

2019

## Native American Parent Perceptions of their Children's Success in Reading and Mathematics

Kandace Cheryee Robertson  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Kandace C. Robertson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Donna Graham, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty  
Dr. Donald Poplau, Committee Member, Education Faculty  
Dr. James Valadez, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2019

Abstract

Native American Parent Perceptions of their  
Children's Success in Reading and Mathematics

by

Kandace C. Robertson

MA, Concordia University, 2012

BS, Oklahoma State University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Walden University

December 2019

## Abstract

The focus of this study was on how to help narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers in an urban Oklahoma school district. A qualitative case study approach was used to answer the questions of how parents of Native American students perceive their children's academic success in reading and mathematics in Grade 1– Grade 12 and why they believe their children have consistently (or historically) performed below district, state, and national expectations in these subjects in an attempt to better understand the achievement gap. Progress reports, institutional reports, and standards-based test scores were indicative of the widening achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory supported by Epstein's model of parental involvement were used as the conceptual framework for this study. Six parents of Native American students in Grade 1– Grade 12 were selected as participants and were interviewed using open-ended, semistructured questions to gain insight and help to answer the research questions. The coding of collected data, an analysis of emergent themes and triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks were all utilized as analytical procedures to ensure accuracy and credibility. Results from the study revealed that parents of Native American students perceive their students' academic success as a struggle and identify parental involvement, curriculum relatability, class size and communication among some of the barriers to their students' success. Implications for positive social change for this study included the potential to inform more effective teaching strategies for teachers who teach Native American students, inform their curriculum development, and foster the empowerment of Native American families.

Native American Parent Perceptions of their  
Children's Success in Reading and Mathematics

by

Kandace C. Robertson

MA, Concordia University], 2012

BS, Oklahoma State University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Walden University

December 2019

## Dedication

The road to earning my doctoral degree has been one paved with both the smoothest of pieces and the most jagged of edges. This journey has not only allowed me to pursue my passion of helping to narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers, but it has also allowed me to reach personal and professional goals and grow as an educator and scholar. While my path to my doctorate has often been seemingly impossible and marred with thoughts of frustration and confusion, there has always been one constant beam of hope and encouragement: my husband Tod. My journey simply could not have been possible without the love and support of my amazing husband. My dear Tod, I dedicate this study to you. Thank you for always being my greatest fan and eternal inspiration.

The years I have spent on my doctoral journey have seen me through love, loss, disappointment, happiness, faith, and hope. The most incredible gifts I could be given in life were received during this process. This study is also dedicated to my two precious children Orlen and Cheryee. Although Orlen watches over me from heaven, he, along with Cheryee, are very much the reasons why I have been able to reach this goal of earning my doctorate. I love you both to infinity and beyond.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this study to my big brother Jason who has always been a model of hard work, integrity, passion, and determination. I love you always.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the following people who have guided me on my academic journey. Your support, knowledge, and encouragement has been invaluable. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. To Dr. Donna Graham, Dissertation Chair, whose patience, understanding, direction and input have made me a better scholar. To Dr. Donald Poplau- Dissertation 2<sup>nd</sup> Chair, whose input and recommendations have been significant to my progress and success. To Dr. Lucian Szilzewski- Dissertation 2<sup>nd</sup> Chair- whose direction when I seemed off track with my thoughts, gave me a point of reference. To Dr. James Valdez, University Research Reviewer, who was instrumental in pushing me to the next step in my academic journey. To Dr. Sara Witty- Dissertation Editor- who demanded the best out of me in the form and style process. Thank you for making me a better writer. I would also like to thank the host of family and friends who have provided words of encouragement and support throughout this process.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Problem Statement .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Guiding/Research Questions.....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Nature of the Study.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	7
Assumptions.....	8
Scope and Delimitations .....	9
Limitations and Biases .....	9
Significance.....	10
Summary .....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	12
Literature Search Strategy.....	12
Conceptual Framework.....	13
Parental Involvement .....	15
Achievement Gap.....	19
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy .....	22
Summary .....	24
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	25



Research Design and Rationale .....	25
Role of the Researcher and Access to Participants .....	26
Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants .....	28
Establishing Research-Participant Working Relationship .....	28
Ethical Protection of Participants.....	29
Instrumentation .....	29
Data Analysis Plan .....	30
Trustworthiness.....	31
Dealing with Discrepant Cases .....	32
Treatment of Data .....	32
Summary .....	33
Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions .....	34
Setting 34	
Data Collection .....	35
Data Analysis .....	36
Outcomes .....	36
Theme 1: Academic Success .....	39
Theme 1a: Relatability.....	40
Theme 2: Current Curriculum.....	41
Theme 2a: Intervention .....	42
Theme 3: Barriers/Achievement Gap .....	42
Theme 3a: Class Size .....	44
Theme 4: Outlook .....	44

Theme 4a: Isolation.....	46
Theme 5: Next Steps.....	48
Theme 5a: Collaboration.....	48
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	49
Summary.....	50
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	52
Parental Involvement.....	53
Acheivement Gap.....	55
Culuturally Responsive Pedagogy.....	56
Limitations of the Study.....	59
Recommendations.....	59
Implications.....	60
Conclusion.....	62
References.....	63
Appendix A: Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests Grades 3-8 Mathematics 2008- 2014.....	77
Appendix B: Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests Grades 3-8 Reading 2008-2014.....	78
Appendix C: Interview Guide.....	79
Appendix D: Introduction Letter.....	81
Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement.....	83
Appendix F: Permission Letter.....	85

List of Tables

Table 1: Student Reading and Mathematics Scores.....38

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Academic achievement and proficiency in core academic subjects are the benchmarks by which students are measured and defined successful in educational and career settings (Grinnell & Rabin, 2013). Among the core subjects in which students are held accountable for demonstrating achievement and proficiency, by national, state, and district education departments, are reading and mathematics (Peterson & Ackerman, 2015). While a diverse group of students often have difficulty in obtaining academic achievement and proficiency in these particular core subjects, there appears to be a clear achievement gap among Native American students and their non-Native peers in an urban school district in Oklahoma where Native American students comprise 7% of the student population (Education Oversight Board, 2013, pp.55-1041-705). Institutional reports (EOB, 2013), progress reports (Native American Student Progress Reports, 2013 – 2014), and standards-based state test scores (Oklahoma School Testing Program, 2014) are indicative of the difficulty that Native American students face in being proficient and academically successful in reading and mathematics. Potential reasons for the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers in this district have not yet been identified. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding about how parents of Native American students in Grade 1 – Grade 12 perceived their children's academic success in reading and mathematics and why they believe their children have consistently performed below district, state, and national standards in reading and mathematics in an attempt to help narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers. The use

of a qualitative case approach allowed for critical insight to emerge regarding how to narrow the achievement gap. I will discuss the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers and how to narrow it by investigating the perspectives of parents of Native American students throughout the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, conceptual framework and assumptions portions of this section.

### **Background of the Study**

Prior research conducted by Henry, Knight, and Thornberry (2012) and López, Heilig, and Schram (2013) on the achievement gap of Native American students in relation to their non-Native peers has confirmed the academic underperformance of Native students and substantiated the existence of factors that may contribute to the achievement gap but no research regarding the issue has been conducted in this school district. According to the National Indian Education Association (National Indian Education Association [NIEA], 2015), the achievement gap between Native American/Alaskan Native students and their non-Native American/Alaskan Native peers was the highest among any other ethnic groups. In a study conducted by the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators (National Caucus of Native American State Legislators [NCNASL], 2008), it was revealed that Native American students performed two to three grade levels behind their white peers in reading and mathematics and are over two times more likely to get expelled or drop out. The findings from both the NIEA (2015) and the NCNASL (2008) substantiated the need to further research the achievement of Native American students as they traverse through the educational

system, particularly in Oklahoma where the NCNASL has identified the state as having one of the highest Native American populations in the country. Hare and Pidgeon (2011) concurred with the findings, further highlighting the need for better educational outcomes for Native American students in order to improve their social, emotional, overall health, and the economic status of the population. Not only did Zyromski et al. (2011) reveal that there was an achievement gap among Native American students and their non-Native peers, they also contended that the factors that contributed to the academic success of Native American students from the perspective of the students and their parents has been largely unknown thus emphasizing the importance of this particular study.

### **Problem Statement**

Native American students in an urban school district in Oklahoma perform at a lower academic level than their non-Native peers when compared using a variety of assessments at the district, state, and national levels (OSTP, 2014). Studies such as Sparapani et al. (2011) and McWilliams et al.'s (2011) have been conducted and analyzed what teachers believed to be barriers to the success of Native American students in core academic subjects. There has been less research however, into how Native American parents perceived their child's academic achievement; specifically, I have been unable to find research that was focused on this particular district to investigate parental perspectives on this topic.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As the achievement gap between Native American students and their peers appears to continue to widen, it has also become increasingly more important for

educators to explore alternative factors that may be barriers to the academic achievement of Native American students particularly in reading and mathematics. Walkingstick and Bloom (2013) referred to the importance and respect toward elders in the lives of Native American students in relation to their academic success and attitude toward their academic journeys. Elders, specifically Native American parents, continue to be instrumental in helping Native students understand the relevance of their school experiences and as such, obtaining parents' opinions may be a good first step to help incorporate this knowledge into educators' improvement and intervention plans for Native students (Walkingstick & Bloom, 2013). Parental involvement is felt to be not only beneficial in the improvement and intervention plans for Native American students, but by initiating contact and developing relationships with the parents of Native American students the potential for educators to better understand Native American learners and their needs may increase (McWilliams et al., 2011). Creating a continuing dialogue with Native American parents may also enable educators to enhance the learning of Native students as they gain specific insight into how to better serve this particular population (Rogers & Jaime, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how parents of Native American students perceived their children's academic achievement in reading and mathematics through a case study approach. The findings of my qualitative case study may help to educators in their efforts to improve their pedagogy and other curriculum components in order to better serve the Native American population.

### **Guiding/Research Questions**

The achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers continues to widen as is evidenced by district, state, and national benchmarks and standards-based assessments (NIEA, 2015). The importance of identifying some of the factors that may be influencing this achievement gap has become increasingly important from the perspectives of parents of Native students and the students themselves. These two areas have been largely uninvestigated throughout past research and became a focus of this study. The research questions that I used in this study were intended to help fill a gap in the research that focused on the perspectives of the parents of Native students in regard to the academic success of their children and guided how I collected data and who I collected it from. I used the following research questions for the study:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do parents of Native American students perceive their children's academic success in reading and mathematics in Grade 1– Grade 12 in an urban Oklahoma school district?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Why do parents of Native American students in Grade 1– Grade 12 in an urban Oklahoma school district believe their children have consistently performed below district, state, and national expectations in reading and mathematics?

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used Bourdieu's (1985) theory of cultural capital which is supported by Epstein's (1992) six types of parental involvement, as the conceptual framework for this study. The theory of cultural capital describes how elements such as one's skills, knowledge,



and attitudes correspond with one's social status and how social status impacts one's motivation to participate within their environment. Social status, parental involvement, and student academic success are all interlinked as I will explain further in Chapter 2. The conceptual framework relates to the study approach of conducting a qualitative case study in which in-depth interviews with parents of Native American students are administered by exploring what prevents parents from sharing their involvement and perceived barriers to the academic success of their children with school staff.

### **Nature of the Study**

According to the Education Oversight Board's Office of Accountability, the local district's mobility rate was 13% (EOB, 2013, p.55-1041-705). Native American students, according to the latest data available, constituted the highest incidences of mobility in the district with one-fourth of the population exiting or entering the district mid-year or later (Native American Progress Reports, 2013 – 2014). Progress reports for school year 2013-2014 generated and retrieved through the district Indian Education Program revealed the percentage of Native American students who failed one or more core academic subjects the first and second nine weeks as 48% and 51% respectively (Native American Student Progress Reports, 2013 – 2014).

Available state test scores for Native American students in Grade 3 – Grade 8 not only revealed more detail about some of the difficulties Native American students faced when attempting to master core academic subjects but also indicated that the learner issue has been an ongoing problem for at least six years (OSTP, 2014, p. 1-2). Native American students in Grade 3 – Grade 8 who ranked advanced, proficient, limited

knowledge, and unsatisfactory on the Oklahoma State Core Curriculum Tests in reading and math from 2008-2014 continued this trend and showed a fluctuation in scores for each performance category (See Appendix A and B) (OSTP, 2014, p.1-2). A significant element to note from these scores might be that Native American students tended to rank more in the limited knowledge to unsatisfactory categories on the state tests in mathematics and reading rather than in the proficient and advanced categories. Each year, at least 45% or more of Native American students score in the limited knowledge or unsatisfactory categories of the state tests in reading and mathematics (OSTP, 2014, p.1-2). In 2011, the Oklahoma State Board of Education refined the reporting of state test scores for districts across the state in order to incorporate an A – F ranking system. According to the 2011 – 2014 district report cards a rating of F has consistently been assigned to this particular district in which the Native American population plays an integral role (“A – F Report Cards,” 2014).

