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Indigenous Women: Violence, Vulnerability and Cultural Protective Factors

Christina M. Agloinga
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Christina M. Agloinga

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Review Committee

Dr. Ashley Dickinson, Committee Chairperson,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Jennifer Grimes, Committee Member,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Joseph Pascarella, University Reviewer,
Criminal Justice Faculty

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

Walden University
2021

Abstract

Indigenous Women: Violence, Vulnerability and Cultural Protective Factors

by

Christina M. Agloinga

MA, University of Cincinnati, 2009

BS, Bellevue University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice: Law and Public Policy

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

The disproportionate rates of violent crimes, historical oppression, and cultural assimilation disrupted the traditional practices and belief system within Alaskan Native communities, thus changing the influence of protective factors that support balance and equality for women. Identifying protective factors provided by cultural practices that support resiliency provides an increased understanding of how cultural strengths can combat distorted stereotypes within the criminal justice system. This study included characteristics of a phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic study. The social constructionist framework and the social construction of target populations theory was used to explore how traditional cultural practices can influence the current gender identity, racial identity, and social status of Alaskan Native women. Seven Tribal elders and/or leaders, who actively engage in Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, participated in individual interviews and the photovoice method to share their experiences and perspectives. The data were analyzed and coded to develop five primary themes: a) Generational Learning, b) Survival, c) Spiritual, d) Identity and e) The Experience. The results of this study highlighted the ways Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices provide the foundation for resiliency and natural protective factors for Alaskan Native women, that can challenge the negative stereotypes within the criminal justice system. Thus, creating an opportunity to generate policy decisions to increase awareness and safety and address the current structural and institutional biases within the criminal justice system, at a local and regional level leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

To all those who support and engage in cultural preservation, to provide strength, balance, and equality.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women has created awareness about the rate of violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women and the disproportionate representation of Indigenous women in the criminal justice system. The disproportionate rates of violent crimes, historical oppression, and cultural assimilation impact the vulnerability of and violence toward Indigenous women and has created a series of consequences and repercussions in society over time. The current situation is a result of years of structural bias, institutional bias, and cultural disruption. Historical oppression and cultural assimilation disrupted the traditional practices and belief system within Alaskan Native communities, thus changing the influence of protective factors that support balance and equality for women. Identifying the protective factors provided by cultural practices, both traditions and norms, that support resiliency may provide an increased understanding of how cultural strengths can combat distorted stereotypes within the criminal justice system, that perpetuate the violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women.

Background

Early colonialism created a societal and institutional bias against Indigenous people, but specifically targeted Indigenous women. As Pedersen et al. (2013) outlined, “colonialism is indisputably a form of structural violence that is deeply interwoven in the social, political, and economic fabric of society” (p. 1036). Colonialism created and implemented a belief system unfamiliar and very different from the culture and belief

system of the Indigenous population. The processes of assimilation restructured the gender roles and imposed a gender hierarchy, based on a patriarchal belief system. This created a structural bias, increasing the vulnerability of women in society for generations (Dorries & Harjo, 2020), by weakening and eliminating the previous gender balance, and cultural beliefs that naturally protected women. Indigenous women historically were respected, held prominent positions in their society, and were even considered sacred. In order to successfully colonize the Indigenous population, the belief system had to be restructured and ultimately created distorted stereotypes of Indigenous women that are still present today and increase the vulnerability of women. Furthermore, the creation of residential schools reinforced the societal norm of Indigenous people being an inferior race who needed saving by European settlers (Palmer, 2016). The removal of children from their families resulted in forced assimilation to other belief systems, eroded the cultural norms, and was an attempt to erase the Indigenous population (Gregg, 2018; Monchalin et al., 2019). The residential schools were successful in significantly changing the culture for future generations of Indigenous people. Setting up structures and institutions, that supported and taught the new belief system, eroded the culture and history of the Indigenous population, and ultimately created a shift to a new perceived identity and role of women within the community, Tribe, and household.

Boarding schools were not the only way to implement social controls over the Indigenous population. The federal government imposed European and Western government and political structures on Indigenous communities, which replaced traditional governing practices (Monchalin et al., 2019). By implementing the new

government structures, the patriarchal belief system was again introduced and reinforced the ideology that the Indigenous population was inferior and could not govern itself. The laws and legislation have been inconsistent and often discriminatory, which leads to creating and supporting institutional bias. Institutional bias is prevalent in the criminal justice system and is observed by the indifference and lack of priority in certain cases and victim blaming by reinforcement of discriminatory societal views about the Indigenous population. The disproportionate crime rates for American Indian and Alaska Native peoples and the high rates of violent acts against Indigenous women is just one indicator of institutional bias by the criminal justice system (Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Rosay, 2016). The lack of respect for Indigenous women's lives, the stereotypes creating victim blaming, and the minimal or no consequences for crimes against Indigenous women, perpetuate the bias. Monchalin et al. (2019) examined the high rate of homicide for Indigenous women and children, related to colonialism and the structure of society and patriarchy. Additionally, there are multiple case examples across the United States of the breakdown in the criminal justice system, that result in the increase of violence and lack of protection for Indigenous women and children. This includes how police respond to reports, how victims are treated and then portrayed in the media, how investigations are handled by the police and prosecuting attorneys, and ultimately, the minimal consequences if any, for the perpetrator, which leads to creating "a society that devalues Indigenous women and sends clear signals that others in society can abuse them with relative impunity" (Palmater, 2016, p.283).

Cultural disruption also leads to the violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women. By reshaping tribal governance, family structure, belief systems, and education, colonialism created disruption and manipulation that can lead to cultural genocide. The patriarchal belief system undermines Indigenous culture and traditions. Kingston (2015) examined the destruction of Indigenous cultures and forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples, through the analytical lens of genocide. The erosion and destruction of cultural values and traditions that often defines the Tribe, impacts the relationships and structure within the community. The loss of land, the loss of a gender balanced society, and assimilation to a new governance and belief system, created cultural disruption. The cultural connection between people is often produced through social practices, such as language, hunting and gathering activities for a specific season, or celebration, and specific tools or methods for preparing food. Social interactions provide a method for strengthening and teaching cultural practices and traditions (King, 2019). Disrupting the cultural connection provides another aspect of victimization experienced by Indigenous people and, more specifically, Indigenous women.

Despite the historical oppression, disproportionate rates of violent crimes and cultural disruption, the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures continue to be resilient and thrive in Northwest Alaska. By passing down knowledge about hunting and gathering, medicinal plants, language, storytelling, and healing rituals, the American Indian and Alaskan Native Tribes have ensured the survival of cultural practices and traditions (Yakushko, 2018).

There is developing research regarding cultural resilience in relation to public health concerns. Initial analysis of the research indicates cultural identity and practices are among the identified protective factors (Orè, Teufel-Shone, & Chico-Jarillo, 2016). However, none of the literature I reviewed for this study examined the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, both traditions and norms that support resiliency in women. The study fills this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the issue of violence and vulnerability impacting Indigenous women. The research supports the need for social change and policy change, to address the disproportionate representation of Indigenous women in the criminal justice system as victims of violent crime.

Problem Statement

In the United States, there are multiple vulnerable populations within the criminal justice system. The voices of Indigenous people, regarding their experiences of discrimination and victimization by the various criminal justice entities, are often not heard or are ignored. Indigenous women are one such population and have the highest rate of violent victimization, when race and gender are considered (Dorries & Harjo, 2020). This population includes Alaskan Native women. There is a problem in the criminal justice system's understanding of the social and historical determinants of violence against Alaskan Native women and the cultural protective factors for Alaskan Native women. The problem, specifically, is that researchers do not know what makes Alaskan Native women more vulnerable to violence and the cultural strengths that become protective factors for Alaskan Native women. Although there is growing knowledge about the rate of violence and victimization for Indigenous women, little is

known about the Alaskan Native cultural traditions and values as protective factors and how these protective factors impact resiliency.

The increase in awareness about the phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women, has brought attention to the violence that disproportionately impacts Alaskan Native women (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017). Studies have identified the violence against Indigenous women as a public health issue and a public safety issue (Crossland, et al., 2013). However, this has not resulted in a decrease in violence toward Indigenous women, specifically Alaskan Native women. In the literature that I reviewed for this study, I found that others have investigated the historical oppression and community structure, colonization, cultural disruption, and perceived community inequality of gender as factors contributing to violence toward Indigenous women (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Monchalin et al., 2019). None of the literature that I reviewed examined the problem from the perspectives of tribal members and leaders on what Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural traditions and values are potential protective factors for Indigenous women. The current study fills this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the problem by providing data to public policy decision makers to formulate and/or change policies, to support the protective factors which impact resiliency for the Indigenous women population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders on what Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, both values and traditions, that are potential protective factors for Alaskan Native women.

Identifying cultural values and traditions that support resiliency in women, from the perspective of tribal members, provides the opportunity for increased understanding of how to potentially incorporate these practices in policy and prevention and intervention programs and promote the use of cultural strengths to improve the overall safety of Indigenous women. I used photovoice and in-depth interviews to develop an understanding of how cultural traditions and values are protective factors for Alaskan Native women.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): In what ways do cultural practices support resiliency among Alaskan Native women?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What cultural practices are protective factors for Alaskan Native women?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base for this study was the social constructionism framework, which I used to explore the individual and group identity for Indigenous women. This theory is used to examine a structure of social relations, rather than understand social connections as biologically determined (Schneider and Ingram, 2004; Mercadal, 2019). Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality suggests that the social interactions between people become "socially accepted as a shared reality.... both subjectively meaningful and objectively factual...by behaving as if they were following conventional rules" (Stingl, 2019, p. 6). Relationships and social interactions shape the reality of an individual's identity and social reality. This includes gender identity, racial

identity, and social status. The social construction of target populations theory suggests that the categories, stereotypes, or images about a specific group, which “have been created by politics, culture, socialization, history, media literature, religion and the like” can have either positive or negative impacts for the specific group (Schneider & Ingram, 1993 p. 2). As the traditional Indigenous culture was influenced by the forced assimilation to western cultural values, this shift impacted the perceived identity and role of the women within the household, Tribe, and community. By exploring the cultural practices of the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures, insight as to the historical identity of Indigenous women can be gained, as well as the cultural strengths that were historically protective factors for Alaskan Native women.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used the social construction of targeted populations research framework, as my focus for the study was the perspectives of tribal members, specifically the elders and tribal leaders, to provide an in depth understanding of the ways cultural traditions and norms support resiliency and how cultural practices become protective factors for Alaskan Native women. I selected the social construction approach because of the focus on understanding the individual experience and perceptions, of the experience by tribal elders and leaders. I used a purposive and criterion sampling strategy to identify 32 potential participants. I collected data using the photovoice method with an interview guide and analyzed using descriptive, value, and analytical coding to develop themes.

Definitions

Culture. Includes knowledge, beliefs, customs, norms, and laws that guide conduct in a social setting; a way of doing things that distinguishes a group of people from other groups of people. Culture must be learned. It is not genetic, and culture is shared between human social interaction and between generations (Mutry & Vyas, 2006).

Social Construction of Targeted Populations. A theory which explains how the perceived social characteristics of a specific population, create either positive or negative images or stereotypes of a targeted population (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

Social Construction of Reality theory. A theory about how an individual perceives their reality is based on and shaped by their social interactions. The reality is based on the collective knowledge of the people in a particular time and place (Schneider, 2005).

Violence. The term violence encompasses the act of physical threat or force of harm, emotional harm, and psychological harm. The Department of Justice (2019) specifically defines violent offenses as murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions for this study. I assumed that Alaskan Native cultures, specifically the Iñupiaq and Yupik, have traditions and norms that can be protective factors in the present time. I assumed that the traditions and norms that were once protective in the traditional community setting of Alaskan Native Tribes are able to remain protective in the current structure of society and the criminal justice system, with patterns of oppression still in place. The change and evolution of the current governance

and criminal justice system is a product of implementing a European and Western government structure, with a patriarchal belief system. The current structure is not likely to revert to traditional tribal governance practices, therefore I assumed the current cultural traditions and norms have an equal amount of effectiveness in this changed structure and environment.

I also assumed that the cultural norms and traditions being practiced today are the same as they were pre-colonization (i.e., pre-boarding school era). I assumed that the cultural traditions and norms have survived colonization in different forms and remain protective. This assumption is important because of the technological advancements made over time have an impact on the way of life for Alaskan Native people. Specifically, the accessibility of food, housing, clothing for individuals, the type of food and housing used, and the changes in the environment (i.e., decrease in animal populations due to industrialization and the permanent location of a Tribe). The process and practice of cultural traditions have evolved with technological advancements. For example, the use of firearms, boats and motors, the modern convenience of grocery stores, and the mass production of clothing; entire communities no longer move based on the season (Huteson, 2006). There are also government restrictions regarding hunting and gathering practices (hunting seasons, permits, quantity limitations), that impact traditional practices. These assumptions are relevant and have potential influential implications for the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study included the perspective and views of elders and tribal leaders regarding the cultural traditions and norms that support resiliency for the Alaskan Native women within two Tribes. I focused on Alaskan Native women in response to the data referencing the disproportionate rates of violent crimes for this specific population. I did not explore if these same cultural tradition and norms support resiliency for Alaskan Native men or other women in other Tribes of the area. The scope only included the traditions and norms brought up by the participants and is not all inclusive of every norm and traditional practice by the Tribe. Additionally, techniques of traditional practices may vary slightly between families within the Tribe. I did not compare or explore if the particular technique or frequency of use/engagement of the selected traditional practice would influence the effectiveness of being a protective factor for women.

Limitations

Each individual Tribe has unique cultural activities based on the location and traditions of the individual Tribe. However, the Tribes within the Qawairaq area in Alaska have similar cultural practices, values, and norms. By including multiple tribal members from the Qawairaq area, the information I obtained was accurate in representing the regional cultural values and norms as well as, an adequate number of participants for saturation for the study. The study was limited to information regarding two federally recognized Tribes (Federal register, 2019), in the Qawairaq area, which does not represent information regarding other Tribes in Alaska or Tribes from other locations.

The social and historical determinates of violence against Iñupiaq and Yupik women, mirrors that of other Indigenous female populations.

