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Examining the Sociocultural Experiences of Cherokee Nation Citizens in Athletic Competition and Sport

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Examining the Sociocultural Experiences of
Cherokee Nation Citizens in Athletic Competition and Sport

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Kinesiology

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the sociocultural experiences of Cherokee adults in athletic competition and sport. Specifically, following a qualitative design, fifteen participants were interviewed about their personal experiences in athletic competition and sport while growing up in rural Oklahoma. Interviews were open-ended and followed a semi-structured script of questions with additional probes. Once completed, the recorded interviews were transcribed and data were analyzed. The data revealed six axial codes and three selective codes. Cherokee culture, psychosocial identity, and athletic competition were the three major selective codes discovered in this study. Qualitative analyses revealed that participants have lived in an environment that is conducive for athletic growth, cultural awareness, and social exploration. The family, schools, and communities offer simple, yet stable surroundings. Athletic and social identities are formed at early ages and are fostered by the close knit Cherokee culture.

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DEDICATION

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INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Dissertation

This qualitative dissertation is a compilation of five chapters in this order: (1) introduction (2) literature review (3) research design (4) presentation of the data (5) conclusions and recommendations. Chapter One introduces us to this qualitative study. Chapter Two is a review of the literature in relationship to the topic. Chapter Three is the arrangement of the methodological approach and study design elements. Chapter Four presents the results from the data collected. And finally, Chapter Five concludes the dissertation with data interpretations, a summary, and the author's thoughts and recommendations.

Organization of Chapter One

This qualitative study begins with an introduction about the sociocultural experiences of athletic competition and sport within Cherokee adults. Then, a selection of background information is detailed and the statement of the problem is addressed. After that, the purpose of the study and research question are presented. Next, the significance of the study is defined in regards to the paucity of Native American (NA) research overreaching into the sociocultural aspects of athletic competition and sport. A description about the theoretical sensitivities, which includes personal and professional experiences, outlines the overall humanistic management of qualitative design for this particular study. Chapter One goes on to illustrate the parameters of the study as well as the definitions of the terms. The chapter concludes with the specific limitations of the study.

Introduction

This research was conceived, in part, due to my love and respect of the Cherokee people. Additionally, I have numerous investments within the scope of this research topic. My wife is

one-half Cherokee, which makes my son and any other future children one-quarter Cherokee. I have many friends and family that are Cherokee. I was raised and currently live in the same county where the study took place. The county has a prodigious number of Cherokee Nation (CN) tribal members. The Cherokee people mean a tremendous amount to me, my family, and to the history of the United States.

The complimentary aspect of this study is my unwavering passion for athletic competition and sports. I have devoted my most of professional life to sport, athletic competition, and physical education. These activities have molded my character as a human being and guided my professional career path. The Cherokee people share that enthusiasm for sport and athletic competition. My goal was to fuse the sociocultural aspects and experiences of the Cherokee people with the psychosocial elements within athletic competition and sport. Therefore, the focus of this qualitative study was to examine the sociocultural experiences surrounding athletic competition and sport of the adult Cherokee Nation citizen. Moreover, the study considered the historical perspective of Cherokees in athletic competition and sport and two underlying sociocultural topics: sociocultural pressures within the Cherokee community and effects on academic.

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach (Husserl, 1970) as it's theoretical framework to examine the lived experiences of the participants. The framework surrounding hermeneutic phenomenology, such as in Merleau-Ponty and Kafle's work, will also be called on in this study in regards to the lived human experiences. For example, Kafle (2011) explains HP, "hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on subjective experience of individuals and groups. It is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life world stories" (p. 186). Ideally, by borrowing key components of hermeneutic phenomenology,

the research will capture the *essence* of a social phenomenon within the sociocultural framework of this study (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 2014) grounded theory was used as theoretical application to collect and analyze the data. Semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendices A for Interview protocol) were utilized to assess the range and scope of these sociocultural experiences.