### **Definition of Terms**

I used the following terms throughout this qualitative study in relation to the problem:

*Academic Achievement:* Academic achievement is a term used to describe the meeting of educational and/or academic goals and is regularly measured through quantitative means such as test scores derived from state, local, or national examinations (OSDE, 2015).

*Achievement Gap:* Achievement gap is a term frequently used to describe the differences that occur in test scores among ethnic groups. Most frequently the term

achievement gap references the difference in test scores among minorities and/or low income students in comparison to their Asian and/or white peers (NEA, 2015). This study uses the term “achievement gap” to describe the test scores Native American students receive in relation to their non-Native peers.

*Cultural Capital Theory (CCT):* The cultural capital theory explores the relationship between an individual’s skills, education level, attitudes and knowledge and their social status (Bourdieu, 1985)

*Field:* Representative of the environment an individual is placed in which consists of social constructs, behaviors, and norms (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

*Habitus:* Dispositions that result from experiences, perceptions, values and actions (Lee & Bowen, 2006)

*Proficient:* Proficient is a term used to describe students who display test scores that rank in the satisfactory or advanced knowledge categories of state test results (OSBE, 2014).

### **Assumptions**

The achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers within this particular school district has not been explored from a parent perspective. As a result, the gap in achievement between Native American students and their non-Native peers has frequently been assumed by teachers throughout the district to be attributed to cultural traditions which have prevented Native American from being actively involved in their educational journeys. This assumption could not be demonstrated to be true and was important in the context of the study as interviews with

parents of Native American students described their culture and the barriers that they perceived as actually preventing their children from being academically successful.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The focus of this qualitative case study was on the perspectives of parents of Native American students in regard to the academic success of their children in reading and mathematics. The parents I interviewed had to have students enrolled in Grade 1 – Grade 12 who identified as Native American and had taken district and/or Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR) tests in reading and mathematics. I chose to focus on reading and mathematics because they are the two most tested academic core subjects and were the two core academic subjects that were found in the literature to indicate the largest achievement gaps. I eliminated students who fit the grade specifications but had transferred to the school and lacked state and/or district scores in reading and mathematics. I also eliminated other core subjects such as science and social studies due to a lack of score availability.

### **Limitations and Biases**

One limitation to the study was the lack of support from the district administrators in which the study was based. Due to the lack of support, I recruited participants and collected data at an off-site location. Another limitation was the amount of participants that were able to be identified once I determined that the snowballing sampling approach would be the most appropriate to use for the study. Using the snowballing sampling approach, participants were recommended by other participants making the number of eligible participants who fit the study criteria extremely limited.

Among the participants that I selected for the study were many that I have had the opportunity to meet and build a professional parent-teacher relationship with as a member of the faculty for the last 10 years. While I have had the children of many of these parents in class, I have taught them in the non-core area of physical education making my bias toward their academic success in reading and math minimal to null. The parent-teacher relationship that I have with participants did not have any effect on the data collection process. My role as the researcher in this study was multi-faceted. With respect to the data collection process, I was the interviewer, transcriber, and coder. With respect to the data analysis process, I analyzed the data, interpreted the data, and communicated the findings for both current and future educational practices to assist in improving the achievement gap between Native students and their peers.

### **Significance**

Research into the perspectives of parents of Native American students regarding the factors that prevent their children from adequately achieving good grades in reading and mathematics is felt to be important to Native families and communities and may push educators to strive to differentiate instruction to better meet the needs of each learner on their journey to become more academically successful (DeJesus, 2012). The results from this qualitative case study may provide additional and valuable insights into the experiences and beliefs of Native American parents and students. Understanding Native experiences and beliefs is integral in understanding how to eliminate some of the barriers that threaten the achievement of Native American students (Zyromski et al., 2011). Insights gleaned from this study may also have the potential to affect the best practices of

educators who teach Native American students in their classrooms and inform curriculum development that may need to include more relevant and relatable information to Native American students. Equally notable was the potential of this study to bring about significant social change that may impact the entire Native American community by focusing on how the engagement and empowerment of Native families through the fostering of their perspectives on some of the aspects of curriculum and education may be understood and implemented.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I introduced the local problem that inspired this particular qualitative case study. Literature referencing the achievement gap among Native American students and their non-Native peers that I provided in Chapter 1, outlined the learner issues described through local, state, and national data for an urban school district in Oklahoma. Not only did the literature suggest that parental involvement is imperative to the academic success of Native students but it also revealed that the perspectives of Native parents have been largely uninvestigated as a means to help improve academic outcomes for Native American students.

Chapter 2 includes an in-depth literature review providing a foundation for the study. Chapter 3 includes the methodology and design approach used for the study and will reveal details surrounding the setting, sampling procedures, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 includes the findings, data analysis and ethical concerns of the study. Finally Section 5 includes conclusions, and suggest recommendations garnered from the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The widening achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers has been an ongoing problem at the local, state, and national level. In order to attempt to narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and these students, I conducted an in depth investigation into how parents of Native American children in Grade 1 – Grade 12 perceived their children’s academic success in reading and mathematics and why they believe their children have consistently performed below district, state, and national standards in reading and mathematics. Literature explaining the relevance of this achievement gap along with the important role that parents play in helping to narrow it were located, however, there is a gap in the literature in regard to the actual perspectives of the parents of Native American parents in regard to the academic achievement of their children. This chapter includes a description of the relevance of the achievement gap through previous literature along with themes that significantly describe the importance of parental involvement.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I conducted an extensive search for literature pertaining to the problem using educational databases such as ERIC, Education Source, Sage Journals, Academic Search Complete, and Taylor and Francis. Within these databases, I used Boolean terms and keywords such as *parental involvement*, *Native American achievement gap*, *Native American education*, and *minority education experiences* were used. Eric and Education Source along with the keywords *Native American*, *parental involvement*, and *achievement gap* yielded the most extensive number of useful articles. The other

databases and keywords led to limited current research on my research topic but were useful in identifying articles that listed other keywords and sources that were useful.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Bourdieu's (1985) theory of cultural capital and is supported by Epstein's (1992) six types of parental involvement. The cultural capital theory contends that the skills, education level, attitudes, and knowledge of individuals are parallel to their social status. This social status thus plays a role in how much capital an individual is willing to place in the environment in which they are a part (Bourdieu, 1985). As Lee and Bowen (2006) highlighted, cultural capital (CC) is directly related to the *field*, or environment, and *habitus*, the experiences, perceptions, values, and actions of an individual. The more an individual feels or perceives their habitus fits with the field in which they are placed or are a part, the more they become involved. Greenman, Bodovski, and Reed (2011) confirmed the ideal of cultural capital by illustrating how neighborhood characteristics, shared values, beliefs, and cultural dialogues that take place among residents in neighborhoods that surround educational institutions impact parental behaviors. For the purposes of this study, the field represented the school district. Parents who do not feel that their habitus and the field match are less likely to share the experiences of their children in the academic environment. Furthermore, it is essential that the field also fit with how Native American students learn, a notion that would be best understood through building mutually respectful and helpful relationships with Native American parents (Cheeseman & Gapp, 2012).



Gaddis (2013) further elaborated on the concept of culture on an individual's habitus by presenting that not only does culture shape habitus but as culture is shared between parents and children, it affects outcomes that are pertinent to students such as student achievement and attainment. "Culture defines not only knowledge but also the means by which that knowledge is acquired" for Native American families (Tunison, 2013, p. 570). In large part, culture helps to define the habitus for parents and without culture, the habitus becomes less important. Understanding the foundation of culture in the lives of Native American families, valuing the perspectives of Native parents, and applying valuable input provided by Native voices enables educators to better understand the identities of Native students and the school based-experiences that affect their identities (Cerecer, 2013). Villegas (2009) as well as Smith, Stumpff, and Cole (2012) explored the idea that parental perspectives about education are deeply rooted in the Native American history of being uprooted from their communities and placed in boarding schools isolated from their families and communities in an effort to force Native students to think, behave, and learn in ways that were viewed as "more appropriate." This transition to boarding schools has had long lasting impact on the perspectives and culture of Native American families today ranging from how they view the educational system as a whole, to their perceived role in the educational system, to how they view the success of their students within the educational system. Furthermore, the transition to boarding schools has changed how Native American communities incorporate Western educational goals and elements into their own tribal governments and tribal communities as a means to protect cultural, political, and social interests (Lee, 2009). Understanding Native

American culture and perspectives also requires acknowledging the history and the role education has played in the lives of Native families from past to present. The history of colonization within the Native American community transcends into their current lived experiences and at times may adversely affect their perspectives of western education (Kulis, Wagaman, Tso, & Brown, 2013).

Styres, Zinga, Bennett, and Bomberry (2010) took the idea of culture and Native American perspectives one step further and proposed that the incorporation of Native American culture into classrooms created the possibility for cross-cultural learning, an essential ingredient for academic understanding and success. Additionally, Metzger, Box, and Blasingame (2013) and McCarty (2009) pointed out that cross-cultural learning and the development of cultural exploration and understanding also strengthens participation in social contexts both in and outside of the school setting and gives learners a sense of ownership in their learning process that they may share within their communities.

### **Parental Involvement**

The six types of parental involvement outlined by Epstein (1992) include (a) *parenting*, the role of parents in fostering the social, mental, emotional and physical needs of their children as well as supporting the cognitive development necessary for thinking and learning both in home and school environments; (b) *communicating*, communication from parents regarding the academic development of their children with school staff; (c) *volunteering*, the action of parents donating their time and participation in classroom and school-wide events; (d) *learning at home*, the role of parents in

emotionally supporting and verbal and/or physically assisting students with homework and managing academic challenges that their children express experiencing in the school setting; (e) *decision-making*, the intentional attempt of parents to be advocates for the educational interests of their children and (f) *collaborating with the community*, the knowledge and use of community resources displayed by parents regarding tools that better improve the learning of their children. The inclusion of all six types of parental involvement is necessary for students to be successful in educational settings.

The six types of parental involvement are significant in the comfort and willingness of parents to share their perceptions of their children's educational outcomes so that the achievement gap of Native students and their peers can be more adequately addressed (Ringenberg et al., 2009). Additionally, the comfort and willingness of parents to share their perceptions of their children's educational outcomes is also affected by schools. It is not uncommon for schools to associate the perspectives and practices of Native American populations, which are frequently grounded in culture, as a threat to non-Native perspectives and beliefs that are shared on a national platform (Bird et al., 2013). Morgan (2009) elaborated on the connection between Native American and non-Native American perspectives as they relate to curriculum by describing how rare it is for textbooks written by Native Americans to be found in school curriculums. Due to the absence of the Native American perspective in school resources, Native American history and culture is only able to be viewed from a non-Native perspective that is not always accurate or adequately detailed. Harrington and Chixapkaid (2013) confirmed the absence of the Native American perspective in curriculum as they described the

frequently non-existent or stereotypical representations of tribal nations in US history books.

It is necessary for schools to consider the perspectives of Native American parents regarding the educational outcomes of their children not only to gain more specific insight into how to improve the achievement gap, but to also enable visual role models for Native students to be seen and heard on school campuses nationwide (Goodkind et al., 2012). Creating a school environment where Native American parents and students feel comfortable, accepted, and free from stereotypes in public school systems is an important element to the success of students and parent/school relations (Mello, Mallett, Andretta, & Worrell, 2012). Hare and Pidgeon (2011) highlighted a serious point shared by Walkingstick and Bloom (2013) that students thrive in environments that foster acceptance, support and perhaps most importantly, belonging of their identity, culture, and families. As educators become more culturally aware of the Native American students and families that inhabit their schools and classrooms, a common “language” can be used that relates academia to cultural concepts and ideas. These connections make authentic learning and academic success more attainable for Native American students (Sparapani, Seo, & Smith, 2011). Creating an environment that fosters the cultural identity of Native American students however, must be free of stereotypes so as not to create a more isolated and offensive environment. The occasional storytelling or erecting of a teepee frequently utilized within school campuses to integrate Native American culture is not enough nor does it adequately encompass the Native American culture. (Pirbhai-Illich, 2013).

Jeynes (2012) offered a more critical view of parental involvement in educational systems which he concluded that parental involvement is critical and necessary on a voluntary basis. Jeynes (2012) took this stance due to his belief that school-based parental involvement programs may actually be ineffective due to the tendency of teachers to undermine the perspectives, values, and practices of parents rather than to support them. It is not uncharacteristic of schools to allow parents to volunteer in classrooms, bring snacks, assist with teacher needs, or provide assistance for assemblies and student-centered fundraising efforts, however, there are schools whose staff choose to ignore the perspectives and input of parents in regard to curricular choices, school policy, and state mandates. Native American parents not only report being unheard, unapproached, and discounted on school related topics and trends at times due to their education level but also take issue with schools not clearly stating what constitutes parental involvement (Smith et al., 2011).