Although the region is large, the population density is small, and many individuals have been impacted by close family, friends, and acquaintances, of women who have gone missing or were murdered (Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2019). Participants from the area may have had some type of emotional response to the study, based on familial relationships. There was the possibility of bias due to long standing trust issues between tribal members and government agencies tasked with investigating crimes in the area. There was also a risk about how tribal members experience the study, when discussing resiliency in combination with the emotions related to the effectiveness of law enforcement's investigation into specific cases. Obtaining informed consent from the families, Tribes, agencies, and/or individuals involved in the research are essential to addressing part of this ethical concern.

While writing and gathering information about Tribes, it is essential to use respectful language regarding any cultural practices and descriptions of any differences between the perspectives of elders and tribal leaders. To ensure integrity, the information regarding the Tribe was reviewed by the participants to ensure no misunderstanding or misrepresentation of tribal practices is reported. Also ensuring bias-free writing, during all aspects of the project, is essential to ensuring integrity in the research process.

Significance

Indigenous women have the highest rate of violent victimization, when race and gender are considered (Dorries & Harjo, 2020). Despite the enactment and revision of the

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 2013, which was designed to protect women and increase safety measures for Native women, almost all the Tribes in Alaska (except for one) were not covered in the new legislation. The voice of Indigenous people, regarding their experience and knowledge about cultural strengths as protective factors, needs to be heard.

This research fills the gap in understanding the cultural strengths that become protective factors for Alaskan Native women. This study is unique because I addressed specific aspects of Alaskan Native cultural practices, traditions, and norms, specific to Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures. I focused on cultural practices, traditions, and norms that are protective factors and impact resiliency for a very specific population: the same population that has the highest rate of violent victimization. The results of the study contribute to the much-needed body of knowledge about protective factors of a culture that has been viewed as inferior and primitive to Western culture. The results of the study include data public policy decision makers can use to formulate and/or change policies, to support the protective practices which may also impact resiliency for the Indigenous (Alaskan Native) female population.

Summary

The disproportionate rates of violent crimes toward Indigenous women is both a public safety concern and a public health issue. Structural bias, institutional bias, and cultural disruption are contributing factors to perpetuating the phenomenon of missing and murdered indigenous women. Understanding the social and historical determinates of violence against women and understanding the cultural traditions and norms that become

protective factors, could aid in implementing policy for prevention and intervention measures to improve the safety of indigenous women. Examining the issue from the perspective of tribal members and leaders provides additional insight and a more comprehensive view of the concerns.

Chapter 2 includes the discussion on the literature regarding historical oppression, cultural disruption, and how colonialism created a societal and institutional bias against Indigenous people, but specifically targeted Indigenous women. The disproportionate violent crime rates are also discussed and the corresponding literature about discrimination of Indigenous women within the criminal justice system. Finally, the cultural strengths are discussed and include background information regarding the specific Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures, to provide clues on how the cultural practices have survived and evolved over time.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The decades of historical oppression and discrimination by society and the criminal justice system have greatly influenced the violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women. There is a problem in the criminal justice system's understanding of the social and historical determinants of violence against Alaskan Native women and the cultural protective factors for Alaskan Native women. The problem, specifically, is researchers do not know what cultural strengths become protective factors for Alaskan Native women, to defend against the vulnerability of violence. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders on what Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, both values and traditions, that are potential protective factors, for Alaskan Native women.

In the following literature review, I discuss the social and historical determinants of violence and victimization in relation to structural bias and institutional bias within society and the criminal justice system. There is increasing information about the rates of victimization of Indigenous women, yet the data about the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women vary across data collection agencies (Crossland et al., 2013; Department of Justice, 2020; Department of Justice – Canada, Research and Statistics Division, 2019; Perry, 2019). The prevalence of this phenomenon is unknown.

The literature review also includes information about the cultural traditions which impact resiliency for Indigenous women. The background information regarding traditional practices provides clues to the natural protective factors for women that were

present pre-colonization. Finally, the information regarding how the traditional practices have evolved and survived over time provides additional clues about how these cultural practices can combat the distorted social constructs within the criminal justice system and within society, to increase the overall safety of Indigenous women.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following terms to search relevant articles and information regarding violence, vulnerability, and cultural protective factors for Indigenous women. The keywords, *violence, vulnerability, resiliency, assimilation, cultural disruption, historical oppression, colonization, protective factors, sovereignty, missing and murdered indigenous women, Violence Against Women Act, social constructionist framework, social construction of target populations and social construction of reality theory*, were searched in the online Walden Library under the subject search of Criminal Justice and Public Policy and Administration. Additionally, I searched the LexisNexis database, case law information, SAGE journals, Law Journals, and the Thoreau multidata base. Google scholar, government reports, and government websites were also used in my search for current statistics and information about the general population (Indigenous population, crime rates), missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the geographical area (Northwest Alaska) included in this study.

Theoretical Framework

The social constructionist framework and the social construction of reality theory suggest that social standards and knowledge are created based on the culture and practices of the community and the relationships and social interactions of individuals

within the society (Given, 2008). These established social standards cause people within the community to believe certain things and act in certain ways (Given, 2008). Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality proposes that through the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization, people shape the notions of community norms, social practices, and culture, ultimately leading an individual to accept these societally shaped beliefs as justified and true (Given, 2008; Wexler, 2014). Galbin (2014) stated the interests, beliefs, and practices of the dominant social group is what is reinforced and create the social institutions which become embedded into society. Schneider and Ingram (1993) took this idea a step further, with the social construction of target populations theory, which proposes social characteristics given to a specific population create powerful images or symbols and values about the population, which can either negatively or positively influence how the population is treated within other systems. Social realities of any individual or group of people are maintained or changed based on the community's collection of beliefs in a specific time and place (Schneider, 2005). Therefore, once a targeted population has been labeled with specific characteristics that are socially meaningful, the values and images connected with the characteristics then determine the power and privileges of the target population. However, the characteristics or stereotypes can be influenced and changed over time (Schneider, 2005).

In this study, I used the social constructionist framework and the social construction of target populations theory to explain how structural and institutional bias and cultural disruption increased the vulnerability of indigenous women and perpetuated

different forms of violence against women since colonization. These same historical determinates of violence and the distorted stereotypes are still shaping the social structure and institutions within the criminal justice system and individual communities today. By recognizing social interactions and social forces shape community norms, I utilized the social construction of target populations theory to explore how traditional cultural practices can influence the current gender identity, racial identity, and the social status of Indigenous women. Identifying cultural practices that support a positive identity for Indigenous women could allow the opportunity to challenge the current stereotypes and biases within the criminal justice system. Challenging the current stereotypes impacting structural bias and institutional bias, could provide the opportunity for positive social change to increase the safety of Indigenous women.

Structural Bias

Colonialism is deeply rooted in the structure of society and impacts the current vulnerability of Indigenous women to violence and victimization. The purpose of colonizing is to assimilate, take control, and exert power over the Indigenous population and their land. When settlers colonized the American Indian and Alaskan Native populations, this altered the belief systems, the balance in gender roles, and presented distorted stereotypes of the Indigenous people, specifically the women (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Monchalin et al., 2019; Weaver, 2009). Many of the traditional Indigenous societies had matriarchal or equalitarian belief systems where women were valued and held sacred statuses within the Tribe, and the roles and duties were viewed as equal rather than in a hierarchy of authority (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Deer, 2015;

Weaver, 2009). Traditionally, women were leaders and healers, they were the head of the household; women directed use of the land, oversaw gathering activities and were tasked with teaching children the cultural traditions and norms while men were the protectors of the Tribe and engaged in the hunting activities (Brave Heart, 1999; Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Yakushko, 2018). The balance between the roles provided natural protections for each gender. Indigenous societies were structured around values and beliefs that were not aligned with the democratic political values of European settlers (Macklem, 1993). Through colonization and assimilation, the traditional belief system was challenged and restructured to the European patriarchal structure and men became the authority over women and children. Men had perceived ownership rights of the land and were viewed as the sole leaders of the Tribe (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Pedersen et al., 2013; Yakushko, 2018). This new belief system created an imbalance between the genders. The use of physical violence and force was deemed acceptable in order to gain control and impose authority over women, which was previously unacceptable. Husbands were instructed by English Common Law and leaders to beat and punish wives who disobeyed them, in an attempt to keep women under control (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017). Indigenous women were treated as inferior, devalued, and dehumanized. This was done through manipulation, humiliation, and inaccurate labels by colonizers.

Specific stereotypes about Indigenous women were created that presented the women as savages, immoral, provocative, or a temptress needing to be controlled and saved (Deer, 2015; Monchalin et al., 2019; Palmater, 2016). When colonizers described

Indigenous women as “dirty” or “polluted” to other settlers, this portrayal encouraged dominance, disrespect, and a strong repulsion of Indigenous women as an acceptable social norm (Ramirez, 2004). Additionally, the representation of Indigenous women as temptresses or as provocative created an image that their bodies could be used or violated and disposed of by others (Monchalin et al., 2019, Palmater, 2016). In an attempt to cleanse, purify, and rid the land of the Indigenous people, women became the target because they were key to reproducing future generations. Forced sterilization, rape, and other forms of forced violence on women became justified (Burnette, 2015; Monchalin et al., 2019; Ramierz, 2004). The social forces of assimilation weakened the independence and sacredness of Indigenous women and created a lack of respect specifically for indigenous women and increased their vulnerability by normalizing the violence (Dorries & Harjo, 2020). These labels presented Indigenous women as less than human, impacting beliefs regarding other roles of women, specifically as mothers.

During the colonization period, children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools as a form of social control over the Indigenous population. Boarding schools eroded the cultural norms, separated families, and forced assimilation to the European culture, language, and religious practices (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Gregg, 2018; Monchalin et al., 2019). The boarding school structure reinforced the ideology that the Indigenous culture and race were inferior and that Indigenous women were inept to raise their own children (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). This structural bias impacted and changed the identity of Indigenous women for generations to come. Many of the children did not return from boarding schools, and many suffered physical,

sexual, and emotional abuse, causing generational trauma still experienced and prevalent today within American Indian and Alaskan Native families (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Weaver, 2009.) Boarding schools were created and regulated by governmental policies as part of the colonization process. Boarding schools were not the only regulatory system implemented by the federal government that created and supported a bias toward Indigenous women.

Institutional Bias

The federal government imposed European and Western policies and governmental structures over the Indigenous population, replacing the traditional governing practices. These new governing practices were founded on the patriarchal belief system, which reinforced the perceived inferiority of the Indigenous population and implemented additional control mechanisms over Tribes, by regulating the tribal government powers (Macklem, 1993; Monchalin et al., 2019; Pevar, 2012; Redlingshafer, 2017).

Pevar (2012) described four main arguments used by the U.S. Supreme Court to justify the federal authority over Tribes. The first two are based on the Commerce Clause in the U.S. Constitution, providing power to regulate Commerce with Tribes and the power to make treaties with Tribes. These two arguments recognize the sovereignty rights of Tribes as Independent from the United States. However, there is debate over the intent of the clause, if it was to provide power to establish treaties “with” the Tribes or to establish power “over” the Tribes (Pevar, 2012). Additionally, the Commerce Clause has

also been used in the argument to differentiate the racial vs. political classification, for laws granting special consideration and privileges to tribal members (Macklem, 1993).

The third argument regarding the justification of federal authority over Tribes is based on the rule of international law, which entitles the Europeans who claimed to have “discovered” North America and achieved “conquest” over the people, to have the right to enforce laws over persons and property within the United States (Pevar, 2012). This rule of international law inadvertently provided legal justification for the colonization and forced assimilation that occurred during the early contact between European settlers and the Indigenous population. Furthermore, the perceived stereotypes of the Indigenous population lacking in social organization and any governance, provided social justification to assume authority over the Indigenous population (Monchalin et al., 2019).

The opposition to this argument is that the Europeans did not discover America; there were independent nations (Tribes) already living and thriving on the land (Macklem, 1993; Pevar, 2012). This perspective supports the need to research traditional cultural practices that were the foundation for the Indigenous population to flourish, prior to European contact.

The fourth argument is based on the Supreme Court’s rulings in early cases, claiming the federal government has both the authority and the obligation to regulate the Indigenous population for their protection (Pevar, 2012). Early decisions by the Supreme Court created this assertion of power over Tribes when in reality, “no tribe surrendered its right to self-government in any treaty with the United States” (Pevar, 2012, p. 58). Through various court rulings, Tribes were granted sovereignty, yet Congress still

maintained certain powers over Tribes. The focus of the remainder of this section is based on the third and fourth arguments mentioned above.

The enactment of governmental legislation over Tribes established the social norm of the inferiority of the Indigenous population, which was introduced more than 100 years ago, yet still can be observed in current legislation. The Indian Appropriations Act of 1871, determined the government would no longer enter into treaties with Tribes, rather this process would be done through statutes. This piece of legislation also established that certain violent crimes would remain under federal jurisdiction, including rape and murder (Macklem, 1993; Maxwell & Robinson, 2019). Then, in *Oliphant v Suquamish Indian Tribe* (1978), the Supreme Court ruled that Tribes do not have the authority to prosecute non-Indians who violate Tribal law. These are just two examples of the government creating restrictions and limiting the sovereignty rights of Tribes as well as creating a break down in the criminal justice system, that reinforced and, in some cases, encourages criminal activity, not just on tribal lands but also toward Indigenous women (Pevar, 2012; Palmater, 2016; Redlingshafer, 2017). More recently, with the changing social concerns to focus on women's rights and attempts to address rising violence rates, the government passed legislation to protect women.

The enactment of the revised Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 2013 was designed to extend protection to women and increase safety measures for Indigenous women. However, the revised VAWA still excluded almost all the Tribes in Alaska (with the exception of one). This lack of protection reinforces a discriminatory societal view about the value and importance of Alaskan Native women. The VAWA has been revised

multiple times, and provisions for Tribes to prosecute crimes committed by non-tribal members were finally added in 2013, yet there were still restrictions and limitations. The perpetrator had to be affiliated with the Tribe, either by residing or working on the reservation or having a relationship with a tribal member, and the Tribes could not enforce the new law until 2015 (Maxwell & Robinson, 2019; Sacco, 2019). Yet, the 2013 revision of the VAWA still prohibited tribal jurisdiction over cases involving perpetrators who did not know the victim or who are not affiliated with the Tribe, essentially creating a jurisdictional loophole for strangers to commit violent crimes against Indigenous women on tribal land. Additionally, there can be confusion about who should be contacted when a violent crime occurs because jurisdictional issues arise between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, based on the seriousness of the crime, the type of crime, and where the crime occurred (Perry, 2019).

