in the above application are true.

Sister Eva Mary (Signature of applicant.) (Parent, guardian, or next of kin.)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21 day of December , 1908

APPENDIX B

NAPI SURVEY

I am interested in understanding how a Blackfoot Way of Knowing bullying prevention paradigm informs cultural connectedness, and school connectedness. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The survey should take you around 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. There are no right or wrong responses.

- How old are you?

- Indicate your sex by circling your choice?

  Female Male

- Place a check next to each grade you were enrolled in an immersion classroom:

  K____ 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____

- Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be by circling your choice(s):

American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	White
Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Other

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge by circling either YES, or NO. If you are unsure or if the question doesn't apply to you circle N.A. There is no right or wrong answer.

1. I know my Indian name. (S)

   YES N.A. NO

2. I have participated in a cultural ceremony. (T)

   YES N.A. NO

3. I want to find out more about my culture such as its history, traditions, customs and language. (I)

   YES N.A. NO

4. In certain situations, I believe things like animals and rocks have a spirit. (S)

   YES N.A. NO

5. I have a traditional person/Elder who I talk to. (T)

   YES N.A. NO

6. I have a strong sense of belonging to the Blackfeet Nation. (I)

   YES N.A. NO

7. If a traditional person/Elder speak to me about being Blackfeet I would listen to them carefully. (I)

   YES N.A. NO

8. It's important that I know my Blackfeet language. (I)

   YES N.A. NO

9. The Eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me. (S)

   YES N.A. NO

10. Someone you are close with uses sage, sweetgrass, cedar, or sweet pine. (T)

    YES N.A. NO

Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge by circling the number that best represents your agreement or disagreement with the statement. (**1** = Strongly Agree), (**2** = Agree), **(3** = Undecided), **(4** = Disagree), (**5** = Strongly Disagree). There is no right or wrong answer.

1. I work hard at school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. I enjoy being at school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. I get bored in school a lot.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. I do well in school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. I feel good about myself when I am at school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. Doing well in school is important to me.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX C

YOUTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Youth Interview Guide: Cultural and School Connectedness

This interview script is intended as a guide for use with Blackfeet youth. Its focus is on how Blackfeet youth come to know and understand cultural and school connectedness. As the interview progresses, follow-up questions may be asked on any of the topics discussed. Participants may decline to answer questions that they don't understand or relate to them.

Thanks again for agreeing to participate in this interview. As we talked about before, I am audiotaping and then will transcribe our conversation so we may have a record of exactly what was said. I won't put your name on the transcript, and we won't use your name in conjunction with any quotes I may use. I am very interested in learning how you come to know and understand cultural and school connectedness. My goal is to develop a Blackfoot way of knowing Bullying Prevention Model. DO you have any questions for me?

Original Question	Follow-Up Question(s)
Do you know Your Indian name?	Can you say it to me? What does your Indian name mean? Why is your Indian name important to you?
Is learning Blackfeet language important to you?	Why is knowing Blackfoot language important to you?
Describe your favorite cultural activity you have participated in?	Describe what you like about it?
How do you know when you are doing well in school?	Describe how it makes you feel?
Describe your favorite activity to do at school that makes you happy?	Describe how it makes you happy?

APPENDIX D

ELDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Elder Interview Guide: Values Transferred During Ceremonies or Cultural Activities
This interview script is intended as a guide for use with Native Elders. Its focus is on how Blackfoot elders come to know and understand the values that are transferred during traditional ceremonies or cultural activities. As the interview progresses, follow-up questions may be asked on any of the topics discussed. Participants may decline to answer questions that make them feel uncomfortable. Thanks again for agreeing to participate in this interview. As we talked about before, I am audiotaping and then will transcribe our conversation so we may have a record of exactly what was said. I won't put your name on the transcript, and we won't use your name in conjunction with any quotes I may use. I am very interested in learning how the Blackfoot people come to know and understand values transferred during traditional ceremonies, cultural activities or traditional stories. My goal is to develop a Blackfoot Way of Knowing Bullying Prevention Model. Any questions? Let's begin. What comes to mind when I say the phrase Blackfoot values? What does it mean to you? What do you think are some of the positive things youth learn from attending ceremony or by participating in cultural activities? In your mind what is the significance of an Indian name? How do you feel when you hear the Blackfoot language? What are some of the positive things the youth attain by hearing and learning Blackfoot? How optimistic are you about young people learning the Blackfoot language? Can you explain the connection if there is one between the environment and spirituality? What are your thoughts about the land around us. Before we close, do you have any additional comments to share about the culture? Thank you for sharing your views with me. Do you have any more questions about the project and its goals?

APPENDIX E

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY EXEMPTION

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Dear Ruth Wylie:

On 5/30/2019 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	A Culturally Centered Model for Bullying Intervention and Prevention
Investigator:	Ruth Wylie
IRB ID:	STUDY00010231
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Adult Consent , Category: Consent Form; • School District , Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • Child Assent , Category: Consent Form; • Blackfeet Nation IRB , Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • IRB Final , Category: IRB Protocol; • Survey , Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Script , Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/30/2019.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).