Galindo and Sheldon (2012) contended that there are a multitude of types of parental involvement and that parental involvement in every capacity, including school-based parental involvement, contributes to the education and development of children. According to Robinson-Zanartu, Butler-Byrd, Cook-Morales, Dauphinais, Charley, and Bonner (2011), relationships and partnerships formed by the parents of Native American students and the faculty/staff that are involved in teaching their students also creates an avenue for successful academic interventions. Academic interventions are most effective when students have the support of both the school and home. The transmission of new concepts and the furthering of background knowledge to master educational concepts are

reinforced when parental involvement is fostered. Both social and academic development depend on knowledge that is shaped in both school and home settings (Brickman, McInerney, & Martin, 2009).

Reinhardt, Perry, and Faircloth's (2012) theory of parental involvement coincided with the six types of parental involvement outlined by Epstein (1992) but categorized parental involvement into two groups: school-oriented involvement and home-oriented involvement. According to Reinhardt et al., (2012), parental involvement or lack thereof is influenced by social, cultural and historical reasons many of which are based on their own personal experiences. Parents of Native American students who have not been successful themselves in an academic setting or who have had negative educational experiences may not feel the educational system is warm, welcoming, or even necessary for their children to be successful in life. In assisting Native American students to be more successful academically, it is important that educators work to also change the negative associations that parents of Native American students feel into more positive and welcoming experiences.

### **Achievement Gap**

The achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers is an ongoing issue that has been solidified by the very presence of the gap, the importance in gaining insight into the perceptions of Native American parents in regard to the educational experiences of their children. Simply stated, if the achievement gap continues to widen, Native American students will be placed at a severe disadvantage later as adults compared to their non-Native peers. Adolescent academic achievement is predictive of

adult outcomes that include health, unemployment, and social relationships (Florin et al., 2011). Parke and Kanyongo (2012) substantiated the claim that adolescent academic achievement is predictive of adult outcomes by stating that behavioral problems and exhibitions of violence are among the unwanted outcomes that occur as Native American students drop out of school as a result of low academic achievement and high mobility. Perhaps the most detrimental aspect related to the low academic achievement of Native American students is their high risk for suicide. Zyromski, Bryant, and Gerler (2011) addressed the low academic achievement of Native American students as a contributing factor to high suicide rates among adolescents and young adults as well as the cycle of poverty that results from these particular students who have difficulty completing their educational journeys. While numerous strategies to narrow the achievement gap have included an in-depth look at negative stereotypes and their elimination, raising academic expectations of Native students, cultural sensitivity for teachers, and curriculum changes, there have been significantly less strategies that utilize the perspective of Native American parents (Fryberg et al., 2013). Additional studies assessing the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers have indicated the low-income status of many Native families as playing a vital role in why the gap exists but have not investigated parental perceptions into the information either. Cutuli, Desjardins, Herbers, Long, Heistad, Chan, and Masten (2013) and Clayton (2012) for example, found that low-income second through seventh grade students such as Native American students, longitudinally had lower academic achievement in reading and math and had significantly lower overall student performance.

Native American students are severely underrepresented in academics where they find it hard to identify with a population that has been largely unsuccessful throughout the educational system (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). This underrepresentation stems mainly from low graduation rates and high dropout rates. Native American student dropout rates are among the highest of any other ethnic group leaving less than 50% of Native American students who graduate each year (Lopez et al., 2013). The Native American students who remain in school find themselves among the lowest performing ethnic groups, specifically in the core academic subjects of math and reading. Proficiency rates of Native American students in reading and math compared to their White peers are less than half (Henry et al., 2012). Compared to their White peers in particular, Native American students have limited opportunities to discover and define themselves intellectually in academic settings (Chu, 2011). Native American underachievement in the core subject of math is often misinterpreted to mean that they simply do not care to do the work. The theory that attitude and lack of motivation are factors for underachievement in the “universal language” of math are frequently based on assumption when the reality is, many Native American students have learning disabilities that prevent them from understanding mathematical concepts. In fact, there is a significantly disproportionate number of Native American students who are identified as learning disabled compared to their non-Native counterparts (Hankes, Skoning, Fast, & Mason-Williams, 2013). The Native American students who are tested and are found in need of special education services due to a disability are frequently not given the time and attention that is necessary to help them be academically successful. This lack of



attention may be attributed to how Native American families view health and define disability within their own communities (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009) making the perspectives of Native American parents extremely important in understanding how to address issues such as these within the academic setting in order to help students become more academically successful.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

The importance of cultural capital in narrowing the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers can also be linked to the adaptation of culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy focuses on the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of students (Lopez et al., 2013). These characteristics, experiences, and perspectives are often translated through traditions, communications, and behaviors learned from generation after generation of family members. Lopez et al. (2013) outlined six elements of culturally responsive pedagogy that increase positive academic outcomes for Native American students in particular. The elements outlined by Lopez et al. (2013) range from the implementation of Native American languages into classroom instruction to the implementation of strategies and curriculum that reflect the cultural characteristics and traditional cultural practices of Native American families and perhaps most importantly, community participation from Native American families. While many researchers, educators, and scholars alike would agree that with input and perspective from parents of Native American students, culturally responsive pedagogy positively impacts Native American student achievement in core academic subjects, national programs have not yet reached a

point where culturally responsive pedagogy is an urgent priority. According to Tippeconnic III and Fox (2012), national programs actually limit the ability of schools to immerse the curriculum with culturally relevant characteristics and experiences due to the national emphasis on reading, math and science. Systemic change in the educational realm on the national, state, and district levels must be emphasized and inclusive of input from Native American communities in order for Native students to flourish and have equal educational opportunities to that of their counterparts. Not only must the ethnic and academic identities of students be compatible (Okagaki, Helling, & Bingham, 2009) but the content, pedagogy, and approach to instruction must change to be culturally inclusive to that of Native American peoples for the major tenets of education to become part of the fabric of a diverse American society (Richardson, 2011). The compatibility of the ethnic and academic identities of Native American students in comparison to their non-Native peers are often overlooked as reasons for the disparities among overall academic performance. Tsethlikai (2011) disdained this oversight and instead theorized that the high failure rate among Native American students in school is due to incompatibilities between mainstream educational values and the cultural values of Native American students. Preston and Claypool (2013) concurred that instruction must be culturally relevant and presented the idea that cultural values and traditions are actually catalysts of academic motivation when learning is aligned with these cultural facets. The learning and teaching process must not only be considered from the student perspective but must also be cognizant of the family unit. Ginsberg and Craig (2010) provided insight into the idea that teaching and learning must also be considered from the

perspective of parents and other family members in order to make the learning process more valuable for students as well as to provide opportunities for educators to gain an understanding of traditions that have historically impacted students within the communities from which they originate.

The link between parental involvement and culturally responsive pedagogy is a valuable component to data and statistics that inform best practices in classrooms across the country. The data and statistics gathered however, often omit cultural experiences and values that play a vital role in how to appropriately teach Native American students. Research into the perspectives of Native American families not only gives insight into these values and cultural experiences that are relevant to Native learners but they also provide educators with ways to better support the development of culturally responsive pedagogy (Rogers and Jaime, 2010).

### **Summary**

I introduced the local problem that inspired this particular qualitative case in Chapter 1. I referenced literature that outlined the achievement gap among Native American students and their non-Native peers in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research design, approach, and rationale used for the study and reveals details surrounding the methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. Chapter 4 includes information on the setting and data collection process, analysis of data, and results. Chapter 5 includes interpretations of the study, the strengths and limitations of the study, implications, and will suggest recommendations garnered from the study.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to attempt to gain a better understanding about how parents of Native American students perceive their children's academic success, or lack of, in reading and mathematics and why they believe their children have consistently performed below expectations in these specific core subjects. I selected this qualitative case study design because it provided me with the opportunity to gain more insight into the perceptions of Native American parents more objectively in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their thoughts about factors that academically threaten their students. Creswell 2012, described that exploring the thoughts and perspectives of a certain group is characteristic of a case study approach. A qualitative case study approach also allowed for the potential of valuable insights to emerge regarding how to modify teacher pedagogy and curriculum content in order to better serve Native American students. These insights were sought after research into Bourdieu's (1985) cultural capital theory and Epstein's (1992) parental involvement framework on how to narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers through the utilization of parental influence, perceptions, and involvement.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The case study approach has the ability to examine a current issue or phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 1981), making it the ideal choice for this particular study. According to Creswell (2012), the case study approach also involves an in-depth investigation of a bounded system through data collection and analysis. Due to the fact

that I sought to investigate the bounded system of individuals through data collection from interviews and the analysis that resulted, a case study approach appeared to be an appropriate fit. I considered qualitative approaches such as the ethnographic approach, phenomenological approach, and grounded theory approach but deemed them inappropriate. The ethnographic approach, which involves exploration of the culture of a group and the complexities within, was not appropriate because I sought to explore the perceptions of a particular group not the culture of the group. Likewise, the grounded theory approach, which involves me to continually review data to create the emergence of a theory, was also not appropriate because in my study, I sought to gain insight from participants to improve a local problem, not develop a theory. Lastly, I did not consider the phenomenological approach because according to Lodico et al. (2010), the phenomenological approach involves the investigation of the interpretation of an individual's experiences not their perceptions of another individual.

### **Role of the Researcher and Access to Participants**

The urban city school district in Oklahoma that served as the focus of this study has a Native American demographic population of 7% (EOB, 2013). Due to the fact that my goal for this study was to explore the perceptions and beliefs of parents of Native American students regarding their children's academic success in reading and math, it was imperative that the population I selected fit specific criteria. One criterion that I established was that participants have students enrolled in the specific grade levels associated with the study (Grade 1 – Grade 12). Another criterion that I established was that participants must have students who identify as being Native American. The last

criterion that I established was that participants have students that have taken district and state and/or STAR tests in reading and math so that data that I collected from these tests could be considered and/or referenced in the study. In all, I selected six parents of Native American children in Grade 1 – Grade 12 to complete the sample size for the study using the purposeful sampling approach of snowballing. I felt the particular sample size of six adequately encompassed a wide enough sample suitable for in-depth data collection, saturation, analysis, and triangulation. Use of the purposeful sampling snowballing approach allowed me to identify participants who fit the criteria for the study as well as collect data from participants who represented children from different grade levels, academic experiences and success. Access to the academic records of the Native American students shared with me from parents via the district parent portal also provided me more significant insights into additional ways to address the persistent achievement gap of Native American students from the perspectives of Native American parents. The participants that I selected represented a range of male and female students from grades found at the elementary, mid, and secondary levels of schools within the district. The participant sample excluded parents of students who fit the grade levels specified by the study, who identified as Native American, but who did not have district, state, and/or STAR test data in reading and mathematics as well as participants who had students that were new to the district and only had reading and math data from other school districts. It was imperative that participants selected had students who fit the study criteria in order for triangulation of the data to be accomplished.

### **Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

I gained access to participants through attendance at cultural events in which the district is located as well as the surrounding areas. Cultural events included but were not limited to powwows, language classes, or cultural nights hosted by local Native American tribes. I sought permission to conduct research on tribal lands or at tribal events by tribes who may be hosting cultural events through an official typed letter explaining the purpose and goals of my research. I made initial contact with the first participant at the Seminole Nation Color Guard Powwow hosted by the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. As part of the initial contact, I included a discussion about the goal of the study and I provided a handout presenting an introduction to the study as well as the role of the participant within the study should they choose to participate.

### **Establishing Research-Participant Working Relationship**

Developing a researcher-participant working relationship was critical to the data collection process and analysis phase of the study. In order to foster this type of relationship it was important to approach the participants from a research perspective explaining in detail the methods and procedures used in conducting the study and how their input and perspectives would be used as a basis to try and narrow the achievement gap between Native students and their peers. Keeping the participants informed about the study, particularly after data is collected from them, is the main way to build a trusting and mutually respectful working relationship that will be beneficial to all involved (Creswell, 2012).

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

Another aspect of developing a researcher-participant working relationship involved ensuring that the rights of participants were protected. Before any research was conducted, I sought approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the IRB approved my study with my Walden University approval number of 12-27-16-0404856, I gave participants informed consent forms as a means of verifying that participants agreed to participate in the study and gave their full consent. An integral part of the informed consent forms was an explanation of the purpose of the study, information regarding participant rights to withdrawal from the study as they wish without any risk of penalty or physical or emotional harm, and assurance of participant confidentiality. According to Lodico et al. (2010) the intent of a study along with measures to ensure confidentiality must be made clear to participants in order to uphold the integrity of the study. I protected participant confidentiality by ensuring that participant input and responses were used solely for the purposes of the study and were not identified by any personal indicators such as their name.