The VAWA has undergone revisions, and the reauthorization was passed by the House of Representatives in April 2019 but has yet to receive approval from the Senate. The current VAWA (2013) expired in December 2018. The limitations, jurisdictional confusion, and lapse in the current legislation reinforces the social construction, the issue of violence against Indigenous women, lacks credibility or is no longer important and ultimately increases the vulnerability of Indigenous women (Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Palmater, 2016; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The enactment of VAWA was based on data regarding the alarming rates of violence against women, and more specifically, the disproportionate victimization of Indigenous women (Crossland et al., 2013; Sacco, 2019).

Indigenous women have disproportionately higher violent victimization rates, including homicide, physical violence, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence (Greenfeld, & Smith, 1999; Monchalin et al., 2019; Petrosky et al., 2017; Rosay, 2016; Smith et al., 2017). A report from the National Institute of Justice in 2016 indicated four in five Indigenous women experienced violence in their lifetime, and one in three experienced violence in the last year, which equates to more than 730,000 Indigenous female victims in a year (Rosay, 2016). This report was limited to incidences of sexual violence, stalking, physical violence by intimate partners, and psychological aggression by intimate partners; the study did not include murder or homicide. There are comparable rates of victimization in Canada, where the overall rate of victimization for Indigenous women was almost tripled, compared to non-Indigenous women (Department of Justice – Canada, 2019). Significant research and data have been collected on the occurrence of violent victimization of the Indigenous population; however, there is limited to no data regarding the prevalence of missing and murdered Indigenous women. The missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) movement created a spotlight on the crisis, to honor the memory of those lost, to address systemic barriers and the intuitional bias, and to eliminate the violence against Indigenous women (Canada Privy Council Office, 2019).

The most recent data from the FBI National Crime Information Center (NCIC, 2019) regarding missing and unidentified persons, indicates there are 10,447 Indigenous people missing out of the 87,438 total missing cases. However, the data does not indicate the number of missing people by gender. This data was not inclusive of all states, as at

least one state, Alaska, was not included (NCIC, 2019). The Department of Justice (2020) indicated there are only 183 reported American Indian/Alaska Native females cases pending and an additional 26 unidentified person cases pending, meeting the same demographic search. This missing data can be partially attributed to underreporting. Morgan and Oudekerk (2019) estimated about 43 percent of violent victimizations were actually reported to the police. Similarly, in an early study, Greenfeld and Smith (1999) estimated about 45 percent of American Indian victims, reported violent crimes to the police. The lack of reporting can be attributed to several factors, two of which are the distrust of law enforcement, based on the bias within the criminal justice system and the impact of how victims are portrayed in the media.

The research regarding the distrust by Indigenous women toward law enforcement, when the women have been victimized, can be a sensitive and controversial issue; however, as a re-occurring topic within the literature, it is important to address the institutional bias that has created this distrust. Palmater (2016) credited the culture of racism within society and the criminal justice system, as a reason, the phenomenon of MMIW has reached the level of a crisis. The media reinforces the culture of racism and bias in the lack of media coverage provided when an Indigenous woman has been reported missing or murdered (Burnette & Figley, 2017; Palmater, 2016). This inequitable media coverage is often connected to the social stereotypes of the Indigenous population, including information about the victim's alcohol use or involvement, prior police contact, or victim blaming (Monchalin et al., 2019; Palmater, 2016; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). When the police dismiss the victim as creditable based on these same

social stereotypes or fail to prioritize the case for investigation, this also sends a message the victim does not matter or is not worthy (Monchalin et al., 2019; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Additionally, when victims do make reports, they generally see little justice, which increases the distrust for the criminal justice system and law enforcement in general. For example, in 2016, in Alaska, there were 1,052 sexual assault cases reported to law enforcement, but only 134 cases were accepted for prosecution; 28.3 percent of those cases resulted in a conviction (~38 cases). After three years post release, a 38.5 percent recidivism rate was reported for all felony adult sex offenders, who were released in 2016 (Alaska's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, 2019). The literature is very clear about the history and rate of violence toward Indigenous women connected with structural and institutional bias. However, just as important is the literature about how traditional cultural practices support resiliency.

Cultural Strengths

Resiliency can be described as the reasons and characteristics that contribute to an individual's ability to positively adapt, survive, and recover from adversity (Burnette, 2014; Greene, 2014). Resilience is created through positive interactions between individuals, family, community, culture, and environment (Burnette, 2014; Burnette & Figley, 2017; Greene, 2014; Orè et al., 2016). Greene (2014) and Orè et al. (2016), suggest that resilient systems, like a community, a family, or a Tribe, have the natural ability to adapt and return to balance, after facing adversity. Culture and cultural engagement were identified as themes for protective factors for resiliency (Orè et al., 2016; Teufel-Shone et al., 2018).

Prior to colonization, many Tribes had a matriarchal or equalitarian belief system, where women were the center of social, spiritual, and cultural activities and this maintained balance and unity between genders and within the Tribe (Burnette, 2014; Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Deer, 2015; Weaver, 2009). This balance provided natural protective factors for women within the Tribe. The traditional norms and values, such as respect, responsibility, spirituality, and community, empowered the Tribe and a formal government was not necessary for balance and safety (Burnette, 2014). Deer (2015) explained how laws and behavior expectations did not need to be written down, like the European and Western legal system; rather, the traditions and ceremonies within the culture established and enforced both the behavioral and the belief system of a Tribe. Women often held the role of medicine healers and council members; but also gathered and prepared food, fought battles, and hunted alongside men; men and women had complementary functions within the Tribe (Burnette, 2014; Deer, 2015). The functionality of their role, provided for natural protections and any violence against women, resulted in banishment, humiliation, or removal of status for the man within the Tribe (Burnette, 2014; Deer, 2015). Additionally, in many Tribes, a child's identity was based on the maternal lineage and women were tasked with choosing the leaders of the Tribe (Deer, 2015).

Burnette & Figley (2017) suggest although colonization impaired the respect and status of Indigenous women, through oppression and assimilation, these strategies did not completely eliminate the cultural protective factors. The collective identity, support through family, and the traditional teaching by elders survived and provided a connection

to the traditional supportive values (Burnette, 2018; Burnette & Figley, 2017; McKinley et al., 2020; Orè et al., 2016, Wexler, 2014). Traditional knowledge is deeply rooted in history but also dynamic, adaptable, and useful in present-day life (Bisbal & Jones, 2019; Raymond-Yakoubian et al., 2017). Traditional knowledge is passed down through generations and is directly connected to the identity, values, way of life of the Indigenous community (Raymond-Yakoubian et al., 2017). Bisbal & Jones (2019), explained that engaging in traditional cultural practices, supports cultural identity and there is no substitute for the personal and spiritual fulfillment attained from engaging in the activity. Learning the traditional language, storytelling, songs ceremonies, and engaging in hunting, gathering, and other cultural practices, not only supported resiliency but also ensured the traditional beliefs and practices were passed on to the next generation (Burnette & Figley, 2017; McKinley et al., 2020; Orè et al., 2016). McKinley et al. (2020), explored food and cultural traditions that promoted resiliency, wellness, and cultural continuity within tribal families and communities and found that food, dancing, and clothing were among the top activities identified as important aspects of tribal culture. Women were identified as the primary facilitators for teaching food gathering and preparation techniques, sewing, and beading (Burnette, 2014; McKinley et al., 2020). McKinley et al. (2020), also suggest that engaging in cultural practices supports cultural identity, taught other cultural values, increased family connectedness, and are a protective factor for women. The Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures are two such cultures that have survived and evolved since colonization.

The Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures are located in Qawairaq region. The traditional knowledge encompasses and interconnects the environment, spiritual, relationship, community, and mental/physical elements (Bisbal & Jones, 2019; Ikuta, 2011; Raymond-Yakoubian et al., 2017; Yakushko, 2018). The traditional knowledge and cultural practices explained their creation, spirituality, the connection to the environment, and the connection to their ancestors (Bisbal & Jones, 2019). Iñupiaq and Yupik culture include identified values, beliefs, and subsistence hunting and gathering both on the ocean and on land. Traditionally women had a profound influence on whether or not the men would be successful in their hunts, and both genders were tasked with maintaining a balanced relationship between the human and non-human entities (Ikuta, 2011). Additionally, Iñupiaq and Yupik women were also fundamental to healing and medicinal practices (Burnette, 2018; Yakushok, 2018). Their knowledge of herbs and healing practices supported their respected and protected status within the community (Yakushok, 2018).

Traditional healers provided culturally established medical treatments and are respected by the elders and the community. Yakushok (2018), states historically and currently, many traditional healers and tribal doctors are women. Scholars also noted that the survival of cultural traditions was ensured by the passing down of wisdom related to medicinal plants, healing rituals, and storytelling (Burnette, 2018; Freeman et al., 2001; Yakushok, 2018). Alaska has embraced traditional healing practices, and a focus of revitalizing traditional ways is a priority; this includes ceremonies, dancing/drumming, and storytelling (Freeman et al., 2001). Storytelling is a method used to teach and promote cultural values, which include respect, unity, spirituality, patience, harmony, and

generosity, to name a few (Burnette, 2018). Supporting cultural practices and values such as traditional healing, storytelling, and substance practices, could continue to re-instill respect and the sacred status of women and can once again provide the natural protective factors for women, within the community (Burnette, 2018; Burnette & Figley, 2017; McKinley et al., 2020).

Summary and Conclusions

Historical oppression, colonization, discrimination, and cultural disruption contribute to the structural bias and institutional bias within society and the criminal justice system, against Indigenous women. Cultural assimilation created an imbalance of gender roles, distorted stereotypes, and devalued Indigenous women within society (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Monchalin et al., 2019; Weaver, 2009). The structural bias changed the social identity of Indigenous women, which increased their vulnerability (Monchalin et al., 2019; Palmater, 2016). The institutional bias created by governing practices, federal legislation, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions, perpetuated the vulnerability of Indigenous women. This included limitations and restrictions for Tribes and jurisdictional confusion within the criminal justice, pertaining to crimes against Indigenous women (Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Palmater, 2016; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Additionally, the increased rates of victimization, the challenges surrounding reporting crimes and the low prosecution rates, contribute to the disproportionate representation of Indigenous women in the criminal justice system (Greenfeld, & Smith, 1999; Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019; Monchalin et al., 2019; Petrosky et al., 2017; Rosay, 2016; Smith et al., 2017). The continued lack of data regarding the prevalence of missing and murdered

Indigenous women continues to emphasize the vulnerability of Indigenous women and raise questions about the magnitude of the phenomenon (Canada Privy Council Office, 2019; NCIC, 2019).

Research indicates Tribes having a natural ability to adapt and return to balance after facing adversity (Greene,2014; Orè et al.,2016). Additionally, there is existing literature that provides a foundation of information that traditional cultural practices and engagement in cultural practices are protective factors for resiliency (Orè et al., 2016; Teufel-Shone et al.,2018). Traditionally, women were essential to maintain the balance within the Tribe and to ensure the traditional knowledge was passed to future generations (Burnette, 2018; Burnette & Figley, 2017; McKinley et al., 2020). Identifying Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices that support resiliency in women is warranted, to combat the stereotypes created through structural and institutional bias within the criminal justice system. Utilizing the social construction of reality theory and the social construction of target population theory, I explored and discussed new literature about traditional cultural practices that can increase resiliency and the natural protective factors for Indigenous women. Chapter 3 includes the discussion on the methodology, research design, and rationale for this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders on what Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, both values and traditions, that are potential protective factors for Alaskan Native women. Identifying cultural practices that support resiliency in women, from the perspective of tribal members, provided the opportunity for increased understanding of how to promote the use of cultural strengths to improve the overall safety of Indigenous women. In this chapter I will present the research questions, then discuss and justify the use of a qualitative research design to explore the perspectives of tribal leaders and elders. Collaborating with tribal leadership was essential for conducting the study. Utilizing an integrated approach increased the depth and richness of the data collected. A detailed description of the role of the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures are also included in this chapter to provide comprehensive information about my study.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study.

RQ1: In what ways do cultural practices support resiliency among Alaskan Native women?

RQ2: What cultural practices are protective factors for Alaskan Native women?

Phenomenon of the Study

The increase in awareness about the phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women has brought attention to the violence that disproportionately impacts Indigenous women. Centuries of historical oppression and cultural assimilation of Indigenous women perpetuated the violence and influenced the structural bias and institutional bias within the criminal justice system (Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Greenfeld & Smith, 1999; Rosay, 2016). Identifying the protective factors provided by cultural practices, both traditions and norms, that support resiliency may provide an increased understanding of how cultural strengths can combat the biases within the criminal justice system, that perpetuate the violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women. The focus of the study was the perspectives of tribal members, specifically the elders and tribal leaders, to provide an in depth understanding of the ways Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural traditions and norms support resiliency and what cultural practices are protective factors for Alaskan Native women.

Research Tradition and Rationale

Qualitative research is the method used to explore and understand the ways individuals perceive and experience the world and construct meaning of their experiences (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of the phenomenon by recognizing both the historical aspect of human behavior and the subjective aspect of the experience (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015).

In this study, I used photovoice and interviews to explore the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders regarding their traditional cultural practices that support

resiliency for Indigenous women. The social constructionism framework refers to how historical, cultural, and contextual factors influence the knowledge and perceived truth of society or groups of people (Schneider and Ingram, 2004; Mercadal, 2019; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Furthermore, the social construction of target populations theory suggests that the categories, stereotypes, or images about a specific group, can have either positive or negative impacts for the specific group (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The literature review provided information about how the forced assimilation to Western cultural values negatively impacted the perceived identity and role of Indigenous women within society and within the criminal justice system.