### **Instrumentation**

The primary data collection tool that I used in this qualitative case study was personal interviews. The differing grade levels, academic records and successes of the students that the parents represented provided me with a valuable variation in which thick, rich information were collected from their responses. In order to facilitate these responses, I utilized open-ended questions. Open-ended, semistructured questions allowed a set of pre-determined questions to be asked to each participant. Merriam



(2009) described open-ended questions as a methodical approach that allows participants to elaborate on the initial questions through the use of probes thus granting more in-depth information to be obtained. The interview guide that I produced as a tool in the data collection process consisted of six semi-structured questions (Appendix C). I also used an audio recorder that was tested and used before the initiation of each interview. Lastly, I used field notes to accurately record and document data collected from participants.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Interview transcripts that I collected from interview participants were stored via a personal external storage device. As I analyzed hand written field notes and transcripts, they were then separated into themes first using open coding procedures then analytical coding. The themes were placed into a working word document that was ultimately utilized to communicate the study's findings. I used a reflective journal to organize and compare common ideas identified from each participant.

Data analysis plan interviews that I conducted in the data collection phase of the study were analyzed one interview at a time using open coding. My use of open coding allowed me to identify useful information and label this information in the margins of the transcripts for further review throughout the analysis process. Open coding was also a method that provided a broad overview of concepts related to the topic that I later compared to transcripts from other participants to determine what patterns existed in the data. I conducted analytical coding on each interview transcript so that categories could be created from the open coding notes made in the margins. Merriam (2009) described the method of using analytical coding as a detailed way to compare commonalities that

emerged from the data collection process. Categories that were created from my analytical coding allowed me to align themes as appropriate. As I transcribed each transcript, I kept a reflective journal as a method to organize emergent themes found in the data collected. In order to accurately represent the perspectives of participants as outlined as necessary by Lodico et al. (2010) I interpreted an analysis of the themes and then wrote them in a narrative form that also included samples of quotes from the research participants.

### **Trustworthiness**

Accuracy and credibility of the findings from the data collection were imperative to the validity of the research project. In order to ensure the accuracy of the findings I utilized the research methods of triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing. I used triangulation during the data analysis process to cross-reference the data collected from each participants and verify emerging themes. As the emerging themes were verified, I interpreted them into the findings. Once I transcribed and analyzed interview transcripts, the analyses was given to participants within 72 hours of the interview to verify that their perspectives were not misinterpreted in the analysis. Participants were able to provide written and/or verbal feedback to me regarding the interpretation of their perspectives which helped me to protect the quality and validity of the data. Lastly, I used peer debriefing to ensure that researcher bias was not present and that all perspectives were truly that of the participants and not my own. Lodico et al. (2010), described the role of the peer debriefer of analyzing field notes and asking questions a way of analyzing the data collected in a different way to ensure all biases remain reserved. Therefore, I

utilized a peer debriefer to ensure that participant perspectives were the only perspectives being presented.

### **Dealing with Discrepant Cases**

According to Merriam (2009), investigation into discrepant cases are important to ensuring the credibility of a study. In order to verify the credibility of my study, I conducted a purposeful investigation into discrepant cases that may have resulted in my study. Discrepant cases allowed for the integrity of the study to be upheld by seeking alternative explanations for the findings. Merriam (2009) contended that the alternative explanations sought in discrepant cases further build confidence in the initial findings supported by the data collected in the study.

### **Treatment of Data**

The confidentiality of participants during this study was important to the overall integrity of the data collection process. I made participants aware via a typed introduction to the study letter (Appendix D) that their participation in the study would be completely voluntary with the option to terminate their participation at any time they saw fit. Furthermore, I reassured participants in the consent form for the study that any information collected from them would be completely confidential and void of any identifying information. To further protect the confidentiality of participants, interview data that I collected with an audio recorder as well as any written transcripts and notes that I took were kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office only accessible to me. Data that I collected and transcribed electronically were kept on a password protected flash drive and placed within the locked file cabinet. After 5 years' time, all written data

that I collected will be shredded and all digital data on the audio recorder and flash drives will be permanently erased.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, I outlined the participant selection process, instrumentation, methodology and data analysis used for this qualitative study. I also discussed methods used to ensure validity and credibility such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. In Chapter 4, I will outline the findings of the study and will discuss the data analysis process in greater detail.

## Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about how parents of Native American students in Grade 1– Grade 12 perceived their children’s academic success in reading and mathematics and why they believe their children have consistently performed below district, state, and national standards in reading and mathematics in an attempt to help narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers. In this chapter, I will describe the setting, data collection process, analysis, and results. I will also provide evidence of trustworthiness within the study in this chapter.

### **Setting**

In an attempt to ensure that the interview process did not become cumbersome and could be successfully accommodated into the daily schedules of participants, I scheduled interviews with participant cooperation. I conducted interviews for the study at the Almonte Metropolitan Library during after-school hours that ranged from 3:30pm – 7:00pm. After the completion of each recorded interview, I listened to the recording again in order to accurately transcribe each interview adding any additional notes that I took throughout the interview. At this time printed information from the district parent portal, report cards, and progress reports pertaining to student district benchmark scores in reading and math, and state test scores and/or STAR test scores were shared with me by participants for my analysis. In order to ensure the accuracy and validity of the transcribed interview notes, I scheduled and conducted follow-up interviews. During the follow-up interviews, I gave participants printed copies of their transcribed interviews

and asked them to verify the accuracy of their comments utilizing the technique of member checking, inform me of any errors, and provide any additional thoughts or conclusions that they may have reached in regard to each interview question. Data collected from the interviews are included within the findings.

### **Data Collection**

Initial contact with the first participant also included the documentation of contact information such as name, phone number and email address as well as a request to recommend additional participants via their names and contact information who also fit the criteria for the study. The first participant was able to provide contact information for two other potential participants. Participant identification continued to snowball as one participant recommended another via name and contact information until there were no more recommendations resulting in a total of six participants.

I contacted the remaining participants for the study via telephone where the goal of the research study, a brief description of the introduction and role of the participant within the study was discussed. I also discussed and emphasized the voluntary nature of the study and option to terminate participation with the study at any time throughout the process. At this time participants shared information with me as to how they would like to receive the informed consent document. Three participants chose for me to hand deliver the informed consent at cultural events hosted by the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma while the other three chose for me to deliver the informed consent via email. I sought permission to recruit participants for my study at Seminole Nation tribal events and on their tribal grounds in advance via a formal letter emailed to the Assistance Chief

of the Seminole Nation. Informed consent forms were asked to be returned within 2 weeks of receipt. Upon receiving the informed consent forms back the next steps were initiated which included scheduling and conducting interviews that spanned over a 6 week period and lasted approximately 45 minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

The results that I generated from the study were revealed through data analysis that was achieved with the assistance of the MAXqda PC based computer program. As I transcribed each interview, I typed them into separate Word documents that I then imported into the MAXqda program in order to search for and identify any recurrent themes. I identified emergent themes by first looking for key points in each transcript and then for commonalities in all participant' responses. According to Creswell (2012) themes emerge from commonalities found within the data and are substantiated with detailed notes taken during the data collection phase. As a result of this point, the viewpoints generated from each participant enabled me to verify and substantiate the themes. I color coded each theme for each transcript to better visualize the commonalities found. Five major themes were revealed using the color coding process as well as five sub-themes. The major themes included were academic success, current curriculum, barriers/achievement gap, outlook and next steps. The sub-themes included were relatability, intervention, class size, isolation, and collaboration.

### **Outcomes**

Lodico et al. (2010) explained the process of triangulation in which data collected from multiple sources are compared to one another to help validate findings. In the case

of this qualitative study, data from student scores were collected to help validate the findings that revealed the academic struggles of Native American students in the core academic subject areas of reading and mathematics. Table 1 presents student benchmark, state and/or STAR test scores and rankings, grade levels, and overall 9 week report card grades in reading and mathematics shared from each parent from the district parent portal and district report card and progress report print outs. Scores found within the table indicated that of the six participants interviewed, three of their children earned failing scores in reading and mathematics on their district benchmark grades as well as their 9 weeks report card grades. Available STAR test results for two of the participant's children revealed that both are below grade level in reading while one is below grade level in mathematics. Student state test scores in reading revealed three student scores as unsatisfactory, one limited knowledge and two proficient while student state test scores in mathematics revealed three student scores unsatisfactory, two limited knowledge and one proficient. It is evident from the results that while some students' scores were passing, on grade level, or proficient, at least half of the Native American children of the parents interviewed were clearly struggling academically in reading and mathematics. In addition, district state test results retrieved from the Oklahoma State Department of Education (2016) revealed that the district as a whole in which Native American students are an integral part, have received an F rating in both reading and mathematics.



Table 1

*Student Reading and Mathematics Scores*

	<b>DBR</b>	<b>DBM</b>	<b>9 Weeks RCG Reading</b>	<b>9 Weeks RCM Math</b>	<b>Star Test Reading</b>	<b>Star Test Math</b>	<b>State Test Results Reading</b>	<b>State Test Results Math</b>
<b>Participant 1 Student Grade level 6</b>	85	94	3 (80-89)	4 (90-100)	NA	NA	Proficient/ Satisfactory	Proficient/ Satisfactory
<b>Participant 2 Student Grade Level 10</b>	65	58	1 (69- below)	1 (69- below)	NA	NA	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Participant 3 Student Grade Level 9</b>	58	33	1 (69- below)	1 (69- below)	NA	NA	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Participant 4 Student Grade Level 4</b>	80	89	3 (80-89)	3 (80-89)	3.9 Below Grade Level	4.1 On Grade Level	Limited Knowledge	Limited Knowledge
<b>Participant 5 Student Grade Level 5</b>	52	63	1 (69- below)	1 (69- below)	2.10 Below Grade Level	3.2 Below Grade Level	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
<b>Participant 6 Student Grade Level 6</b>	89	96	3 (80-89)	4 (90-100)	NA	NAR	Proficient/ Satisfactory	Limited Knowledge

*Note:* DBR = District Benchmark Reading, DBM = District Benchmark Mathematics, RCG = Report Card Grade Reading, RCM = Report Card Grade Math

Creswell (2012) described the importance of using narrative discussion as a means for researchers to summarize findings identified during the data analysis phase of research. The themes identified during the data analysis phase allow narrative discussion to be described in detail while gaining significant insight into the specific viewpoints of participants regarding their perceptions of their students' academic success in reading and mathematics. Lodico et al. (2010) explained that thematic analysis helps identify major concepts that can be used to better interpret and explain the data in greater depth and detail. While my interviews with participants have enabled me to develop overall findings, the analysis of themes have allowed me to describe the data in greater depth.

### **Theme 1: Academic Success**

Throughout the interview process with participants, multiple themes have emerged. The first theme that I identified through the interview process was that the academic success of students is dependent on parental involvement. Smith et al., (2011) described the importance of parental involvement for the academic success of students in relation to student behavior, attitudes towards school, better grades and homework completion, and overall student attendance. While all participants agreed that their students were struggling in at least one academic area, Participant 1 elaborated to say that "academic success for students all starts with parents. Parents need to find something that is interesting to the student in the subject area they are weaker (math or reading) and help them along." to A study presented by Tunison (2013) further confirmed that parent initiated involvement in schools leads to more effective instruction and higher achievement rates among students. Participant 2 concurred with Participant 1, adding

that “there are barriers to student success. The barriers prevent them from success due to lack of involvement.”

### **Theme 1a: Relatability**

The theme of parental involvement being an instrumental aspect to student academic success was a theme I further explored to reveal that such success was also effected by how academic concepts being taught related to Native culture and how this academic information was transmitted from families to schools and finally to students. Academic concepts that do not draw on the relevant experiences and prior knowledge of students makes it more difficult for students to take a vested interest in their learning process (Carjuzaa, 2012).

Participant 1 stated, “Curriculum changes could be made to be more relatable to Native American students in reading.” Participant 5 echoed this thought, “Relevant information is missing from the curriculum in reading and stuff like that.” Participant 6 also agreed by stating that, “I think we could make the curriculum more relatable to Native American students. There is not a whole lot of culture in general in our curriculum.”

In addition to the perspectives of the parents interviewed to the study, Rogers and Jaime (2010) pointed out that educators must take the time to learn about and implement stories and experiences that are important to the Native American culture in order to develop culturally responsive educators as well as to encourage Native American students to feel more comfortable and inclusive within the classroom setting.

**Theme 2: Current Curriculum**

The second theme that emerged from the data that I collected from interviews included the scope of the current reading and mathematics curriculum and whether or not the current reading and mathematics curriculums were meeting the needs of Native American students. According to Robinson-Zanartu et al. (2011), multicultural training for school employees is critical in developing curricula that meets the needs of Native American students as this particular training promotes the understanding of tribal histories, historical cultural trauma and its effect on learning, tribal and familial behavior norms, and the role of the extended family. Educators cannot adequately meet the needs of students they know nothing about.