Photovoice is a photography-based research method, developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris. Wang and Burris (1997) created the photovoice method to conduct participatory needs assessments in communities, to empower marginalized groups within the community to tell their stories and have their voices heard (Latz, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). The photovoice method provides an effective means of sharing knowledge with both a visual representation of the information (photograph) and the storytelling, or explanation of perspective behind the photograph (Latz, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). Through the photovoice process of exploring the perceptions of the unheard voices and empowering participants to share their perceptions and knowledge, can generate new insight for positive social change to occur. The photovoice process is discussed in further detail in the Instrumentation section of this chapter.

In this study I explored the traditional cultural practices of the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures that positively impact the identity and role of Indigenous women and create

natural protective factors for Alaskan Native women. A qualitative study was ideal for exploring the perspectives of tribal leaders and elders and for capturing a rich and in-depth understanding of the influence of cultural practices on the individual and group identity of Indigenous women. Prior researchers have identified culture and cultural engagement as themes for protective factors for resiliency (Orè et al., 2016; Teufel-Shone et al., 2018); yet, without being able to understand and identify specific cultural practices as variables to measure for a quantitative study, a qualitative study was a better choice for this exploratory research.

This study included characteristics of a phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic study. This integrated approach provided a deeper and richer understanding of the way traditional cultural practices support resiliency and are protective factors for Alaskan Native women. The participants of the study were asked to describe their experiences and engagement in cultural practices to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of the experience, which is a distinctive aspect of a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach is used to capture the essence of a lived experience by the participants and examine the participant's meaning of the experience (Patton, 2015). However, the specific cultural practice was identified by each individual participant. Therefore, it was unknown if the participants would select the same traditional cultural practice. The study was not about the essence of the cultural practices, rather the ways the cultural traditions support resiliency and are identified as protective factors, therefore the phenomenological approach was not selected for the solitary method for this study.

Storytelling is one technique used to teach and promote cultural practices and is used within the Iñupiaq and Yupik culture (Burnette, 2018; Freeman et al., 2001). Participants chose to utilize storytelling in connection with the photovoice data collection method for this study. Storytelling is associated with the narrative inquiry approach. The narrative inquiry approach captures data through stories, to describe experiences or life issues, document an experience, or be used to analyze the connection to a specific aspect of the experience (Patton, 2015; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). A narrative inquiry approach can be used to identify social or cultural patterns through the lens of the participant's experience (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The narrative inquiry can also provide insight into the multifaceted relationship between the participant and society and typically includes only one or two participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This study included the perspectives of multiple tribal leaders or elders in order to explore the connection between cultural practices and resiliency and identifying cultural practices that are protective factors. Limiting the study to just one or two participants would have hindered the opportunity to capture a variety of cultural practices that support resiliency and deemed as protective factors.

An ethnographic study places focus on describing and understanding the cultural norms, beliefs, values, lifestyles, and behavior behind members of a particular group (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). This study included a detailed description of Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices selected by the participants. However, a key aspect of an ethnographic study is to become immersed in the culture being studied and conduct an extensive in-person field study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016;

Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Although I grew up in the region, and have intimate knowledge of the culture, I do not currently reside in the area. For this reason, an ethnographic study was considered but not selected. Rather an integrated approach to the qualitative research tradition was chosen to incorporate the strengths and characteristics of phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic studies.

Role of the Researcher

The population, location, and methods selected for this study required me to be a participant and an observer. Participatory research encourages collaboration, close attachment, interaction, and engagement in the data collection process (Patton, 2015). Due to the nature and focus of the study, it was very important to acknowledge the distinction between research being done on Indigenous people and with Indigenous people (Patton, 2015). For this study, I gathered data and worked in collaboration with tribal members of the Qawairaq region. I was raised in the region and maintains close family connections within the region. Ensuring and maintaining respect for the tribal members and the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices was essential for this study. Although I am not a tribal member, I have immediate and extended family members who are tribal members. I am acutely aware of the responsibility as a local from the area and as a professional, to respect and protect the knowledge and cultural practices that were shared while collecting data for the study. The interactive approach required that I use effective listening skills, and have a baseline understanding of the culture, to ask direct and appropriate questions to gather rich data. The observer role was important while documenting the details of the cultural practices and perspectives of the participants.

Based on the cultural practices selected by the participants, there was a possibility that I had personally observed or engaged in the selected cultural practice. Documenting both descriptive and reflective notes minimized bias for the study. Following up with the participants and asking for their careful review of their information ensured I had captured and accurately described the cultural practice selected by the participant. This process was done to ensure the validity and reliability of the research data.

During the recruitment process, any direct family members (any of my bloodline and the first line of spousal familial ties) was excluded from the study. To reduce or eliminate researcher bias in the participant selection process, the Tribe was asked to identify the individual tribal leaders and elders for the study, based on the Tribe's definition of leader and elder. Due to the interconnected nature of families within and between Tribes and within the region, it was likely I would know the participants, or the participants would know of my familial ties to the region. I was not currently working or residing in the region, which eliminated the possibility of any power relationships or conflicts of interest with the participants.

The interview guide (see Appendix B), in conjunction with the photovoice method, ensured the questions were focused, structured, and aligned with the purpose of the study. The interview questions were reviewed by a professional colleague, a peer, and committee members to minimize research bias and to ensure clarity of the questions. The interview questions I utilized inquired about cultural practices, yet the specific cultural practices that were captured (photographed) and discussed, was selected by the individual participant, through the photovoice and interview process. Requesting the participant to

identify the cultural practice, ensured I was not leading or controlling the outcome of the study. Working in collaboration with the Tribe and Tribal members, to clarify and verify information reduced the possible influence of my personal perceptions and experiences of the cultural practices selected by participants.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The Qawairaq region is located south of the Arctic Circle and on the northwest point of Alaska, neighboring Russia. According to the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development (2019), the population of the identified census area (Qawairaq region), is estimated at 9,988 and 75% are Alaskan Native. Within the Qawairaq region, there are 20 tribal governments and 17 communities representing three culturally distinctive groups: Iñupiaq, Yupik, and Siberian Yupik. The tribes within the Qawairaq region were selected because they are physically located in proximity of each other (24 miles apart), they represent both the Iñupiaq, Yupik cultures, and have similar cultural practices.

A combined purposeful sampling strategy was used to recruit participants. This sampling strategy was used to capture a variety of perspectives and a focused sample (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Starting with criterion-based sampling, to identify only Iñupiaq or Yupik tribal members ensured rich information regarding Iñupiaq or Yupik specific practices. Criterion-based sampling is used to identify participants, who all meet specific, important criteria, which in this study was two very specific cultures (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Second, utilizing the key knowledgeable sampling

strategy, the Tribal Council and Native Corporation board members were asked to identify 10 tribal leaders and/or elders, who actively engage in traditional cultural practices. The key knowledgeable sampling strategy ensured participants were individuals with great cultural knowledge, who could share accurate information about the Iñupiaq or Yupik cultural practices. Additionally, Patton (2015) and Ravitch & Carl (2016) discussed how purposeful sampling increases credibility and reduces bias. Therefore, I collaborated with the Tribal Council and Native Corporation board to identify the tribal leader and/or elders, as part of the purposeful sampling strategy. Once the Tribal Council and Native Corporation board had each identified a list of 10 individuals who are tribal leaders and/or elders, I contacted each prospective participant by letter or email, inviting the individuals to participate in the study. This process provided a list of 32 prospective participants for the study.

Identifying a sample size for a qualitative study can be influenced by the nature and purpose of the study, the framework, the analytical approach, and the available resources to conduct the study (Hennink et al., 2017; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative studies often use saturation as a guiding principle to determine sample size (Hennink et al., 2017; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Saunders et al., 2017). However, there is varying guidance on how to determine if saturation is achieved. Saunders et al. (2017), described four different primary models of saturation, which include theoretical saturation, inductive thematic saturation, priori thematic saturation, data saturation, and a fifth hybrid model, using different combinations of the four primary models.

Each of these models of saturation has different significance and implications for determining the sample size of a qualitative study. Identifying and describing the model of saturation for the individual study is important to guide and support the selected sampling decision and provide validity to the study (Saunders et al., 2017). Similarly, Hennick et al. (2017) also suggested saturation and determining sample size, is influenced by the parameters and characteristics of the individual study. Hennick et al. (2017) focused on differentiating between two different approaches of assessing saturation, code saturation, and meaning saturation. Code saturation represents when the researcher has captured or identified all relevant themes or issues of the study, whereas, meaning saturation represents fully comprehending and understanding the issues of the study (Hennick et al., 2017). The purpose and nature of this study required a hybrid approach for saturation, to include both inductive thematic saturation, for codes and themes, and meaning saturation, for a rich understanding of the issues. The photovoice method provides guidance on determining the initial sample size of seven to 10 participants as ideal (Bullard, 2020; Sutton-Brown, 2014). This range in sample size is in line with Hennick et al.'s (2017) findings, which indicate code saturation is reached after nine interviews and meaning saturation would be dependent on the variety of dimensions of the codes identified. Meaning saturation is influenced by the diversity, clarity, and depth of data provided (Hennick et al., 2017). For this study, participants had an opportunity to select and provide multiple photographs to respond to each interview question, providing supplementary data to develop a rich understanding of the issues, in addition to the data gathered from the individual interview. Therefore, 12 to 15

participants were recruited for this study to meet the minimum sample size of seven to 10 participants.

Instrumentation

There were two primary sources of information for this study, semistructured interviews and participant selected photographs, to represent the traditional cultural practices and the research questions. The semistructured interview was utilized to capture a personal description of the selected cultural practice and to understand from the participant's perspective, how the cultural practice can increase resiliency and be a natural protective factor for Alaskan Native women. The semistructured interview format included predetermined interview questions to guide and narrow the focus of the interview and provide the liberty to ask probing and follow-up questions to fully understand the participant's perspective (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). An interview guide ensured all predetermined topic areas were covered and explored in the same manner and the same order with each participant. The interview guide was created in collaboration with the Tribal Council, to ensure the content and language is culturally appropriate, easily understood, and directly related to the research questions.

Photographs were utilized as the second primary source of information. The photovoice approach provided a more in-depth and authentic representation of each participant's perspective and experience of the research topic (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants were asked to take photographs of images that represent responses to the interview questions. Photographs encouraged participants to define, provide a visual representation and reflection on their thoughts and ideas related to the topic and to the

research questions (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Photographs also provided tangible research data and enhanced the scope and depth of information, more than what individual interviews alone can provide (Julien et al., 2013). Participants selected the photographs that they feel are most important or representative of their response to the interview question(s).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation and Data Collection

Initial contact with the Tribal Council and Native Corporation Board was made by email, requesting an invitation to the next Council/Board meeting to discuss the purposed project. An overview of the study was provided, as well as the purposed sampling strategy was shared with the tribal leadership entities to obtain support and initiate a collaborative effort, to recruit participants. The Tribal Council and Native Corporation Board were asked to provide a list of 10 individual tribal members, who are tribal leaders and/or elders, and their contact information. Once the list was received from the tribal entity, each prospective participant was sent a letter or email, inviting the individual to participate in the study. If an email address was available, that was the preferred method of contact to the prospective participant. The participation invitation included a brief description of the study, contact information, a consent form and photograph questionnaire. The consent form described the voluntary nature of the study, the procedures, risks, and benefits of being interviewed, and privacy information. The first 10 individuals to respond and provide consent to participate were included in the study. If more than 10 individuals responded, a list was made, in order of response, for alternative participants, should any of the first 10 decide to drop-out of the study.

Each participant was emailed or mailed the photograph questionnaire (Appendix A), general guidance about the photovoice method, and asked to take photographs representing their response to each interview question. Participants had the opportunity to select up to three photographs to submit for each question. The participant was asked to consider and select a cultural practice, either a tradition or norm, when responding to the questions. The participant could choose to use a singular cultural practice for all questions or to select a different cultural practice for each question, to represent a variety of traditions and norms. The participant was asked to submit the selected photographs, within two weeks (14 days) of receiving the interview questions. The participants could choose to submit the photographs electronically by email or physically by mail. The two-week timeframe ensured the progression of the study and sufficient time for the participants to take, select, and submit photographs, and to indicate their continued interest in participating in the study. If a participant did not respond within the two weeks, I reached out to confirm continued interest in participating in the project. If no response was received, I contacted the next alternative participant from the response list. Participants were allowed additional time to submit photographs, if requested, by contacting me.

If the participant did not have access to a digital camera (either a personal camera or other digital cameras, such as a smartphone), I would have provided a disposable camera for the participants use in the study. Participants were offered individual training on how to use the camera, upon request, or if the participant has any questions about how to take a photograph, I was available to provide basic photography instructions.

Participants were informed that photographs, could not include any other individual(s). Any photograph(s), with other individuals, excluding the participant, was not included in the data for this study. Participants could select any photographs, either current or historical, to provide for the study. The purpose for a photograph consent is for the participants to retain complete control of censorship and discretion about which photographs I could include and disseminate as part of the analysis and results of the study (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Each photograph was numbered and provided a unique alphabetic identifier to ensure the photograph was accurately connected to the participant who submitted the image.

Upon receipt of the photographs from the participant, a one-hour interview time was scheduled immediately. Interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy and to capture the participant's perspective, in their own words (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each interview began with an overview of the purpose of the study. General demographic information was collected on each participant, to appropriately identify any differences between Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices and between different tribal affiliations of the participant. I asked the participant about the specific photograph submitted for each question and how the photograph represents their response. The photographs provided information about the participant's representation of their response; however, the interview also provided more in-depth information about feelings, experiences, and descriptive interpretation of the photograph (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Follow-up and probing questions were used to explore and illuminate their perspectives about the question and the image in the photograph. (Patton, 2015). Once each interview

was formally completed, as indicated by asking all the interview questions and any follow-up questions, the participant was then provided the opportunity to ask questions or provide any additional comments or information. Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible and reviewed. This enabled me to contact the participants to request clarification for any information that was unclear or vague in a timely manner.

Data Analysis Plan

Data was collected using the photovoice method and a semistructured interview, then analyzed using descriptive, value, and analytical coding to develop themes, followed by a second cycle of coding to identify patterns. The process began with each interview being transcribed and checked for accuracy. I conducted initial hand coding of each individual interview transcription. Descriptive coding was used as the foundation and initial analysis of the data, to identify topics or categorize the data (Saldaña, 2016). The initial analysis also included the application of values coding. Examples of value coding include identifying the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants (Saldaña, 2016). A thematic analysis of the photographs was used to capture and summarize key ideas, identified, or represented in the images (Wang & Burris, 1997). The second cycle of coding was used to identify overall patterns. Pattern coding were utilized to summarize the coding from the initial coding analysis in order to identify any patterns within the perspectives of the participants and link the information to the research questions. I did not attempt to use NVivo software to assist in organizing and sorting the data. Discussion and findings from the data is examined further in Chapter 4.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the standard for qualitative studies to establish confidence, reliability, and rigor for the results of the study (Lincoln, 2004;). Trustworthiness includes four principles, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln, 2004; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By addressing the trustworthiness of a study, the researcher provides a mechanism to validate or provide increased confidence in the methodology and findings of the study (Lincoln, 2004; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the accurate reflection of the data. Credibility is established by gathering different perspectives by using diverse data sources, addressing, and discussing unexpected patterns or results, having an expert independently examine the data, and using multiple perspectives to interpret the data (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Collaborating with the tribal leadership, clarifying, and verifying data with the participants to ensure accuracy and completeness; assessing the consistency of findings between photograph and participant interviews and discussing any inconsistencies within the data, was used as triangulation strategies.

Transferability

Providing a rich and thick description of the participants and the setting of the study for the reader to understand the application to a broader milieu establishes the transferability of this study. Patton (2015) states providing clear and vivid details about data as well as the context, allows the researcher and reader to think about the potential application of the findings in other situations, this is the purpose of transferability. The

participants for this study, Iñupiaq and Yupik elders and leaders, were a very specific population, yet the study and findings may be applicable to other Alaskan Native populations or other Indigenous populations for further exploration. The issue of structural bias and institution bias within the criminal justice system is not isolated to the Iñupiaq and Yupik peoples; therefore, the findings may be applicable to other populations and settings, under similar situations. A detailed description is provided about the participants and the results of the study in Chapter 4. The results of the study will provide additional information to the current literature and potentially contribute to positive social change by providing information to generate policy decisions and increased attention to the structural and institutional bias within the criminal justice system, against the Indigenous populations.

Dependability

Stability and consistency of data, which includes a traceable and a logical research process, establishes the dependability of a study (Lincoln, 2004; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By articulating and documenting the data collection method, the data collection process and keeping an audit trail increases the dependability of this study. An audit trail is used to accurately and thoroughly document the process of the study and the data, and how it was analyzed and rationalized to reach the findings of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). A personal journal was kept capturing reflections, observations, and reactions to the study process and data. A peer review was sought throughout the study to assess and provide feedback about the data collection process, the data analysis, and data interpretation.

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures others can track the information in the study and findings, back to the original data source (Lincoln, 2004). Ensuring the findings are reflective of the perspectives capture in the interview documents, photographs, and observation journal provide the confirmability of this study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) contend understanding how the researcher's biases and prejudices may influence the interpretation of the data, and mediating those, as much as possible, is a significant aspect of establishing confirmability. The triangulation strategies mentioned previously, keeping an audit trail, writing a personal journal, and the dissertation committee and peer review of the data, ensure confirmability of the data and findings for this study.

Ethical Procedures

Researchers have an inherent responsibility to ensure ethical practices are followed, especially when human participants are included in the study (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). There are five ethical principles to be considered to ensure participants are unharmed from the experience of this study, and the participants provide fully informed consent for this study. The five ethical principles include: care/no-harm, consent, privacy/confidentiality, communication, and maintaining respectful and professional relationships (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015; Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

Care/No-harm: Each participant was provided a description of the study and the process, to ensure risk and benefits are explained. Each participant was provided contact information for me, in the event the participant wanted to ask specific questions about the

study and contact information for a Walden University representative was provided, to discuss their rights as a participant. If any participant experienced distress as a result of participating in the study, they had the option at any time during the study, to decline further participation, by either not answering the question, or discontinuing their participation in the study.

Consent: Each participant was provided a copy of the consent form, which includes background information, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risk and benefits of participation, compensation, and privacy information. An additional verbal consent was provided by participants to obtain permission to use their submitted photographs (data) in the results chapter of the dissertation. Only participants who provide consent to participate in the study were considered and included in the study. The participant retains the sole ownership of the photographs submitted.

Privacy/Confidentiality: The specific names of the Tribe are masked at the discretion of the Tribe. There are multiple Tribes representing the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures in the Qawairaq region; therefore, readers would not be able to identify which Tribe participated, if the Tribe decides masking is appropriate. The list of names provided by the Tribes was kept confidential by me. The names of the responding individuals were also kept confidential, and pseudonyms are used in the results section, to protect the identity of the participants. Credit for any photograph used in the results section are identified and labeled using the participant's pseudonym. The data collected was stored securely in my home office, in a locked cabinet. Only I had access to the documents (consent forms, backup of interview recordings, and digital information). All data for the

study is password protected. The data and stored documents will be kept for a minimum of five years.

Communication: Each participant was asked to review the transcribed interview to ensure the accuracy and completion of the data. Each participant was notified of the results of the study. Each participant was provided a copy of the consent form, which includes contact information for me. Debriefing with the tribal entities, to ensure an accurate and positive representation of the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures are presented in the final report.

Maintaining Respectful and Professional Relationships: I had a responsibility to maintain respectful relationships with participants and partner entities (tribal leadership). The research ensured each individual's right to participate in the study was voluntarily. No form of force, coercion, or pressure was used to recruit participants or compel the participant to remain in the study. I ensured interviews and acceptance of data (photographs) was gathered in a respectful manner to respect the participant's views, rights, dignity, and diversity.

All the ethical guidelines of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed, and permission and approval from the IRB was obtained prior to the recruitment process. Walden University's approval number for this study is 11-20-20-0605052 and it expires on November 19, 2021.

Summary

This chapter provides a clear and complete description of the methodology and research design for this study. Using a qualitative research method to explore and

understand the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders, to identify the cultural practices that are protective factors and that support resiliency for Indigenous women, can contribute to the current literature of how cultural strengths can combat the biases within the criminal justice system, that perpetuate the violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women. Thus, creating an opportunity for positive social change by providing information to generate policy decisions to increase awareness and address the structural and institutional biases. This study used an integrated approach, combining the strengths and characteristics of a phenomenological, narrative, and ethnographic studies to address the research questions. By using both the criterion based sampling and key knowledge sampling strategy, to capture a variety of perspectives, through a focused sample, I collaborated with the selected Tribes to increase credibility and reduce bias within the study. Additionally, the use of two different but interconnected data sources, semistructured interview and photovoice, to capture each participant's perspectives ensures an authentic representation and increase the trustworthiness of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Chapter 4 will present the findings and provide a description and discussion of the participant's demographics, data collection, and analysis process, evidence of the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders on what Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, values, and traditions are potential protective factors for Alaskan Native women. The goal was to increase the understanding of how cultural practices can fight against distorted stereotypes within the criminal justice system that perpetuate the violence and vulnerability of Indigenous women. Two research questions were examined in this study. I developed the first to understand in what ways do cultural practices support resiliency among Alaskan Native women. I developed the second to explore what cultural practices are protective factors for Alaskan Native women. In this chapter I will present information about the study by providing a description of the setting, demographics of the participants, the data collection process, and the data analysis procedures. The evidence of trustworthiness is also discussed along with a discussion about the themes that resulted from the data gathered.

Setting Discussion

The two tribal leadership entities, the Tribal Council and Tribal Corporation Board of Directors, each provided a list of individuals who met the criteria for the study. Thirty-two individuals were identified for the study. During the recruitment process, snowball sampling became a part of the study at the initiation of a participant. The snowball sampling resulted in the recruitment of two participants. One initial participant informed two additional individuals about the study and encouraged the two individuals

to contact me. The two individuals contacted me separately to inquire about this study and then subsequently volunteered to participate in the study. The two participants were in addition to the initial 32 identified by the Tribal leadership entities. Five participants were from the initial 32 identified individuals and two participants were a result of the snowball sampling. All the participants provided consent for the study, and the initial photo questionnaire was utilized to collect the photographs for this study. Upon receipt of the first photograph, I scheduled an interview with the participant. The interviews were conducted by one of the following methods: an in-person meeting, a video conference, or by telephone. Two of the modalities for the interviews, video conference and in-person meeting, were part of the initial plan for the study. One participant requested to be interviewed over the telephone, as the participant did not have access to video conferencing capabilities and declined to meet in-person. I had the opportunity to meet in-person with four of the participants during the study, at the discretion of the participants. There were no interruptions during the interviews, which could potentially interfere with the data collection process.

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic conditions and restrictions had no influence on the data collection process. The pandemic may have positively influenced the interpretations and/or the results of the study. The participants discussed cultural traditions and norms that have been practiced for generations and are linked to resiliency. The participants reported they continued to engage in the cultural practices throughout the pandemic, with little to no impact on the actual cultural practice. This supported the position that cultural practices have adapted

and/or withstand events that have dramatically changed the social interactions and social practices of society over time.

Demographics

The Qawairaq region has 20 tribal governments and 17 individual communities. I used a combined purposeful sampling strategy, to incorporate criterion-based sampling and key knowledgeable sampling strategies to identify participants. All the participants in the study were adult tribal members, identified as a leader or elder, by one of the two Tribal leadership entities or by a tribal elder (snowball sample). Each participant was asked to identify their tribal affiliation; four different Tribes were identified. All the participants identified as either Iñupiaq, Yupik or both. Each participant confirmed they actively engage in cultural activities and have done so since childhood. The participants ranged in age from 35 – 80 years old. Both men and women were recruited and participated in the study. Six out of the seven participants reside in a rural area or within a tribal village. Other personal identifying information regarding the participants was not collected for this study.

Data Collection

This study consisted of two data sources: individual semistructured interviews and photographs. The two tribal leadership entities each provided a list of individuals who met the criteria for the study, resulting a list of 32 potential participants. Direct family members (anyone within my bloodline and the first line of spousal familial ties) were removed from the potential participant list. Initially, 20 participants were invited to participate in the study. Snowball sampling became a part of the study at the initiation of

a participant, which resulted in the recruitment of two additional participants. Ten individuals responded by providing informed consent. Seven individuals who provided both the informed consent and submit a photograph were included in the study. Three individuals provided informed consent but did not respond to the photograph questionnaire. I waited 2 weeks, then sent a follow-up email to the three individuals to inquire if they were still interested in participating in the study and wanted extra time to respond. One individual asked for the photograph questionnaire to be resent and the other two individuals did not respond to the follow-up email. I sent the photograph questionnaire to the participant who requested a second copy and then I waited another 2 weeks. The individual did not respond; therefore, only seven participants were included in the study.

The seven individual semistructured interviews were conducted over 8 weeks. Each individual interview lasted between 45 – 55 minutes and was recorded to ensure accuracy. The interview protocol (Appendix B) was used to collect data from each participant, and I asked additional follow-up questions, to explore and gather more in-depth information, regarding the research question. I took notes in addition to the audio recording. Each participant was provided the opportunity to provide additional information or comments, before the interview was concluded. Each interview was transcribed and reviewed within 4 days after the interview was completed.

Thirty-two photographs were submitted for the project as the second data source. The participants were asked to submit photographs representing their response to the interview questions. Participants were informed the photographs could represent any

timeframe (past, current, summer, fall, winter, etc.) and any cultural practice (tradition or norm), that they chose. Participants were informed they did not have to be in the photograph; only that the images needed to represent their answer to the question(s). Participants were instructed not to include images of other people. One photograph submitted included the image of a minor and therefore was excluded from the data. Participants were reminded they did not have to submit a photo for every question and each participant was limited to three photographs for each question or a total of 21 photographs for the entire project. Photographs were sent electronically to me. Each photograph was immediately numbered and provided a unique alphabetic identifier. The number of photographs submitted by each participant ranged from one to 19 individual photographs.

Data Analysis

The focus and purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of tribal elders and tribal leaders by utilizing photovoice and in-depth interviews. After collecting the data, I transcribed each interview and then checked the transcription for accuracy. Saldaña (2016) explained how descriptive codes can be used as the foundation to identify topics or categories and values coding. The interviews were read over twice and hand coded to identify the initial descriptive codes. Fifteen different categories were identified within the initial coding of interviews. A thematic analysis of the photographs was used to identify and summarize ideas, based on the description and meanings the participant provided to explain why each photograph was selected. The themes identified from the photographs were then incorporated into the second cycle of

coding, with the identified categories from the participant interviews. The second cycle of coding was used to narrow and identify five main themes within the data set, relevant to the research question. The identified themes include: (a) Generational Learning, (b) Survival, (c) Spiritual, (d) Identity, and (e) The Experience. Additional details and discussion of each theme are presented in the results section of this chapter.

Table 1 shows the major themes and subthemes that emerged when incorporating the coding of the interviews and the thematic analysis of the photographs. Each of the five major themes was prevalent in all seven of the participants.

Table 1

Identified Major Themes and Subthemes

Major Theme	Subthemes
Generational Learning	Teaching/Sharing Ancestral Knowledge/Adapting Application Roles & Responsibility
Survival	Traditional Activities Seasonal Resources & Preparation Evolution – Tools & Technology
Spiritual	Honoring Land & Animals Personal Awareness & Healing Traditional Healing/Practices
Identity	Tribe/Community/Individual Identity Relationships Community Wellness
The Experience	Feelings Values Attitudes/Beliefs

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

An accurate reflection of the data ensures credibility. I collaborated with tribal leadership to ensure an accurate reflection of the data. Participants were asked probing questions to clarify the information they provided during the interview. Participants were then asked to verify the data they provided by reviewing the transcript of their interview to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information provided. There were no additions, edits, or deletions made to the original transcripts by the participants. Initially I assessed each data source separately (photographs and participant interviews), then assessed the consistency of findings between the two data sources, prior to the second cycle of coding.

Transferability

Information presented earlier in this chapter provided a rich and thick description and discussion of the setting for the study and the demographics of the participants. This description and discussion allow the reader to consider the potential application of the findings to the larger Indigenous population or other situations. Additionally, future researchers can replicate the study to other populations and settings. Therefore, although the study included a very specific population and location, the details provided establish the transferability of the study.