While Participants 1 and 2 both agreed that the current reading and mathematics curriculums adequately met the needs of Native students with the addition of more student directed learning and less assigned homework making way for students to apply reading and mathematics concepts in both socially and nonacademic contexts, Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 did not feel that the current reading and mathematics curriculum did enough to meet the needs of Native American students.

Participant 3 mentioned that there is “Not enough one-on-one time with students and teachers. There is a lot missing in the curriculum and it is hard to fill in the gaps.”

Participants 4 and 5 both concurred that after-school activities that focus on reinforcing concepts taught in the classroom would be beneficial to students and would assist them in learning/re-learning what the curriculum intended for them to learn.

**Theme 2a: Intervention**

Intervention for students who are struggling is significant in order for them to make academic gains. Early intervention before a student begins to fail or grow discouraged academically is even more crucial to their success (Robinson-Zanartu et al., 2011). Intervention strategies designed to assist the specific Native American student population within the district used in the study were identified and described by multiple participants. Participant 2 stated “Educational programs designed to help Native students, such as tutoring, are not coming out and working with students.” Participant 3 further described “The tutoring program designed for Native American students is not a success.” Participant 6 went one step further and explained that the tutoring services provided for Native American students was not enough. Participant 6 elaborated with “I think more intervention services for students that are struggling so that they can get up to their grade level is missing.”

**Theme 3: Barriers/Achievement Gap**

According to Fryberg et al. (2013), in the 12 states that have the highest Native American student populations, high school graduation rates reveal that the Native American graduation percentage is fewer than 50% compared to a rate of 71.4% of non-Native peers. Compared to their non-Native peers, this percentage is staggering. Henry et al. (2012), furthered this perspective of the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers by describing the proficiency rates in reading and mathematics being less than half of their non-Native peers. Robinson-Zanartu et al. (2011) relayed even more information regarding the achievement gap documenting that

reading and mathematics scores for Native American students, particularly in Grade 4 and Grade 8, are lower on average than the average of all other students nationally.

Participant 6 noted that barriers that contribute to the academic success of Native American students include two important elements: “Not asking for help and not understanding the curriculum.” In a study conducted by Fryberg et al. (2013), it was found that applying interventions in the form of affirming and empowering a sense of self in Native American students and creating a curriculum where Native American students can feel self-relevant as well as a sense of belonging in the classroom setting not only led to an improved grades but helped to alleviate the achievement gap. Participant 3 also stated that, “Students are emotionally stressed because they do not understand the material being taught particularly in reading and mathematics.” Both Participants 2 and 4 gave specific insight into why they believe that the achievement gap exists and why some barriers to the success of Native American students are not so obvious to non-Native educators and peers.

Participant 2 stated:

Native American students are quieter. They stand in the background. They are afraid to ask questions, afraid to say the wrong thing or have the wrong answer. Reading and math are not practiced much in Native American homes because they expect the teachers to do the teaching. Parent involvement from Native American parents is limited.

Participant 1 described the achievement gap and barriers to success in a more non-academic format sharing that, “Divorced families, single parents, and home environment can be negative factors toward the child’s development. Economic backgrounds, single parents, health issues, income levels. Some students are at a disadvantage.”

Participant 4 made it clear that the responsibility to assist students in removing barriers to success lies with the teachers within the school district.

Participant 4 stated:

Schools need to take into consideration that traditional ways of Native students. I don’t think schools realize that some of these Native students participate as much as they do in their traditional ways. In class, Native students feel they may be looked at funny for asking questions or the teacher may think they are not paying attention.

### **Theme 3a: Class Size**

The most persistent sub-theme that emerged from the interview process in relation to the overall theme of achievement gap/barriers was class size.

Participant 3 revealed that “Classrooms are overcrowded. Teachers are overwhelmed.”

Participant 4 agreed “Too many students are in one class. Teachers keep moving forward and don’t move back on a subject when needed. ”Participant 5 also agreed, “Class size is too big especially for rookie teachers. More aid in the rooms would help out.”

### **Theme 4: Outlook**

Student attitudes and feelings toward their school environment and academic course work is instrumental in how successful they are as scholars. It is important that students feel a

sense of belonging and acceptance in order for them to flourish and reach their greatest potential. Native American youth often find it difficult to find remnants of themselves, their perspectives, worldviews, values, and histories in their classrooms (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Understanding the cultural identities of Native American students within classrooms is directly related to understanding the role Native American students take within the classroom setting in regard to leadership, participation, and class climate (Cerecer, 2013). Each student within a classroom setting plays a role in how that class functions, communicates, develops, learns, and creates its own climate and community. For many Native American students, their outlook regarding their role within the classroom environment is often diminished when they feel they cannot understand the material being taught or perhaps most importantly, feel that they themselves are misunderstood or are invisible. Participant 1 revealed the frustrated outlook Native American students face when the material is too difficult to understand and related the importance of finding material that was not only relatable in context but of interest to students for their particular age and grade level.

Participant 3 stated that the outlook for Native American students was that of failure. Participant 3's child in particular felt as if failure was constantly looming and "believes there is not enough support from the school or district Native American program." Support from the school district, Native American program and peer initiated, was a topic mentioned by another Participant in regard to the overall outlook of Native American students.



Participant 4 shared:

The school provides some home resources for parents but not a lot. It's left up to parents to go out and find that resource. The school may tell you about an online resource but some cost money and there are parents who cannot afford the resource or do not have access to the internet. Internet access and cost are barriers that parents have to go around and prevent parents from being able to use those resources. Some parents don't know how to help their child. I think students are more comfortable when they can work with someone else who may also be struggling so they can help each other.

A deeper look into the outlook theme revealed that Native American students not only feel a sense of failure, frustration, or uncomfortableness regarding their academic success and classroom belonging, but they also felt the very lonely. These feelings of loneliness ranged from their comfort level within the school environment to the willingness of teachers to draw them in and create more nurturing classroom climate. The concept of self-confidence and self-worth appeared to also be triggers of feeling lonely.

#### **Theme 4a: Isolation**

Along with feelings of loneliness, participants described the deeper sense of feeling isolated. Participants 2 and 3 referred to the shy nature of Native American students and how it is difficult for them to approach their teachers to ask questions when more clarification is needed, particularly if a concept has already been taught or discussed. Participant 2 went on to reference particular instances in which teachers have made the

comment “You should have listened the first time. I will not repeat instructions on how to complete the assignment.” Responses such as this leave many Native American students feeling isolated and alone and left without answers to their questions thus leaving their academic needs unfulfilled. Participant’s 3 and 4 referred to how their children felt left out and ignored due to their nationality and how programs such as the district Native American program showed a lack of caring or support toward the very students they are in place to assist.

To expand on this concept Participant 5 stated that:

It just seems like there is not many Native American activities throughout the schools. I think Native American students feel left out because of their nationality. In middle school students learn Spanish and French. You don’t ever see them needing to learn the Native American languages. I think it would be good for students to learn Native American languages as well because that’s all you hear now is that you have to know Spanish or be bilingual but what about the Native American languages? Nobody ever looks at that anymore. Sometimes they (Native American students) feel ignored because they are asking for help but other students are disobeying the teachers and teachers are trying to calm the kids down but are not spending time with the ones who need help and are struggling.

Participant 3 made the stark comment reiterating the thoughts of isolation saying “My child feels that no one cares. The Native American program gave up on helping.”

**Theme 5: Next Steps**

Previous themes that I derived from the interview data appeared to culminate into theme number five: next steps. Each participant agreed that there was much more that the district could be doing to assist Native American students in becoming more successful in the specific academic areas of reading and mathematics. Participant 1 stressed the importance of getting parents involved in the academic lives of Native American children while also highlighting along with Participant 2 that the district Native American Program needed to be more involved and present with both Native American students and their families. Participants 2 and 3 mentioned that the school and district as a whole needed to communicate more with parents in regard to student academic achievement, behavior, and events/activities, or how parents can be more involved to help make Native American students more successful.” Participant 3’s perspective concluded that, “Communication with parents is needed more from the district. Teachers need to communicate once a problem or a student struggle is evident so that parents can help fix the problem and make them more successful.

**Theme 5a: Collaboration**

While exploring the last major theme of next steps, interview participants provided feedback that supported the emergence of the sub-theme collaboration, by explaining that the academic success of Native students could be enhanced by school district collaboration with local tribal governments. Collaboration was not just limited to parents and teachers as Participant 3 detailed but could also extend to schools and surrounding tribes as Participant 4 suggested. The extension of collaborative efforts to include the

surrounding tribes creates avenues for more student resources to be explored and implemented.

According to Participant 3, “We more parents and teachers involved to work as a team to make students more successful.”

Participant 4 pointed out that:

Schools should reach out to surrounding tribes and see if there is a way for them to bring in their resources for tutoring. Really, they need to partner together, the schools and the tribes. Tribes have the resources to bring in tutors and some even have tutors available already it’s just schools getting them there between certain hours and times. Schools and tribes really just need to come together.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

In Chapter 3, I highlighted methods of trustworthiness used in the study. In order to verify the credibility and accuracy of the data collected from participants, the participants themselves played a vital role in member checking the transcripts. Not only did I give participants given an opportunity to verify transcribed transcripts but they were encouraged to challenge any information that was not clearly interpreted so that the data that I presented was in its truest form. In order for me to adequately ensure confirmability, a peer debriefer was also used to thoroughly analyze the data to ensure that my study was unbiased and the perspectives being documented were not that of my own. Participants also provided data from their parent portals to me that verified the dependability of the data by allowing for triangulation to be achieved. I analyzed and triangulated data from the parent portal with interview transcripts in order to accurately

cross-reference and substantiate emergent themes found in the study. The variation of participants from different grade levels and experiences within the district allowed for me to establish transferability. The perspectives given from such variation provided me with thick descriptions that were able to be compared for commonalities.

### **Summary**

The findings that I documented in Chapter 4 revealed pertinent answers to the research questions I sought to answer in this study. First, the parents that I interviewed for the study all concurred that their children struggled in at least one of the core academic areas of reading and mathematics and perceived their children's success in reading and mathematics as dependent on one very important element: parental involvement. Parental involvement was a reoccurring theme throughout the interview process which also led to how parents perceived their role within the school environment. Second, parents of Native American students believed that their children consistently perform below district, state, and national standards in reading and mathematics due to factors such as: the absence of Native American history and culture from the current curriculum, non-relatable teaching methods and subject matter, class size, student feelings of social and emotional isolation, and inadequate intervention programs to assist Native American students. The parents involved in the study not only elaborated on their perceptions of their children's success in reading and mathematics and the barriers which prevent their children from performing on par with their non-Native peers, but they also revealed the need for enhanced communication and collaboration between the school

district, parents, and students in order to improve the academic success of their children and help narrow the achievement gap between Native students and their peers.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this study I focused on the perceptions of the parents of Native American students in regard to the academic success of their children in the specific academic areas of reading and mathematics. I chose the parents of Native American students in an effort to better understand how to narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers. Upon my gathering of data through semistructured interviews with six parents of Native American students and analyzing the data, it was revealed that the best way to assist in narrowing the achievement gap among native American students and their non-native peers in reading and mathematics was to present, educate, and facilitate effective dialogue among the specific stakeholders of administrators, educators, and parents about the findings that emerged in the study.

The insights gleaned from interviews conducted with parents of Native American students provided feedback concerning the social, emotional, and academic barriers that Native American students face as they strive to be academically successful. The themes that I identified in this qualitative case study were: collaboration, parental involvement and curriculum relatability and structure. The identification of themes made it evident that educators charged with teaching Native American students may be unaware and untrained to teach Native American students in a way that allows them to reach their fullest potential and gain academic success. Professional development based on the findings from this study would enable educators to gain informative feedback into potential changes in classroom instruction, curriculum, school climate, and school/community relations.

## **Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement from parents of Native American students implores teachers the opportunity to gain an understanding of Native American culture, learning styles, and language, it also provides a basis for dialogue concerning how existing school programs and curriculum incorporate the culture, learning styles, and language of Native students. Most Native American students are expected to thrive as they participate in curriculum and standardized testing measures that consistently abstain from including multicultural content. The lack of multicultural content effects Native American students who are most successful when school curriculum includes their culture, values, languages, and ideas (Guillory & Williams, 2014). Parental involvement allows teachers to work collaboratively to evaluate, review, and plan programs and curriculum that foster the individual needs of each student while examining how to incorporate each students' unique identity.

Colton and Langer (2016) contended that there are five phases to collaborative analysis of student learning: establish a focus for collaborative inquiry, define teachers' professional learning goals, inquire into teaching for learning, assess learning progress, and integrate learning into teachers' professional practice. The five phases emphasized by Colton and Langer (2016) demonstrated that how parental involvement in relation to this study can assist in improving the academic success of Native American students by asking the following questions: where do Native American students struggle with the curriculum, which students should be the focus for more extensive observation in order to determine a more equitable learning model, what teaching approaches most effectively



highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Native American students, how are Native American students progressing and what changes can be made if they are not, and how can the practice of being reflective practitioners who work collaboratively with communities and families assist our Native American students.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings from the interviews that I conducted in this study was that parents felt that their students could not relate to the curriculum in any way and as a result, struggled to comprehend ideas, skills, and strategies being taught. Wilcox (2016) noted that students must be given the opportunity to immerse themselves in relevant, real-world learning experiences as part of their learning requirements or academic success will be limited. Existing programs designed specifically for Native American students seem to be inefficient according to the parents interviewed in the study.

Many of the parents interviewed were frustrated with the lack of support academically, emotionally, and socially district-wide for their Native American children. Assistance from Native American programs and services, when implemented appropriately, enable these students to retain their culture while safely and comfortably adapting to a curriculum and school climate that is different than what they are used to (Lundberg, 2014). Curriculum and programs that are inclusive of Native American culture, learning styles, language, and values also assists Native American students to become more successful academically by bridging the gap between school and home.

According to Lawrence (2015), school and home are the two most significant elements that influence student' achievement. Education curricula, policy, and practice

that are ingrained with the knowledges of Native Americans strengthens public education and helps to sustain relationships with Native American families, communities, and nations (Jacob et al., 2018). One parent interviewed for the study emphasized the importance of schools collaborating with tribal nations to better and more adequately serve Native American students given the many resources and contacts that tribal nations have available.

Faircloth (2018) and Robinson (2017) stated that partnerships with Native American tribes, communities, and schools must be formed to strategically surround students with support, thus advancing them to academic success. These partnerships will provide a forum for Native American parents and students to voice their concerns, ideas, and provide integral insight into elements of culture, customs, values, and language that can be implemented into curriculum, policies, and programs on the district, state, and national levels. Students rarely, if ever, have a voice in decisions related to curricula (McCarthy & Stanton, 2017). This study has the potential to transform a curriculum that places an emphasis on the learning needs of Native American students. Curricula should encompass the academic needs of Native American students and put in place fair and equitable measures to ensure their success (McCarty, 2018).

### **Achievement Gap**

Teacher training and professional development is frequently composed of curricular components that are found by educators to neglect the idea of teaching a diverse body of students. More specifically, teacher training on the culture, learning styles, and language of Native American students is not always effectively provided to teachers who teach

Native American students as is evident by this study. While many schools boast an environment where all students can learn, inclusion and equity in learning for all students are ideas that are not always grasped by those charged with ensuring the academic success of students (Mackey, 2017). Inclusion and equity are irrelevant if teachers do not understand how to adequately teach students from diverse backgrounds and knowledge bases.

Native American culture and language are crucial elements to teacher training in order to decrease the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers and increase Native American academic outcomes (Vincent, Tobin, & Van Ryzin, 2017). Lundberg and Lowe (2016) pointed out that along with other factors that are barriers to the academic success of Native American students, teachers unknowingly may be contributing factors to the underachievement of Native American students when teaching from a limited perspective devoid of any relation to Native American culture. The more aware teachers are of the backgrounds, cultures, and values of the students they are held accountable for teaching, the more effective they can be in the learning processes of those students. McInnes (2017) and Borrero, Ziauddin, and Ahn (2018) agreed that including a Native American component to teacher preparation and education is important in growing teachers to be transformative and more respectful of the diverse student populations that they encounter.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

A clear result of teacher participation in professional development on Native American culture, learning styles, languages and values is teachers who are versed in culturally

responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy accounts for the academic success of diverse students and also nurtures the social, emotional, psychological and physiological well-being of students (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017). Culturally responsive pedagogy not only allows teachers to imbed the cultural experiences and perspectives of students into their teaching methods but it aids in eliminating feelings of isolation and alienation among students from diverse backgrounds (Stowe, 2017).

Feelings of isolation, a theme brought up in the findings of this study, were described to be felt more severely when there was a lack of understanding from teachers when learning was seemingly not occurring. Students represented in the study were lacking the support and feedback necessary to enable them to take ownership of their own learning (Tomasko, Ridgway, Waller, & Olesik, 2016). Native American students that are hesitant, resistant, or reluctant to speak or participate in classroom activities and discussions are frequently misunderstood and reprimanded for not contributing to class expectations. While these characteristics are saturated in their cultural norms, most teachers are unaware and misunderstand these actions as disobedient or off-task making the need for culturally responsive pedagogy more important (San Pedro, 2015).

In addition, the findings concluded that students felt a severe lack of belonging as part of the isolation. While students of all races, religions, and backgrounds have struggled with feelings of belonging for one reason or another within the school setting, students from multicultural backgrounds tend to have more intense feelings of lack of belonging. The social identities of stigmatized racial and ethnic groups make them

vulnerable to negative stereotypes thus fostering feelings of not belonging (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015).

Vaughn (2016) further explained that the most important element in culturally responsive pedagogy is that the curricula be interconnected to the lives of students in order to adequately teach them. Feelings of not belonging and isolation are frequently precursors for not just academic failure for Native American students but can threaten their overall well-being both in and out of the school setting. Reyhner (2017) contended that Native American students who are assimilated into a school setting where the dominant culture is not their own and representations of their own culture is limited to non-existent experience and poor physical and psychological health as a result. Torres (2017) agreed with this sentiment, adding that students who are members of the non-dominant group frequently feel a sense of pressure to choose between their own culture and the dominant culture thus leading to internal conflict that severely hinders normative educational growth.

The interviews in the study revealed a need for Native American students to feel comfortable within their school setting and for curriculum and social activities to be inclusive of their cultures in order to improve academic success in reading and mathematics. The extent to which the educational experiences of Native American students align with their cultural perspectives and values will ultimately determine how academically successful they will become (Chain, Shapiro, LeBuffe, & Bryson, 2017). Interviews conducted in the study revealed that not only was the lack of cultural relevance in the curriculum evident, but that it was the responsibility of the teachers and

administrators to remove these barriers so that Native American students could succeed. In order for teachers to attempt to remove this particular barrier, culturally responsive pedagogy must be practiced. Teachers must be taught to and be prepared to engage in providing instruction and materials that are reflective of the Native American culture (McComas, Downwind, Klingbeil, Petersen-Brown, Davidson, & Parker, (2017).

### **Limitations of the Study**

In this study I used a final number of six participants who adequately fit the criteria and were recommended by each other using the snowballing sampling approach. While the 6 participants selected represented a diverse range of student grade levels and age groups, the study would have detailed a broader array of perspectives if more parents could have been interviewed. The lack of support for this study from the district administration causing the study to be administered at an off-site location was initially viewed as a hindrance for the study but actually made the participants feel more comfortable and at ease to express their true feelings by being interviewed away from school grounds. Participants felt their opportunity to be heard without fear or judgement from those in power made them feel empowered to reveal their honest perspectives.

### **Recommendations**

Although the participants interviewed for this study represented a wide range of age groups and perspectives about their Native American student's success in reading and mathematics, I believe that the perspective of every parent of Native American student within the district should be heard. The parents of Native American students within the district should be given the opportunity to voice their view of their student's success and

be provided a platform to make curriculum and policy suggestions. A parent/teacher committee dedicated to collaborating with parents of Native American students should be formed at each school within the district. The purpose of the committee would be to facilitate best teaching practices for Native American students, share cultural and historical information relevant to the curriculum, and to create a forum to address barriers to Native American student academic success. In addition to the formation of parent/teacher committees, teachers and administrators district-wide should be trained in cultural sensitivity and cultural responsive pedagogy. The programs that are currently in place to serve Native American students should be examined for its effectiveness and inclusivity as it relates to parental involvement, communication, and student academic achievement. Focused research into teacher mobility would also be beneficial in order to determine the role teacher turnover and training of new teachers plays into the academic success of Native American students.

### **Implications**

The Native American population in the urban Oklahoma school district in which this study took place steadily increases each year (EOB, 2018). As this particular population increases, the importance of finding plausible solutions to their inadequate proficiency and achievement in reading and mathematics becomes tremendously more significant as this population prepares to join a workforce that demands a thorough knowledge and skill set in these particular academic areas. The data collected and analyzed through this study may not only outline barriers that can inform solution strategies to the low performance of Native American students in reading and

mathematics but may also describe effective teaching strategies that can improve the success of Native American students in these particular academic areas as well as help narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers. The collected and analyzed data also has the potential to implicate variables such as curriculum and culture in the academic success and proficiency of Native American students. In order to gain a deeper understanding about all variables including curriculum and the culture of Native American students in regard to their success and proficiency in academic subjects, open-ended interview questions to Native American parents were imperative.

Examining and exploring cultural experiences of Native American students as they relate to their school experiences is one avenue to understanding the barriers that prevent them from becoming academically successful. (Zyromski, Bryant Jr., & Gerler Jr., 2011) The cultural experiences of Native American students not only aid in shaping the academic experiences of students but they are also fundamental in forming a sincere awareness of factors that may prevent them from authentically engaging in Westernized educational institutions. As Carjuzaa's (2012) research also pointed out, recognizing Native American culture and the experiences of Native American students allows educators to create a school environment centered on elements of these experiences that facilitate a comfortable, inclusive, and safe community where the academic potential of Native American students can be more adequately reached (p.8).



## **Conclusion**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding about how parents of Native American children in Grade 1 – Grade 12 perceived their children’s academic success in reading and mathematics and why they believe their children have consistently performed below district, state, and national standards in reading and mathematics. The study met these goals and provided critical insight into ways the achievement gap among Native American students and their non-Native peers could be narrowed within the district in which the study was conducted. While the study focused on a specific district, the insights gleaned could be easily transferable to state and national initiatives that are geared to Native American student performance and success. The study also proved to be a significant avenue for parents of Native American students within the district to have a voice. The study provides a solid basis for further studies regarding the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers to be expounded upon.

## References

- Bird, C. P., Lee, T. S., & López, N. (2013). Leadership and accountability in American Indian education: Voices from New Mexico. *American Journal of Education*, 119(4), 539-564. doi: 10.1086/670959
- Borrero, N., Ziauddin, A., & Ahn, A. (2018). Teaching for change: New teachers' experiences with and visions for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Critical Questions in Education*, 9(1), 22-39. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Brickman, S., McInerney, D. M. ., & Martin, A. (2009). Examining the valuing of schooling as a motivational indicator of American Indian students: Perspectives based on a model of future oriented motivation and self-regulation. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 48(2), 33–54. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Bourdieu, P. 1985. The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*: 241-258. New York: Greenwood. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Carjuzaa, J. (2012). The positive impact of culturally responsive pedagogy: Montana's Indian Education for all. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 14(3). Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Cerecer, P. Q. (2013). The policing of Native bodies and minds: Perspectives on schooling from American Indian youth. *American Journal of Education*, 119(4), 591-616. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Chain, J., Shapiro, V. B., LeBuffe, P. A., & Bryson, A. M. (2017). Academic achievement of American Indian and Alaska native students: Does social-emotional competence reduce the impact of poverty?. *American Indian & Alaska*

*Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of The National Center*, 24(1), 1-29.

doi: 10.5820/aian.2401.2017.1

Cheeseman, G. W., & Gapp, S. C. (2012). Integrating storytelling into the mindset of prospective teachers of American Indian students. *Multicultural Education*, 19(4), 24-32. Retrieved from ERIC database.

Chu, S.-Y. (2011). Perspectives in understanding the schooling and achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 38(3), 201–209. Retrieved from Education Source database.

Clayton, J.K. (2011). Changing diversity in U.S. schools: The impact on elementary student performance and achievement. *Education and Urban Society* 43:671–95. doi: 10.1177/0013124510380909

Colton, A. B., & Langer, G. M. (2016). A process of discovery: Teachers examine cultural perspectives through collaborative analysis of student learning. *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(5), 36-40. Retrieved from ERIC database

Covarrubias, R., & Fryberg, S. A. (2015). The Impact of self-relevant representations on school belonging for Native American students. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 21(1), 10-18. doi:10.1037/a0037819

Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Cutuli, J. J., Desjardins, C. D., Herbers, J. E., Long, J. D., Heistad, D., Chan, C., & Masten, A. S. (2013). Academic achievement trajectories of homeless and highly mobile students: resilience in the context of chronic and acute risk. *Child Development, 84*(3), 841-857. doi:10.1111/cdev.12013
- De Jesus, O.N. (2012). Differentiated instruction: Can differentiated instruction provide success for all learners? *National Teacher Education Journal, 5*(3). 5-11. Retrieved from Education Source database.
- Education Oversight Board/Office of Accountability. (2018). 2018 School Report Card: John Glenn Elementary (EC-5). Retrieved August 4, 2019 from <https://www.schoolreportcard.org/doc/profiles/2018/reports/src/201855i041107.pdf>
- Epstein, J. (1992). School and family partnerships. In M.C. Alkin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 1139-1151). New York: Macmillan. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Epstein, Joyce L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 701. Retrieved May 15, 2012, from Research Library. (Document ID: 1761444)
- Faircloth, S. C. (2018). Leadership in the era of the Trump presidency: Implications for the education of American Indian children and youth. *Journal of Educational Administration and History, 50*(1), 12-22. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Florin, T. A., Shults, J., & Stettler, N. (2011). Perception of overweight is associated with poor academic performance in US adolescents. *Journal of School Health,*

81(11), 663-670. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00642.x

Fryberg, S.A., Covarrubias, R., & Burack, J.A. (2013). Cultural models of education and academic performance for Native American and European American students.