Dependability

To ensure stability and consistency of the data and to attest dependability of the study I documented the data collection method and process throughout the study. Consent forms, interview questions, audio recordings of the interviews, each photograph and field notes were compiled to provide an audit trail for the study. Additional documentation and notes of each coding cycle were also kept, providing an audit trail on how the data was analyzed and rationalized to reach the findings of the study. A personal journal was maintained during the study, to capture reflections, observation and reactions to the process and data, as it was collected.

Confirmability

The audit trail mentioned above, consisting of the interview audio recording, the individual photographs, and field notes contributed to the confirmability of the study. I reviewed each audio recording, transcription and photograph, multiple times and on different days to ensure objectivity and reduce any biases that may have influenced the results of the study. Confirmability was also ensured by conducting a peer review of the interview questions, the data collection process, data analysis and data interpretation. The data interpretation was reviewed by an expert (tribal elder), who was not part of the study, to ensure themes accurately and respectfully reflect Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices, both values and traditions.

Results Discussion

The following five themes resulted from the analysis of the data, that was provided within the semistructured interviews and the photographs, to address the two research questions, through the lens of Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory of social construction of reality. Each theme is connected to addressing both research questions and are discussed in detail below. The themes are not presented in any specific order of importance as each theme represents a different aspect of the information provided by the participants.

Theme 1: Generational Learning

The first theme was developed from the participants articulating the value and purpose of each tradition or norm and explaining how they ensure cultural practices survive. Participants described cultural traditions and norms as “precious wisdom,” “vetted practices, which served our elders and ancestors well in the past” and “deep rooted.” The practices were “ingrained in us to expand our knowledge base.” The knowledge from “our ancestors...covered all aspects of life... telling us how and why things were done... and it made sense.” There were “so many lesson... you don't even realize you are learning...”

Participants described specific values and norms that taught children and young adults how to conduct themselves in various situations and in turn would also provide knowledge about their role within the family, within the community, and within society. These roles and responsibilities would evolve and change as the participant grew. Examples included tasks which they were responsible for at fish camp or within the

village, or their role at different traditional ceremonies and activities. Other lessons included how to do things or warned the individual about the consequences of not following a specific practice or norm. Examples include the cycle of subsistence hunting and gathering, knowledge about the land and seasons and traditional beliefs. One participant explained, “you have to be smart about decisions you make, and you can't just jump right into one thing or another without knowing the consequences, and through our culture and traditional ways of life you're taught those ideas...” Another participant explained the elders, “would show you how to do things in life ...and if you follow those two combined, your path through life would be much easier.”

Participants also discussed the responsibility, need for and importance of sharing the knowledge with the next generation, not just with family members, but with anyone who wants to learn and is willing to listen.

I actively teach others what I know about subsistence living and participate in passing on my family history and native values by verbal and repetitive example... I choose to participate in these activities because it is my responsibility to do so. This is what I was taught. It is a good way to pass on good and healthy ways of living for our young people. I don't want these traditions, values and skills to disappear, so it is important to do these activities, so this does not happen.

The same participant added,

I am always willing to show and teach anyone who is around me, if they are willing to learn...I'm getting to that age where most of my family's generations

before me is just about gone. Now, it is my responsibility to pass on what I know...others of my age rely on each other for information on traditional things and old and new ideas on ways to do things.

One participant shared,

I try to teach whoever wants to learn. I want to share my fish camp with whoever I can ... I wanna share that experience with anybody who is willing or wants to come out and experience it... I practice them [cultural practices] ...share them, teach them ...to whoever wants to learn.

Another participant explained,

I really try to share what I learned...it needs to be shared right...if you want more and more people to understand what you're doing, how you're doing things, why you are the way you are, why you love subsistence hunting...well you learn to share that with other people, no matter whom they are... so the activities that you are doing, is supported, or at least understood.

Participants also discussed the importance of "leading by example," keeping the knowledge relevant and making engagement in cultural practices a priority to ensure the knowledge is passed to the next generation. "It all comes out naturally...because how I was raised, and it became a part of my personal values and beliefs...it's just the way I run my household or raise my kids..." Another participant added,

The only way I can help ensure the survival of cultural practices is to make sure I can participate in them and encourage my children to participate so that they grow up knowing their cultural practices are part of their everyday life.

Generational learning represents the transfer of knowledge and how cultural traditions are preserved and adapt over time. This knowledge includes information about the identity and roles of women. One participant explained, “the norms have changed... [with] our ancestors, there was no word for “he” or “she” ...everyone was equal... but today things have really changed.” The participants described how cultural practices have evolved and impacted the identity and roles of women within their family, community, and region. The changes and implications of the evolution in cultural practices are discussed in further detail under the next identified theme, Survival.

Theme 2: Survival

The second theme encompasses the participants’ description of specific cultural activities and the purpose of the cultural activities. Participants discussed fishing, hunting, gathering, trapping, making clothing, using traditional healing methods, attending, and participating in ceremonies, Eskimo dancing, and native games; as well as camping, packing water, chopping, and hauling wood, storytelling and eating traditional foods. Each of these activities was associated with survival, the ability to adapt to changing times and being resilient. Participants explained survival depended on “being prepared,” “living off the land,” “harvesting from the sea and land,” “providing for your family and community,” and being knowledgeable about the seasonal resources.

I look at it more as a way of survival... I know how to live off the land out there (camp) and the resources are plentiful out there. We have the fish, we have the clean river water, we have wood, we have seals that come up in the spring or we can go out to the ocean.... I mean in all honesty the Native Village of [location

removed for confidentiality] is probably one of the most richest in resources from any community throughout the region. One, because we have trees and we're on a river and we're close to the ocean so there's so much that is available to our people in that area..... I cut fish for dry fish... when the opportunity arises, I hunt seal and put away the meat and blubber...

Figure 1

Drying Fish



One participant explained,

we grew up in a very subsistence centered household and because my grandparents were still alive, when I was young many of our household expectations norms and ways of doing things, were very much traditional in that they reflected traditional Yupik values... we grew up going fishing, we grew up cutting fish and drying them and put them away for winter; that instilled in us the

traditional values of being prepared, putting food away in preparation for times we couldn't [access the resources]...

Another participant provided the following information regarding the seasonal resources,

The men in the village used to go on rabbit drives...and get rabbit that way...and ptarmigan, seems like there were more ptarmigan when I was growing up...then in the spring we would go duck hunting...we would know what would come in the seasons...in the fall there were more ducks again... fall time we got seals...put away blubber...make seal oil...we would go out and pick berries as a family...put them away in barrels and leave them out in the country with a stick and some kind of flag, or piece of canvas. Then go out in the winter with dog team and bring the barrel home...but that's how we did our berries...we had no freezers...we put those in the cache. Long time ago we had no bears, no wolves, no moose. Moose came in the 60s.

Figure 2*Preserving Berries - Jam*

As hunting regulations were enacted, and transportation methods and tools evolved, participants explained the physical aspect of engaging in the activity changed, yet the purpose and need for the activity did not change. “one example is that when we were growing up women didn't drive boats...[now] other native women like [names removed for confidentiality] driving their own boats and hunting for themselves...”

One participant provided the following information regarding migratory bird hunting in both the fall and spring,

there was a time when spring hunting was illegal for us. We still did it. It's not that we were trying to be against the law or anything, we just needed to feed our families and that's a tradition. It wasn't enforced by enforcement because to many of us were out there hunting in the springtime. Then in about last 15-20 years ago,

somewhere around there, the migratory birds changed, where spring hunting is allowed. So [it] just kind of evolved.

The same participant also stated,

I remember when I was growing up in the village...there is no electricity. There is gas lamps. Everyone had to go get water, pack water. Everyone had to go shop wood. There were no freezers. That's just the way it was there... I remember when there was no cell phones, no phones in the village. There was just the National Guard, and they [had] this radio and how they did it was, they had this bike, that turned a generator that powered the battery that they can talk to...

A participant described how traveling to camp in the past would take three days, because of the road and river conditions or if the family only had a boat without a motor. The family would float or would need to pull the boat by a rope up the river. Now that same distance is traveled in just a couple of hours because the roads are maintained, families have vehicles to get to the river faster, and because the boat now has a motor. Families would spend weeks or months at camp, due to the time spent on traveling. Now families can easily go back and forth between the village and camp in just a couple of hours.

there were a couple times we would just throw our fish that we dried all summer [and] just put them in boat and my brother would row our boat. And we didn't think anything of it. It was kind of nice to look around real slowly...

Figure 3*The River*

Another participant explained,

you know there was a time period, where the Native people all of a sudden their cultural practices helped everybody else survive and [the cultural practices] had to be taught, so people would survive and through our cultural practices, we've been able to adapt. Because we've had to share our culture and our ways of survival with those who have come in and don't know how to do it, and then in return, they share something that helps them make things better ...makes things easier for us. For example, we're hunting with guns now and not spears and bows and arrows which I'm really glad for...

In addition to describing and discussing the actual cultural practices and how activities have evolved with the assistance of modern technology, participants also shared

information on the spiritual, more profound meaning, or healing aspect connected with cultural practices.

Theme 3 Spiritual

The third theme represents the traditions and norms, honoring the land and animals, which provide the means to survive. Participants discussed traditions that give thanks for the sacrifice of the animal; the need to respect the offering and use every part of the animal to ensure there is no waste; and the personal awareness or healing power from the cultural practices and resources of the land.

Participants explained that giving thanks to the animals, immediately after catching, is done to thank the animal's spirit, and to ensure a successful harvest in the future. It is believed that if hunters and gatherers do not honor the land, the spirits would not return and the land would not provide resources in the future.

Things like a bearded seal for example ...when we get done butchering all the sea mammals, we slit the eyes and we use saliva from our mouths to go to their mouths. And the message there, is that we try to send down and back to Spirit let him know that what happened was a good thing. That their soul is good, is providing for our families and that everything is not going to go to waste. We eat the seal intestine, the liver. I used to eat the heart, but not much anymore. But basically, the hide is used for clothing... and they braid the intestine over maybe an inch or two of blubber. So, we cook that you know ...it's cooked with our seal meat... we make our clothing from the seal skin. I have a seal skin cap, gloves, seal skin vest... With the migratory birds, "brant...we used to pluck the main

feathers off and keep the down and we use to have down blankets, down jackets, down everything. It's just a really quality warm things that no other product can do that for us. Be soft and provide heat at the same time in our homes... on the moose and caribou, the leggings were used to make mukluks and mitts. Fox fur ruffs around parkas, which is really protective...

Similarly, another participant explained,

we honored what the land provided for us. So it was very much of household and belief that we were able to gain things from the land as... it was considered a blessing, and so we would do our part to participate in it, and we would give thanks to the animals that we relied on... when my grandfather and my dad would go out hunting, they would put water in the mouths of the animal after they've caught it as a way of thanking them to make sure the spirits came back... that was an active thing that was still practiced.

Other activities, such as the traditional ceremonies and dancing, also included spiritual aspects of personal awareness and healing. One participant stated, “[it’s] not just a cultural practice...it’s almost a form of meditation. It’s rewarding.” Another participant provided the following description,

It wasn't just an Eskimo dance like the physical act of dancing ... there were spiritual and societal meanings behind everything... when you grow up doing traditional dancing it's a very incredibly healing thing... I have a strong sense of connectedness to nature to the animal and the spiritual realm that my grandmother and grandfather truly believed in...

The same participant further described their perspective specifically to Eskimo dancing,

it's not just the physical motions but like many religious or spiritual practices all over the world sometimes the spiritual emotions are just the vehicle through which you get a place in your mind in your heart and your soul... you know the motion so well that you don't have to think about the motions it's...where your mind goes, where your heart and your soul goes and you come out feeling like you just had a spiritual experience. That you had a very healing experience... So, to me that's part of resilience is when you can heal all parts of yourself and become a stronger person. Because it's not just our physical health and wellbeing that we should be attending to, it's our spiritual wellbeing. And I think that's what some of our practices do.

Another participant explained and described the revitalization of Tribal Healers and their use of ancestral healing practices. Traditional tribal healing practices utilize the plants, roots and, berries from the region and traditional massage techniques for medicinal purposes.

Before the Western medical practice was introduced...our own native people have always used and practiced their own tradition in caring for their own people, by using "hands-on massage" to their bodies to repair, loosen, open up the muscles and tendons of the body to align all areas of the body to become functional. This includes working with digestive problems, poor circulation, and stiff joints of the skeletal system. Our ancestors were very knowledgeable in our plants that was

part of our lands we lived on. Certain plants were used for many different problems relating to skin problems, digestive problems, and we able to use some of the plants to help with pain, sleeping problems and infected areas of different parts of the body. Plants were also prepared to use for internal medical problems. And was also used as a body wash [or] soak to ease different ailments of the body.

Figure 4

Nautchiaq (a flower/ a plant)



Figure 5

Machu (Edible root)



The traditional knowledge about the land and the use of specific plants and roots for healing purposes is critical. As one participant told a story about an entire village that was wiped out because of eating a root in the wrong season. “A very simple mistake” that impacted an entire village. The participant stated that the information about the incident had spread to the surrounding villages, as a caution and reminder of the importance of identifying the correct roots and plants in the region. This story was passed on to the participant from their grandmother. The participant continues to pass on the knowledge, to ensure respect of the land, specifically the plants, and as a reminder of the healing properties, and the potential lethality of the resources, if not properly respected.

Theme 4: Identity

The fourth theme encompasses the description and discussion of “who we are as a people” and “who I am.” Each Tribe has their own distinct cultural traditions, norms, and

dialect. The participants individually expressed their view about how the cultural practices, they continue to participate in, influence their identity within their community, within their Tribe, within their family and as an individual. A pattern within the perspectives represented a reflection of the “uniqueness” of the lifestyle, of a shared belief system, the relationships, and interconnectedness. Participants also discussed how identity influenced community wellness.

While discussing identity, relationships, and interconnectedness, one participant provided an example of interactions with extended family members who reside in other states. “When I visit them... [we share stories and photos] and they really want to identify with us. It’s just an amazing thing. They really enjoy being part of us.” The participant’s extended family is also connected to the Tlingit culture, and receives questions about the unique native food, within the Qawairaq region.