*School Psychology International*, 34(4), 439-452.

doi:10.1177/0143034312446892

Gaddis, S.M. (2013). The influence of habitus in the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement. *Social Science Research*, 42(1),1–13. doi:

10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.08.002

Galindo, C., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and home connections and children's

kindergarten achievement gains: The mediating role of family involvement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 27, 90–193. Retrieved from ERIC database.

Ginsberg, M., & Craig, A. (2010). Tradition becomes the teacher: Community events enrich educators' professional learning. *Journal of Staff Development*, 31(4),

36–41. Retrieved from Education Source database.

Goodkind, J., LaNoue, M., Lee, C., Freeland, L., & Freund, R. (2012). Involving parents in a community-based, culturally grounded mental health intervention for

American Indian youth: Parent perspectives, challenges, and results. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 40(4), 468-478. doi:10.1002/jcop.21480

Greenman, E., Bodovski, K., & Reed, K. (2011). Neighborhood characteristics, parental practices and children's math achievement in elementary school. *Social Science*

*Research*, 40(5), 1434–1444. doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.04.007

Grinell, S., & Rabin, C. (2013). Modern education: a tragedy of the commons. *Journal of*

*Curriculum Studies*, 45(6), 748-767. doi:10.1080/00220272.2013.813079

- Guillory, R. M., & Williams, G. L. (2014). Incorporating the culture of American Indian/Alaska Native students into the classroom. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 8(3), 155-169. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Hankes, J., Skoning, S., Fast, G., & Mason-Williams, L. (2013). Closing the math gap of Native American Students identified as learning disabled. *Investigations in Mathematics Learning*, 5(3), 44-59. doi: 10.1080/24727466.2013.11790326
- Hare, J., & Pidgeon, M. (2011). The Way of the warrior: Indigenous youth navigating the challenges of schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 34(2), 93-111. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Harrington, B. G., & ChiXapkaid, P. D. M. (2013). Using indigenous educational research to transform mainstream education: A guide for P-12 school leaders. *American Journal of Education*, 119(4), 487-511. doi: 10.1086/670962
- Henry, K., Knight, K., & Thornberry, T. (2012). School disengagement as a predictor of dropout, delinquency, and problem substance use during adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 41(2), 156-166. doi:10.1007/s10964-011-9665-3
- Jacob, M. M., Sabzalian, L., Jansen, J., Tobin, T. J., Vincent, C. G., & LaChance, K. M. (2018). The Gift of Education: How Indigenous knowledges can transform the future of public education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 20(1), 157-185. Retrieved from ERIC database.

- Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education, 47*, 706-742.
- Kulis, S., Wagaman, M. A., Tso, C., & Brown, E. F. (2013). Exploring Indigenous Identities of Urban American Indian Youth of the Southwest. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 28*(3), 271–298. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Lawrence, E. (2015). The family-school interaction: School composition and parental educational expectations in the United States. *British Educational Research Journal, 41*(2), 183-209. doi: 10.1002/berj.3139
- Lee, J., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal, 43*, 193-215. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Lee, T. S. (2009). Building Native nations through Native student's commitment to their communities. *Journal of American Indian Education, 48*(1), 19–36. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Lodico, M., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (Laureate Education, Inc., custom ed.). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- López, F. A., Heilig, J. V., & Schram, J. (2013). A Story within a story: Culturally responsive schooling and American Indian and Alaska Native achievement in the National Indian Education study. *American Journal of Education, 119*(4). Retrieved from ERIC database.

- Lundberg, C. A. (2014). Institutional support and interpersonal climate as predictors of learning for Native American students. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*(3), 263-277. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Lundberg, C. A., & Lowe, S. C. (2016). Faculty as contributors to learning for Native American students. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(1), 3-17. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Mackey, H. J. (2017). Exploring American Indian students' experiences with injustice: A narrative dialogic approach to improve leadership preparation for equitable secondary schools. *National Forum of Educational Administration & Supervision Journal, 35*(1-3), 47-80. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- McCarthy, G., & Stanton, C. R. (2017). "Let His Voice Be Heard": A community's response to inclusion of an Indigenous counter-narrative in the district curriculum. *International Journal of Multicultural Education, 19*(3), 1-22. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- McCarty, T. L. (2009). The impact of high-stakes accountability policies on Native American learners: Evidence from research. *Teaching Education, 20*(1), 7-29. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- McCarty, T. L. (2018). So that any child may succeed: Indigenous pathways toward justice and the promise of Brown. *Educational Researcher, 47*(5), 271-283. doi:10.3102/0013189X18768549
- McComas, J. J., Downwind, I., Klingbeil, D. A., Petersen-Brown, S., Davidson, K. M., & Parker, D. C. (2017). Relations between instructional practices and on-task



- behavior in classrooms serving American Indian students. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 33(2), 89-108. doi:10.1080/15377903.2016.1236308
- McInnes, B. D. (2017). Preparing teachers as allies in Indigenous education: Benefits of an American Indian content and pedagogy course. *Teaching Education*, 28(2), 145-161. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- McWilliams, M., Maldonado-Mancebo, T., Szczepaniak, P. S., & Jones, J. (2011). Supporting Native Indian preschoolers and their families: Family-school-community partnerships. *Young Children*, 66(6), 34-41. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Mello Z.R., Mallett, R.K., Andretta, J.R., & Worrell. (2012). Stereotype threat and school belonging in adolescents from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, v(17) n1, 9-14. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Metzger, K., Box, A., & Blasingame, J. (2013). Embracing intercultural diversification: Teaching young adult literature with native American themes. *English Journal*, V(102), 57-62. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Morgan, H. (2009). What every teacher needs to know to teach Native American students. *Multicultural Education*, 16(4), 10–12. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Murphy, M., & Zirkel, S. (2015). Race and belonging in school: How anticipated and experienced belonging affect choice, persistence, and performance. *Teachers College Record*, 117(12). Retrieved from the PsycINFO database.

- National Caucus of Native American State Legislators. (2008). *Striving to achieve: Helping Native American students succeed*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/statetribe/strivingtoachieve.pdf>
- National Indian Education Association, (2015). *Students affected by the achievement gap*. Retrieved May 29<sup>th</sup> from <http://www.nea.org/home/20380.htm>.
- National Indian Education Association. (2015). Statistics on Native Students. *National Indian Education Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.niea.org/Research/Statistics.aspx>
- Native American Student Progress Reports. (2013-2014). Retrieved February 10, 2014 from Western Heights Public Schools Indian Education.
- Okagaki, L., Helling, M. K., & Bingham, G. E. (2009). American Indian college students' ethnic identity and beliefs about education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(2), 157–176. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Oklahoma State Board of Education. (2014). A-F 2014 Report Cards: Western Heights Public Schools. Retrieved January 13, 2015 from <http://afreportcards.ok.gov/>
- Oklahoma School Testing Program. (2014). Western Heights 2008-2014 Results. Retrieved January 21, 2015 from Western Heights Public School District.
- Oklahoma State Department of Education. (2015). *Title 1, part A: improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged*. Retrieved May 28, 2015 from <http://ok.gov/sde/title-i-part>
- Parke, C. S., & Kanyongo, G. Y. (2012). Student attendance, mobility, and mathematics achievement in an urban school district. *Journal of Educational Research*,

105(3), 161-175. doi:10.1080/00220671.2010.547231

- Peterson, P. E., & Ackerman, M. (2015). States raise proficiency standards in math and reading. *Education Next*, 15(3), 16-21. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Pewewardy, C., & Fitzpatrick, M.(2009). Working with American Indian students and families: Disabilities, issues, and interventions. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 45(2), 91–98. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Pirbhai-Illich, F. (2013). Crossing borders: At the nexus of critical service learning, literacy, and social justice. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 18(2), 79–96.  
doi: 10.15663/wje.v18i2.163
- Preston, J. P., & Claypool, T. R. (2013). Motivators of educational success: Perceptions of grade 12 aboriginal students. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 36(4), 257–279. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Ragoonaden, K., & Mueller, L. (2017). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Indigenizing Curriculum. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 47(2), 22-46. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Richardson, T. (2011). Navigating the problem of inclusion as enclosure in Native Culture-Based education: Theorizing shadow curriculum. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 41(3), 332–349. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Reinhardt, M. J., Perry Evenstad, J., & Faircloth, S. (2012). She has great spirit: Insight into relationships between American Indian dads and daughters. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 25(7), 913–931. Retrieved from ERIC database.

- Reyhner, J. (2017). Affirming identity: The role of language and culture in American Indian education. *Cogent Education*, 4(1), N.PAG.  
doi:10.1080/2331186X.2017.1340081
- Ringerberg, M., McElwee, E., & Israel, K. (2009). Cultural capital theory and predicting parental involvement in northwest Indiana schools. *The South Shore Journal*, 3, 86-124. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Robinson-Zanartu, C., Butler-Byrd, N., Cook-Morales, V., Dauphinais, P., Charley, E., & Bonner, M. (2011). School psychologists working with Native American youth: Training, competence, and needs. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 15(1), 103-115. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Rogers, C.A., & Jaime, A.M. (2010). Listening to the community: Guidance from the Native community members for emerging culturally responsive educators. *Equity in Education*, 43(2), 188-201. doi: 10.1080/10665681003719657
- San Pedro, T. (2015). Silence as Weapons: Transformative Praxis among Native American Students in the Urban Southwest. *Equity & Excellence In Education*, 48(4), 511-528. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2015.1083915
- Smith, B. L., Stumpff, L. M., & Cole, R. (2012). Engaging Students from Underrepresented Populations: The Enduring Legacies Native Cases Initiative. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 41(4), 60–68. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Smith, J., Wohlstetter, P., Chuan, A. K., & Pedro, K. D. (2011). Parent involvement in urban charter schools: New strategies for increasing participation. *School*

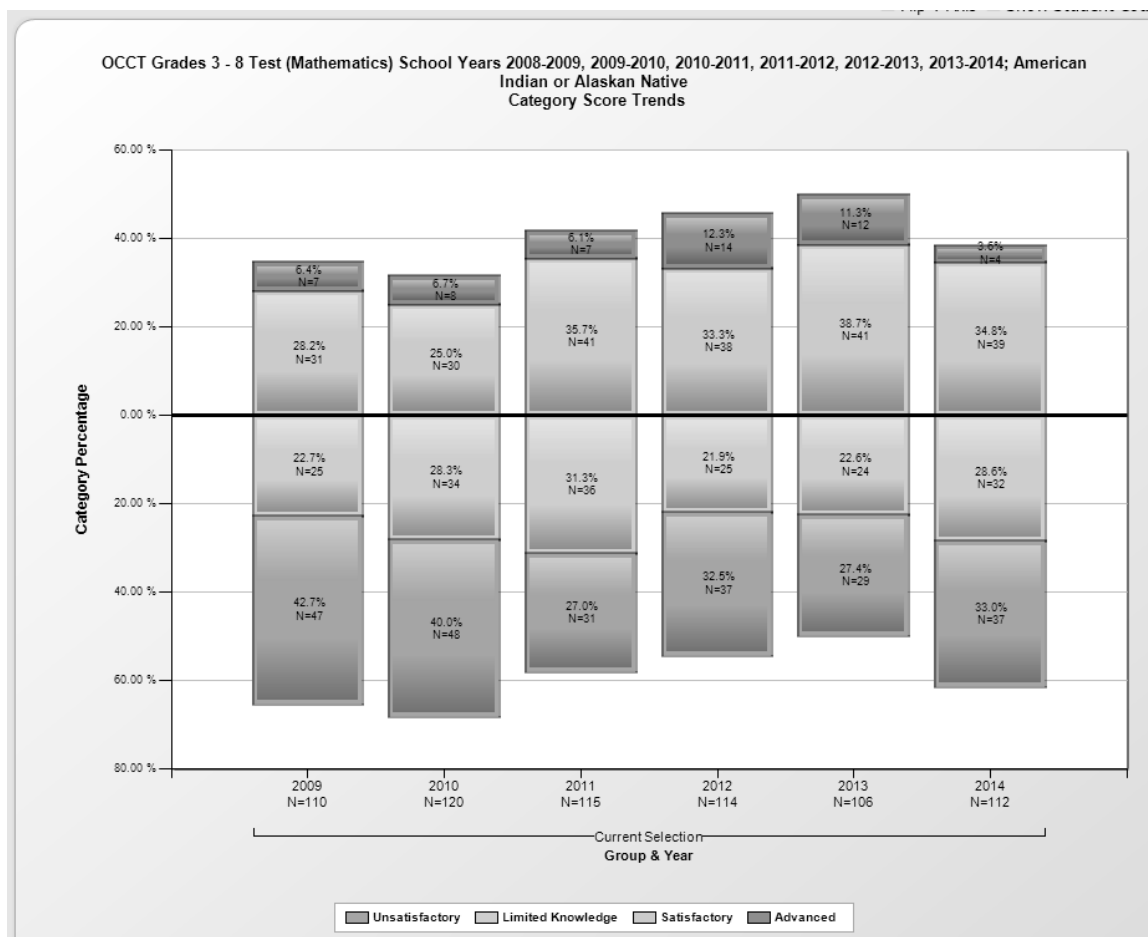
- Community Journal*, 21(1), 71-94. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Sparapani, E.F., Seo, B., & Smith, D.L. (2011). Crossing borders by “walking around” culture: Three ethnographic reflections on teacher preparation. *Issues in Teacher Education*, v(20), n2, 53-66. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Stowe, R. (2017). Culturally Responsive Teaching in an Oglala Lakota Classroom. *Social Studies*, 108(6), 242-248. doi: 10.1080/00377996.2017.1360241
- Styres, S., Zinga, D., Bennett, S., & Bomberry, M. (2010). Walking in two worlds: Engaging the space between indigenous community and academia. *Canadian Journal of Education*, v(33), n(3), 617-648. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Tippeconnic, J. W., III, & Tippeconnic Fox, M. J. (2012). American Indian tribal values: A critical consideration in the education of American Indians/Alaska Natives today. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 25(7), 841–853. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Tomasko, D. L., Ridgway, J. S., Waller, R. J., & Olesik, S. V. (2016). Research and teaching: Association of summer bridge program outcomes with STEM retention of targeted demographic groups. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 45(4). Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Torres, D. D. (2017). Cultural discontinuity between home and school and American Indian and Alaska Native children’s achievement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 110(4), 331-347. doi:10.1080/00220671.2015.1103686
- Tsethlikai, M. (2011). An exploratory analysis of American Indian children’s cultural engagement, fluid cognitive skills, and standardized verbal IQ scores.

*Developmental Psychology*, 47(1), 192–202. doi: 10.1037/a0020803

- Tunison, S. (2013). The Wicehtowak partnership: Improving student learning by formalizing the family-community-school partnership. *American Journal of Education*, 119(4), 565-590. doi: 10.1086/670966
- Vaughn, M. (2016). Re-envisioning literacy in a teacher inquiry group in a Native American context. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 55(1), 24-47. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Villegas, Malia. Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, Malia. (2009). This Is how we “Role”: moving toward a cosmogonic paradigm in Alaska Native Education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 32(1), 38–56. Retrieved from Education Source database.
- Vincent, C., Tobin, T., & Van Ryzin, M. (2017). Implementing instructional practices to improve American Indian and Alaska Native students’ reading outcomes: An exploration of patterns across teacher, classroom, and school characteristics. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 68(5), 435-450. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Walkingstick, J., & Bloom, L.A. (2013). Creating community and support using Native American values in an inclusive third grade setting: An action research case study. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 7(1), 55-78. doi: 10.3776/joci.2013v7n1p55-78
- Wilcox, K. C. (2015). “Not at the Expense of Their Culture”: Graduating Native American Youth from high school. *High School Journal*, 98(4), 337-352. doi: 10.1353/hsj.2015.0011

- Yin, R. K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1), 58-65. doi: 10.2307/2392599
- Zyromski, B., Bryant, A. r., & Gerler, E. r. (2011). Succeeding in school: The online reflections of Native American and other minority students. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 50(1), 99-118. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1939.2011.tb00109.x

## Appendix A: Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests Grades 3-8 Mathematics 2008-2014

*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests Grades 3 – 8 (Mathematics) American Indian or Alaskan Native*

*Figure 1.* Percentage of Native American Students in grades 3-8 found to display unsatisfactory, limited knowledge, proficient and advanced knowledge on the state math test for years 2008-2014 adapted from Oklahoma School Testing Program, (2014). Western Heights 2008-2014 Results. Retrieved January 21, 2015 from Western Heights Public School District.



Appendix B: Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests Grades 3-8 Reading 2008-2014

*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests Grades 3 – 8 (Reading) American Indian or Alaskan Native*

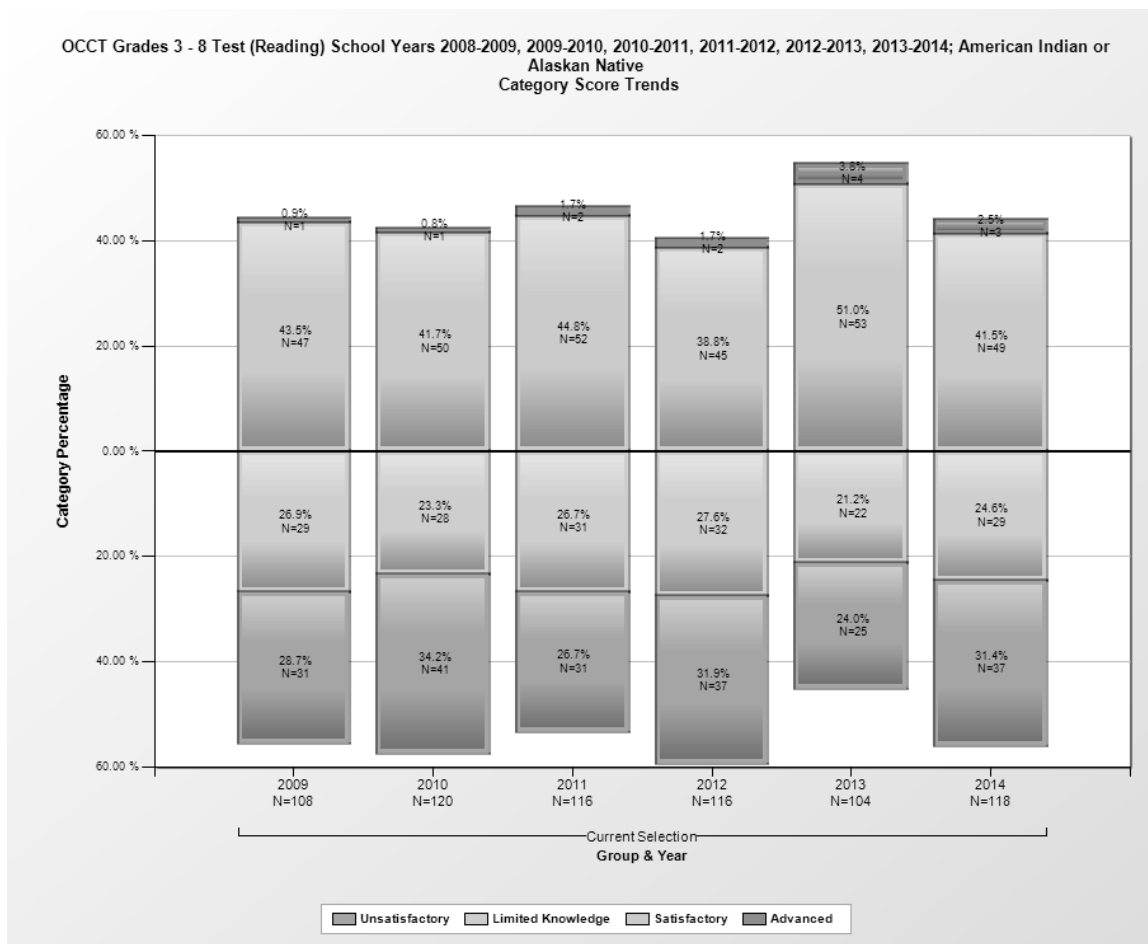


Figure 2. Percentage of Native American Students in grades 3-8 found to display unsatisfactory, limited knowledge, proficient and advanced knowledge on the state math test for years 2008-2014 adapted from Oklahoma School Testing Program. (2014). Western Heights 2008-2014 Results. Retrieved January 21, 2015 from Western Heights Public School District.

## Appendix C: Interview Guide

Project: Parent Perceptions of the Academic Success of their Native American Children in Reading and Mathematics.

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

The goal of this study is to gain insight into the perspectives of parents in regard to the academic success of their Native American children in reading and mathematics.

Interview questions:

1. How do you perceive your students' academic success in reading and mathematics?
  - If yes, how?
  - If no, what do feel is missing?
  
2. Do you feel that the current reading and mathematics curriculums meet the academic needs of your student?
  - If yes, how?
  - If no, what do feel is missing?
  
3. What social, economical, emotional or educational barriers, if any, do you feel prohibit your student from being more successful in reading and mathematics?

- Please explain.
4. Why do you believe Native American students struggle the most both locally and nationally on the specific sections of reading and mathematics on standardized tests?
  
  5. Have there been times when your student has displayed frustration or anger relating to their success on reading and mathematics assignments and/or tests?
    - How did that make you feel as a parent?
  
    - Did your student ever change those feelings about reading and mathematics?
  
  6. What steps would you like to see the district take to help ensure better success for Native American students in reading and mathematics?

Interviewer's Notes:

## Appendix D: Introduction Letter

Dear Participant,

In the coming months I will be conducting a research project seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of how parents of Native American students in grades 1-12 perceive the academic success of their students in the core academic areas of reading and mathematics and why they believe Native students have consistently (or historically) performed below district, state, and national expectations in reading and mathematics. It is my hope that through this research and the possible outcomes that may occur as a result will help to narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers.

There has been very limited research into the perspectives of parents of Native American children in regard to the academic success of their children. One of the main goals of this study is to give parents of Native American students a voice in the educational processes of their children in an attempt to help narrow the achievement gap between Native American students and their non-Native peers. If you would like to participate in this study, I would like to conduct a personal interview with you within the next few weeks as well as a follow up interview within the next month. Your participation in this study will be completely voluntary. Please understand that you are under no obligation to participate and I will understand if you wish to decline any participation.

I look forward to hearing from you within the coming week should you decide that you wish to participate. I truly believe that your perspective is important and could

make significant changes to the curriculum and best practices used to teach Native American students. While my daily job involves my employment as a Physical Education teacher within the Western Heights Public School District, my research as a doctoral student is in no way associated with my employment. As a doctoral student, I am eager to conduct my research in hopes of assisting our Native American students become more academically successful while also positively informing the best practices and curriculum standards that are currently in place.

You are more than welcome to contact me at any time regarding any questions or concerns that you may have about this research project or the process in which I intend to research this topic. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Kandace Robertson  
School of Education  
Walden University

## Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

### **Name of Signer:**

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: “Parents of Native American Children’s Perceptions of the Academic Success of their Children in Reading and Mathematics”, I will have access to information which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential and that the improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

### **By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:**

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modifications or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read and the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## Appendix F: Permission Letter

Dear Assistant Chief,

As an educator in the field of education I am aware that although we strive to provide a learning environment that utilizes best practices to reach students where they are academically and grow them into more knowledgeable and successful students, there is still a rich achievement gap that exists among various demographics of students. One demographic that historically and statistically underperforms in relation to their peers, particularly in the specific academic areas of reading and mathematics, is the Native American population. As a Native American educator myself, I am very passionate about this achievement gap and possible remedies to narrow it. I am a current doctoral student at Walden University and have decided to conduct my doctoral research on how to narrow the achievement gap among Native American students and their non-Native American peers. My research involves a qualitative case study approach directed toward investigating the perspectives of parents of Native American children in regard to the academic success of their students in the specific academic areas of reading and mathematics. It is my belief that through gaining insight into parent perspectives as to how to better teach and educate Native American students, educators within the district as well as educators around the state and nation can potentially enhance the current curriculum and best practices that are being used to educate Native American students. I am aware that there may be some families within my district who are members of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. I am writing this letter to seek your permission, if



necessary, in speaking with and/or recruiting these particular families at events such as powwows, language classes, and cultural events hosted by the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma for my research. A written response with your approval or comments confirming that permission is not necessary for my request would be greatly appreciated as I seek to move forward with my research.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in regard to this significant issue.

Respectfully yours,

Kandace Robertson

Walden Doctoral Student