In our region...if you hear about what we’re eating, like seal meat or ...the fermented pink salmon eggs. We leave the eggs in the body of the pink [salmon] and we ferment them. Those kinds of things help me to realize that I have a unique, I live in a unique world...I have the uniqueness of being an Alaskan native, born and raised in [Qawairaq region], being an Inuit...being a [Tribe named removed for confidentiality] Tribe person, that special. That is special. I know it is. It’s unique.

The participant also discussed how subsistence activities are connected to the camaraderie and wellbeing of the community.

We used to share everything. And I remember when, and I think they still do this. If a bearded seal is shot in the river. A lot of people would go down with a pot and pan and get a piece of the meal...I remember when I was growing up there, we used to have movies. A movie, not movies. The same movie would be shown five nights a week. And the whole village would show up. That was so much fun. Part of that was all the camaraderie...they might have disagreed, but you couldn't see it there. I really miss that kind of general correspondence that people would put aside difference, just be together.

One participant described the uniqueness as, 'it's just a whole different way of life. It's a lifestyle.'" This participant spent time residing in another area and another state and when the participant moved to the Qawairaq region,

I felt like I was home...everybody welcomed everybody...and to be accepted or just being family... it's been a gift...it has probably done a lot in the way of shaping the way my life is now...I don't have to live the subsistence way of life, but I choose that option. I choose to do that... I can proudly say that I'm Eskimo and that I know how my people have lived and I know how to live the way that my people have lived and the values that I'm taught through that way of life have definitely formed and created who I'm as a person and as a leader in general...definitely my culture and traditions and my background have definitely played a role in who I am today, there is no doubt...they've enhanced who I am...I've always known who I am...they've just helped me be a better person.

One participant noted the guidance and impact of the leaders of the community,

we are doing things to make the whole community better. That is what makes us unique. They all try to work together, serving the same community... before we became a village, people used to live at their camps. Many families would camp together and share with each other...when the school started here, people moved here.

Another participant described the relationship, belonging and togetherness aspect of identity in connection with cultural traditions and activities.

Typically [cultural activities] involve other members of the family. Which helps strengthen our bonds... I am proud to say I am a member of the [removed for confidentiality] Tribe. Anyone who says they are from [Tribe name removed], are proud to say they are a part of this Tribe and take pride in this...People that are part of a family or group, they identify with, that strongly believe in and actively participate in cultural practices have a support system around them; that they can reach out to, in time of struggle or trouble. We know that we can count on these people without judgement. All of this helps people make it through whatever challenge they are presented with...

The same participant stated later, when discussing the photographs, “these represent activities I do with my family and value. Because we are so close and connect through these activities, it helps build resiliency. My family is my support system.”

Another participant also described subsistence and ceremonial activities as “a big part of our culture...that helped us with our identity” as a community.

The ceremonies ...were still very much intact and there were certain societal relationships involved...relationships with other villages were involved...it was just an integral part of the interconnection you had with your larger community and that your community and with the larger Yupik region around it ...it was very [a] very bit strong part of our identity growing up and it was also a very big part, I think of our community wellness...and it was an intergenerational thing. That sort of togetherness and closeness with a shared activity, shared belief system. It's really helped us with our self-esteem, with our identity, self-identity, who we were. And you felt you were a part of that...it reaffirms who I am. Reaffirms...the values, our beliefs, and my relationships...you get that sense of belonging and togetherness and saying this is who I am and it's a very reaffirming and revitalizing experience.

The participant later explained,

I didn't realize how unique they were until I moved away from my hometown. I went to college and I realized just how different we were...once I went away and was exposed to more Western ways...I realized just how unique our way of doing things was...I'm very much a proud indigenous woman. Very independent...I still feel a strong sense of community about being there [in the village]...to help and support other people in our community...[the traditions] really shaped my identity but also how other people saw me...so my participation in those [traditions]..greatly influenced how I saw myself as being Yupik and being very strong intact person...we were taught the things we would need to do to be

considered productive and contributing members of our family and of our community...

Figure 6

Hanging & Drying Meat



The same participant later noted, there is definitely still a strong sense of, this is who we are, and this is what we value...there is a wonderful sense of community here. Very proud of our identity culturally... there is a strong sense of pride here [village name removed], of people saying we are Inupiaq...it's a great reflection on how cultural identity has evolved through the century and the last hundred years...so definitely a wonderful communal sense of identity of being part of this bigger tribe.

Finally, one participant explained how some families are no longer participating in traditional activities, with the introduction of alcohol and other practices that have

caused problems within the family, community, and region. The participant emphasized, “you can always go back to your traditions to help change your life...so those that want to change and go back...one of the things that does help is going back to doing our traditional activities.”

Theme 5: The Experience

The fifth theme represents the values and feelings participants described or discussed in connection to participating in cultural practices. The participants identified specific traditions and norms, or principles that are embedded in the culture and support resiliency or are identified protective factors. The feelings, values and principals expressed the personal fulfillment attained and internal strength developed from engaging in cultural practices.

One participant made a descriptive list, when asked “are cultural practices linked to resiliency?” The participant indicated,

Our subsistence lifestyle, traditions, and cultural practices and values have made Alaskan Native people very resilient. Their values of having the ability to change and adapt, teamwork, sharing, the ability to work hard in any environment, kindness, forgiveness, caring for family and others, respect for the land, respect for elders, respect of others and themselves, integrity, truthfulness, being able to ask for help when needed, these are just a few of the values Alaskan Natives have. Those same values have helped us hold on to our culture and have proven us to be resilient in our ever-changing environment. We, the Alaska Native people, have always had to adapt to change, but more so in the 160 plus years....

Other participants expressed sharing a sense of community, “helping our family,” and “helping our people”; camaraderie, connectedness, being prepared, self-awareness, patients, appreciation, rewarding, being kind, “shared responsibility” as shared values within the culture. These values support resiliency. Participants also discussed specific feelings associated with a cultural practice. Participants described “feeling positive,” and “happiness,” while participating in cultural practices. Thankful, gratitude, accomplishment, fun, excitement, and “lucky,” were also expressed.

This past year we would hear about people in the lower 48 and that they go hungry. I always think we are really fortunate in having all the food we put away, our native foods. We have that to fall back on. Moose, caribou, seals, fish, berries, all our greens and those kinds of things that we gather and put away for winter. I really feel for those kids that say they’re hungry and they don’t have enough food at home.

One participant explained,

for me it’s a privilege to have those opportunities. Simply because of the choice of where I live...I’m really thankful...we got to experience camp...I was just lucky enough to be taught the skills by my grandmother...so I feel very fortunate that I’ve been given the opportunity to learn a subsistence way of life...I feel just fortunate... it’s been a gift. I think a lot of it has been a blessing...and how fortunate you are to be where you are today; but still get to practice cultural norms...I’m blessed and happy to be able to participate in that, I’m privileged. It’s a privilege I think.

Later the same participant added,

I want to share my fish camp with whoever I can, and all my family and all my friends. Because it's just one of the most amazing experiences anywhere...seriously, I mean it's just there is no better place in the world to be. I mean when I go out to my fish camp my whole demeanor changes. The world rolls off my shoulders. I can breathe.

Another participant expressed the following, when asked, "how do you feel participating in cultural traditions?"

It's a lot of fun...in most of our activities, it's group activity. Right, like cutting and hanging fish. You could do it yourself. But having done it... with lots of people around, our kids... our babies... running around the fish racks and stuff. Those things are memorable. You can't change that... I just get so excited when I know that's happening...

Figure 7

Smoked Fish & an Ulu



Summary

This chapter presented the description of the setting, the participant demographics, and the data collection process for the study. The discussion about the data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness and results for the study were also presented. Utilizing the photovoice process, five themes were identified to address the two research questions. Generational learning was identified as “vetted practices,” which are passed down to each generation as a means to provide knowledge about how and why things were done and teach the individuals about their role, within their family, within the community, and within society as a whole. The theme of survival, described specific cultural activities and the purpose of the activity, associated with the ability to continue to live off the sea and land to be resilient, while also adapting to the changing times. The knowledge about how to successfully harvest from the land and sea, is viewed as a protective factor. The third theme represents the spiritual aspect of the traditions and norms, by honoring the land and animals and acknowledging the healing ability of the resources from the land and sea. Being connected to the land and animals is seen as a protective factor and a practice/belief which supports resiliency for Alaskan Native women. Identity is the fourth theme. The identity theme presents the foundation for resiliency. Identity represents “who I am” as an individual and “who we are as a people.” A shared belief system, a shared lifestyle, the relationships, and bonds within families, within the tribe and community that are built while engaging in cultural practices. Identity also influences community wellness, which is understood to be a protective factor, for individuals within the community. The fifth theme, the experience, described

values and feelings rooted in the Iñupiaq and Yupik culture, which directly support resiliency or are believed to be protective factors for women.

Chapter 5 will discuss the interpretation of findings, how the findings relate to the previous literature in the field, and how the results may contribute to an increased understanding of how to promote the use of cultural practices to improve the overall safety of Indigenous women within the criminal justice system. Chapter 5 will also discuss the limitations of the study, the potential implications for social change, and describe recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The focus of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Iñupiaq and Yupik elders and leaders as to how cultural strengths can increase resiliency and to provide insight about which cultural practices are protective factors for Alaskan Native women. Increasing the understanding of how to emphasize and support these practices in policy can provide the opportunity to address the structural and institutional bias within the criminal justice system. Additionally, providing a voice to a vulnerable population, regarding how cultural strengths can improve the overall safety of Alaskan Native women. The social construction of targeted populations research framework was utilized to understand the individual experience and perceptions of Tribal elders and leaders about the characteristics of the traditional Iñupiaq and Yupik culture. In this chapter I discuss how generational learning, survival skills, traditional healing and spiritual aspects, cultural identity, and the experience of engaging in traditional practices, support resiliency for Alaskan Native women. This chapter also provides recommendations for future research, and the potential implications of the results of this study.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study provide an increased understanding of how cultural strengths can challenge the distorted stereotypes and images of Indigenous women within the criminal justice system. The structural bias that was created through colonization and altered the belief system created an imbalance in gender roles and created distorted stereotypes of Indigenous women, (Burnette & Hefflinger, 2017; Monchalin et al., 2019;

Weaver, 2009). Tribal elders and leaders explained how engaging in cultural practices supports and emphasizes the traditional beliefs and values where women are respected, seen as leaders, and cherished for their knowledge. Women ensure balance and survival of the population and women directly influence the wellness of the family and community.

Generational learning was directly impacted by the creation of boarding schools, during the colonization period. The sharing of wisdom regarding gender roles and the equalitarian belief system was disrupted when children were removed from the family unit and placed in boarding schools. Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) and Weaver (2009) explained how boarding schools were created as a form of social control and an attempt to eliminate the indigenous culture. Yet, the process of generational learning endured. Elders continue to share the knowledge with each subsequent generation of the importance of traditional practices and make engagement in cultural practices a priority. For example, ensuring practices are incorporated into everyday living, not just the occasional pastime. The lessons embedded in the practices continue to evolve and adapt and reflect a positive image of women. Women actively engage in the hunting, gathering, butchering, and the preservation of food. These activities change with each season and are practiced all year long. The information about the seasonal cycle is just as important, as how and why each activity is done. Women take an active role in sharing this information, not just with their children and family, but with anyone who is willing to learn. Participants in this study conveyed and stressed the importance of their role in

ensuring the process of generational learning continues. Women specifically expressed the personal responsibility to ensure the information is passed along.

Women taking an active and equal role in sharing the knowledge and actively engaging in the activities, embodies the traditional egalitarian belief system. The traditional belief system provided natural protective factors for women, with the absence of a hierarchy system. The egalitarian belief system was based on a balanced and supportive culture for both genders. Participants also identified the generational learning process as being connected to resiliency, because the processes and practices evolved and adapted over time.

Adapting cultural practices ensures the customs remain relevant, useful, and efficient over time. Cultural activities continue to be relevant and useful for many individuals and families to survive within the region and across the state. Fishing, trapping, gathering, hunting, camping, packing water, consuming traditional foods, chopping, and hauling wood all represent cultural activities associated with surviving. These physical cultural activities were identified as being linked to resiliency by the elders and leaders in this study, because they provide a method to survive. These cultural activities teach an individual how to be prepared, how to harvest and use natural resources from both the land and sea, and to provide for families and the community. The knowledge about the medicinal uses of natural resources is also important to survival. The image and stereotype of the Indigenous population, specifically women, being inferior, inept, and needing protection from themselves is the opposite of what these cultural activities teach and demonstrate.

The results also indicate that although institutional bias was created through the enactment of governmental legislation over Tribes, the traditional cultural practices ensured the survival of western settlers in the unique environment. Establishing governmental controls and authority over the Indigenous population implied the population was inferior to Western settlers, incapable and in need of protection. In reality, the settlers were unprepared, inexperienced, and unfamiliar with the environment and how to survive. The traditional cultural values of being prepared and how to preserve the seasonal resources were shared with settlers. Furthermore, settlers and non-natives continue to embrace the traditional cultural practices of the region, acclimate to the unique lifestyle, and adapt the culture as their own. Women continue to be very much a part of this process of sharing information and ensuring the survival of the traditions today. Participants discussed the value of sharing the knowledge with each other and with outsiders, to learn more efficient methods and gain exposure to modern technology and tools.

The use of modern technology such as freezers, guns, boats, and motors, aid with the efficiency of engaging in cultural activities, while still maintaining the essential life lessons and norms being taught in the practice. Participants explained how women continue to embrace the use of modern technology to increase the efficiency and ease of engaging and teaching these important cultural activities. Modern technology has changed and progressed some of the physical aspects of the activities. However, the purpose and need for each practice has not changed. This is consistent with Bisbal and Jones (2019), as well as Raymond-Yakoubian et al.'s (2017) findings about traditional

knowledge being dynamic, adaptable, and useful in present-day life and being deeply rooted.

The migratory patterns of birds and animals changed over time and therefore available resources changed. Participants briefly discussed these changes and how this impacted resource accessibility. The resources from the area, were described as “natural” and “healthy,” options for both diet and basic needs. Participants consider subsistence food sources such as birds, moose, berries, and wild greens, as the healthier option, compared to processed food items. Subsistence food and other provisions obtained through traditional activities continue to supplement the supplies purchased through modern day shopping. However, it should be noted that many of the subsistence foods are unique and cannot be purchased at the grocery store or online shopping. The participants, predominately women, expressed how traditional foods continue to be a central resource for their household, and they feel fortunate to have traditional foods available. This is an example of how cultural practices continue to adapt over time. Women have a significant role in adapting and incorporating traditional practices within their households, which directly supports being resilient. Cultural practices remain relevant, necessary, and useful, which equates to survival for both the people and the tradition.

Eskimo dancing, traditional ceremonies, and the use of Tribal Healers, provide a deeper connection between people and the land, the environment, and the non-human entities, this is identified as the spiritual aspect. Respecting and honoring the land and the animals and understanding the deeper connection and interconnectedness to the spiritual realm ensure balance within nature. The balance is viewed as a blessing and means for

survival. Participants discussed the healing power and increasing personal awareness obtained when engaging in these cultural practices. The activities mentioned above were connected to the process of healing all parts of oneself, either through relaxation, meditation, massage, or the use of regional plants, roots, and berries for medicinal purposes. The act of healing from within and the physical aspect of healing were discussed as a necessary practice and source of personal strength for individuals. Internal and personal strength were identified as being protective factors for women.

Tribal elders and leaders in this study, expressed how the unique Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices define “who we are as a people” collectively and define who they are as an individual. Engaging in different cultural traditions nurtures and promotes the individual’s personal assets. The unique qualities and abilities within each person are fostered to strengthen their identity, which promotes positive self-esteem and self-awareness. Creating a strong positive self-identity, becomes the foundation to creating a solid support system and being resilient.

Participants provided several references to how engaging in traditional activities reinforces the relationship bonds between family members and between community members, which directly influence community wellness. The positive relationships and camaraderie provide a sense of pride, connectedness to something bigger, something distinguishable and extraordinary. Elders and leaders discussed this bond being so strong that people can put their differences aside and connect with each other for the greater good of the community. Providing support for each other, sharing in a harvest, and helping each other through difficult times, are just a few examples. Building relationships

and bonds with other villages in the region is also a part of identity. This camaraderie provides another layer of support for individuals and helps to reaffirm the shared values and beliefs. These different layers of support are natural protective factors and support resiliency for Alaskan native women. This is consistent with the information in the literature, which indicates resiliency is created through these positive interactions (Burnette, 2014; Burnette & Figley, 2017; Greene, 2014; Orè et al., 2016).

The individual values, norms and principles rooted within the cultural practice represent the experience aspect. Elders and leaders mentioned very specific norms and values within the culture that either support resiliency or were identified as protective factors for women. Many of the norms and values were mentioned or described in previous sections, including the ability to adapt, teamwork, being prepared, kindness, sharing, integrity, self-awareness, respect for elders, respect of others, and respect for the land. Participants also described feeling a sense of accomplishment, feeling blessed and privileged to be able to engage in cultural practices. These attributes represent the experience of the Iñupiaq and Yupik culture and promote cultural identity. The elders and leaders specifically linked these practices to resiliency. This is not an inclusive list but contributes to the knowledge and the understanding of the impact and positive characteristics associated with engaging in traditional cultural practices and being a protective factor for women. Each of the participants expressed feelings of happiness, gratitude, thankfulness, excitement, and enjoyment associated with their experience. Participants expressed and described personal fulfillment, internal strength, and growth attained from engaging in the experience of cultural practices. These feelings were

discussed and described in direct relationship to cultural identity and supporting resiliency. Although participants included a very serious and interwoven theme of survival, there were no negative attributes or feelings associated with cultural traditions. This is also consistent with Bisbal and Jones (2019) as well as McKinley et al.'s (2020) findings about engagement in cultural practices supporting cultural identity and promoting resiliency. The practices were embraced, supported, and included a sense of purpose and empowerment, which is also linked to increasing resiliency.

In the literature review section, I discussed some of the social and historical factors which influenced or attempted to portray distorted stereotypes about the Indigenous culture, specifically women. The norms and values expressed by the elders and leaders within this study depict very different characteristics and images of women. The respected and cherished views of women influence, shape, and establish a positive identity for women within the community. Women are considered equal and very knowledgeable about cultural practices that provide guidance covering all aspects of life. This is consistent with Schneider and Ingram's (1993) social construction of target population theory, on how the social characteristics given to a specified population, can positively influence how the population is treated. Women are respected and valued for being strong, independent, skilled, wise, and essential to the family and community for survival. These attributes promote the sacredness of women that can challenge the negative stereotypes within the criminal justice system and provide for natural protective factors.

Tribal elders and leaders explained how cultural practices provided the foundation for the entire societal structure of the tribe. This is consistent with Deer's (2015) findings, that cultural practices both established and enforced the behavioral and belief system of a Tribe. Cultural practices met the basic needs of individuals and families for survival, by providing the means for food, shelter, and clothing. Cultural practices met spiritual needs, by enhancing an individual's identity and personal assets, by promoting self-awareness and the natural healing power of each practice. Educational and governing practices were also established and explained through the same cultural practices. Stability, relationships between families, relationships between Tribes within the region and outside the region were explained, taught, and established through the day-to-day practices. Cultural practices provided guidance and empowerment for the Tribe. Cultural traditions and norms support resiliency for Alaskan Native women specifically through these same aspects of generational learning, survival activities, spirituality, the collective identity, and the values of the culture. These five aspects provide the means for Alaskan Native women to adapt and respond to adversity.

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations of trustworthiness for this study. The Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural traditions depicted by the participants in the study were very similar and consistent with each other, which provided saturation with this sample. The participants self-reported their tribal affiliation, and four different Tribes were identified within this sample. However, these traditional practices can vary between villages and Tribes, and should not be considered to represent the specific cultural practices of other Tribes across

the state or from other locations. Participants provided clear and vivid details and context for the data, yet the information should not be considered all-inclusive of perspectives of Iñupiaq and Yupik elders and leaders.

Information about the participants and setting was provided for the reader to understand and assess the application to a broader milieu. The data for this qualitative study only represents a very small sample of individuals who actively engage in cultural practices in the region. Other tribal members and individuals who actively engage in cultural traditions, norms, and practices could have produced different data and results.

Another limitation to trustworthiness is researcher bias. My individual feelings, background, and opinion could have influenced the outcomes and results of this research. I was raised in the region, maintain close family connections to the area, and has immediate and extended family members who are tribal members. I have personally observed and engaged in many of the practices selected by the participants. This personal knowledge enriched the data, as I was familiar with many of the details and aspects of the practice being discussed. Therefore, questions were focused on gathering rich data, rather than just surface information about cultural practices. However, to minimize researcher bias, participants were identified by the Tribal leadership entities, and snowball sampling was used at the initiation of a participant. Each participant selected the cultural practices to be discussed and selected photos prior to any interviews taking place. I documented both descriptive and reflective notes to minimize bias for the study.

Recommendations

The results of this study highlight the ways Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural practices support resiliency for Alaskan Native women. Further research is needed to examine if there were other governing practices within the traditional equalitarian belief system, that created natural protective factors for women within the indigenous society. The framework and results of this study could provide the foundation for other qualitative studies, such as a narrative inquiry approach, or ethnographic study, to increase the understanding of traditional governing practices. Understanding the traditional governing structure would provide increased knowledge about the traditional social institutions, prior to the implementation of the European patriarchal structure.

Future research with a quantitative design could examine if there is any statistical relationship between engaging in the identified cultural practices of this study, or other cultural practices, and the rate of victimization within the community or region. Understanding if engaging in cultural practices impacts the crime rate or rate of victimization within a community, could assist in further understanding cultural practices as protective factors.

Implications

The influence of early colonization and assimilation continue to have an impact on the structural bias and institutional bias toward Indigenous women in the criminal justice system. The results of this study highlight the inherent strengths of engaging in cultural practices, specifically how cultural practices support resiliency and are identified as protective factors for Alaska Native women. Emphasizing and supporting the strengths

within the cultural practices, such as generational learning opportunities, survival skills, traditional healing, the spirituality of cultural practices, the Iñupiaq and Yupik identity beyond the family and community, to a regional and state level, could provide the opportunity for positive social change, by challenging the current negative stereotypes of Indigenous women. Engaging in cultural practices and increasing the opportunity for engagement in cultural practices, can positively influence the identity of Alaskan Native women. The remote villages and small communities in Alaska have the unique opportunity to continue to share the knowledge and traditional cultural practices, because of the environment and natural resources surrounding the area and are readily available. Embracing and teaching Iñupiaq and Yupik values and norms, which support a traditional equalitarian belief system, provides the opportunity for increased balance, respect, and support for women within the social structure. Increasing the resiliency and protective factors for women, could decrease the rate of violence and victimization and increase the safety of Alaskan Native women. Thus, creating an opportunity to generate policy decisions to increase awareness and address the current structural and institutional biases within the criminal justice system, at a local and regional level.

Conclusion

Indigenous women are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system because of years of structural bias, institutional bias, and cultural disruption. Colonization, historical oppression, and cultural assimilation disrupted and negatively influenced traditional practices, which provided natural protective factors and supported resiliency for Indigenous women. Through the process of assimilation, a patriarchal

belief system imposed a gender hierarchy, eroded the traditional cultural norms, and created an imbalance within society and distorted stereotypes of women within the community and household. The implementation of new governmental structures, laws, and policies created further discrimination and treatment of Indigenous women. The lack of respect and decrease in protection for indigenous women, resulted in an increase in violence against women.

Despite the oppression, and forced assimilation to a patriarchal belief system, the Iñupiaq and Yupik cultures continued to be resilient and thrive in Northwest Alaska. Through generational learning and sharing the precious traditional knowledge regarding survival skills and healing practices, the Iñupiaq and Yupik tribes in the Qawairaq region have continued engaging in traditional cultural practices. The traditional values and norms ensure balance within society, by supporting an egalitarian belief system, which subsequently creates natural protections for women. Furthermore, the norms, values and principles embedded in the culture, support resiliency and provide protective factors for women.

The results highlight how Iñupiaq and Yupik cultural traditions and practices, provide the foundation for resiliency. The shared belief system and lifestyle create community and family bonds and relationships which are interconnected with strengthening an individual's personal assets. The unique cultural practices provide guidance, empowerment, and the ability to respond and heal when faced with adversity. Increasing engagement, understanding, and supporting the strengths rooted within the traditional cultural practices, could provide the pathway to addressing the structural bias,

and the institutional bias, to combat the distorted stereotypes of Indigenous women within the criminal justice system.

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Appendix A: Photograph Questionnaire

1. Describe some cultural traditions/norms in which you participate.
2. Tell me about the purpose of the cultural tradition/norm you selected?
 - a) Why do you choose to follow or participate in this cultural practice?
 - b) Why is this tradition/norm important?
3. How do you feel participating in cultural traditions/norms?
4. How do you think others, either other Tribal members or persons outside the Tribe, perceive the participation in cultural practices?
5. Do cultural practices influence your identity as an individual? If so, how?
 - a) Do cultural practices influence your identity within your family?
 - b) Do cultural practices influence your identity within your Tribe?
 - c) Do cultural practices influence your identity within your community?
6. How do you ensure the survival of cultural practices?
7. Are cultural practices (traditions or norms) linked to resiliency?
If so, in what way?
If not, can you expand on your perspective?

Appendix B: Data Collection Tool/ Interview Protocol

Interview Guide

Date/Time:

Location:

Interview Participant:

Introduction Statement:

Thank you for participating in this interview. The research project is for educational purposes and as we previously discussed, your identity will be kept confidential. The purpose of the study is to explore in what ways cultural practices support resiliency among Alaskan Native women and what cultural practices are protective factors for Alaskan Native women. The interview will include asking about some demographic information. As a reminder, you do not have to answer any questions that you choose not to and you can stop the interview at any time. Please note, you can also return to a question or photograph later in the interview, if needed. There are no right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. I really hope you will feel comfortable sharing and saying what you really think and how you feel.

This interview will be recorded and transcribed, to ensure I don't miss any key details. After the interview is transcribed, you will be asked to review the information from your interview, to ensure the information is complete and to clarify any material you provided. The interview will last about an hour. However, I have additional time available for you to provide any additional thoughts or information, if you choose to continue our discussion. Do you have any questions for me, before we begin?

Demographic questions:

1. In what year were you born? Year _____
2. What Tribe are you enrolled with? _____
 - a) Are there any other Tribes you are affiliated with? _____
3. Are you part of the Tribal Council?
4. Do you live in the Tribal village? Yes No
 - a) If no, where do you reside? _____

Interview Questions/ Photograph Discussion:

You were asked to provide a photograph for each of the following questions. As I ask the interview question, please describe your answer and how the photograph represents your response.

3. Describe some cultural traditions/norms in which you participate. (Subsistence hunting /fishing, gathering, language, a specific value/norm)

*Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

4. Tell me about the purpose of the cultural tradition/norm you selected?

a) Purpose/why you choose to follow or participate in this cultural practice?

b) Why is this tradition/norm important?

* Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

5. How do you feel participating in cultural traditions/norms?

*Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

6. How do you think others, either other Tribal members or persons outside the Tribe, perceive the participation in cultural practices?

*Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

7. Do cultural practices influence your identity as an individual? If so, how?

a) Do cultural practices influence your identity within your family?

b) Do cultural practices influence your identity within your Tribe?

c) Do cultural practices influence your identity within your community?

*Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

8. How do you ensure the survival of cultural practices?

*Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

9. Are cultural practices (traditions or norms) linked to resiliency?

If so, in what way?

If not, can you expand on your perspective?

*Photograph Prompts:

Do you have a title or caption for this photograph?

What is the relationship/reflection between the content in the photograph and your response?

10. *Final photograph prompt: Is there a theme(s) connected with the photographs you selected for this study?

Closing Statement:

Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you would like to include?

Do you have any questions for me? I will be contacting you within the next couple of weeks to provide you an opportunity to review your responses, to ensure accuracy of the information. At that time, you will have an opportunity to provide clarification or additional information. You have my contact number if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time and contribution to my research.