The study carried out open-ended, semi-structured interviews with participants. A closer examination of these shared experiences in athletic competition and sport, especially in such a marginalized population, could allow for certain predictions and interpretations of human behavior. Secondary to the main research question, particular inquiries of the physical education curriculum, sports, and academics within the county's primary schools is warranted as potential inquiries. Most elementary schools within the county compete in interscholastic athletic competitions, during the school day, and as young as second grade. Within these schools, the line between physical education and athletic competition is often blurred. The area of concern here is a priority placed on athletics versus academics. To address these secondary concerns, an examination of these phenomena through in-place qualitative methods should yield rich data and produce some supplemental findings.

Background

The next section will provide a sample background to the literature reviewed for this study. Provided is an inclusive set of theoretical frameworks, ethnographic research, empirical research studies, case studies, and other relevant research resources that fell under traditional criterion within academia. The resource criteria were chosen based on these context's (a) relevance to subject matter and centrality to the topic (b) quality and (c) scholarship.

The sheer lack of research surrounding Native American people and their communities is inexcusable (Yancey, Ortega, & Kumanyika, 2005). Though, there has been selected representation of NA people within behavioral health literature, specifically in the areas of mental health and alcohol abuse. These areas constitute very small percentages of NA populations being studied. The areas of education, career, and cultural awareness/race are also underrepresented. The Cherokee community deserves to be represented in the utmost respect and fairness. Therefore, this qualitative study strives to serve the NA population, all American Indians (AI), including the Cherokee people, and indigenous populations (IP) across the globe.

Due to this paucity of original research on NA, particularly for the Cherokee people, this study investigates a sociocultural topic within the Cherokee population. The NA culture truly appreciates the sociocultural significance of being physically active through sport and play (Thompson, Gifford, & Thorpe, 2000). The development of key tribal attributes such as self-discipline, self-worth, and self-reliance is thought to be developed through sport (Schroeder, 1995). The NA has had an extensive history and tradition of sport and play. Well-known NA professional athletes such as all-around athlete Jim Thorpe-1912 Olympic Gold Medalist Decathlon and Pentathlon, Billy Mills-Olympic Gold Medalist 10,000 meters, and Sam Bradford-Heisman Trophy winner and NFL Quarterback reflect positivity and cultural pride

through sport and competition. Modern sport and games of North America, like field hockey, lacrosse, wrestling and cross-country running can be found in the historical chronicles of NA culture (Schroeder, 1995). However, the NA is a grossly underrepresented minority in academic research (Yancey, Ortega, & Kumanyika, 2005). Accompanying this underrepresentation is the lack of research on the Cherokee people.

The contemporary CN citizen is bombarded with an array of distractions. Technology, social media, peer distractions, and the fast pace of modern life. When it comes to sports, CN citizens are once again being pulled in many different directions that may influence their experiences. The influence of pro athletes, peers, and parents are often key contributors. There is strong evidence that today's parents and coaches show concern and often place various amounts of pressure on their child-athlete to perform in athletic competitions and participation (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Koester, 2000). Coaches, parents, teachers, peers and even administrator expectations can occupy a majority of the student-athlete's daily activities. Community factors such as geographic location and socioeconomic status also contribute to these influences. Culturally and economically, America has positioned sport and athletic successes near the top of its list, if not the top. Painting with a broad stroke, sports are glamorized within most cultures in the U.S. However, researching a specific group or community, like the Cherokees, may show something different or reveal a different aspect to these experiences.

The American sports culture is and has been going strong for decades. Depending on your community and possibly your race, gender, and ethnicity the importance placed on sport and athletic competition can be different. The NA culture could be viewed in the same context; however, we cannot assume that in all cases. One also has to examine why particular sociocultural phenomena exist. For this particular study, a closer examination of how Cherokee

adults view athletic competition and sport and how their community might view the sociocultural aspects of this topic is warranted.

Statement of the Problem

Native Americans face sociocultural pressures while competing in sports. A high value is placed on winning and competing at young ages. Cherokee citizens in rural Oklahoma are no exception, as they face many of these burdens as well. As school-aged children (elementary and middle school) in the county, many Cherokees and their non-native peers are frequently taken from the learning environment of the classroom and asked to compete in various sporting events, during the school day, and throughout the academic year. The majority of the rural county schools have been practicing this method of sporting competition for decades. This issue could seem puzzling to outsiders looking in. For example, second graders are competing against other county elementary schools in softball tournaments during the middle of the school days. Do all school districts/communities do this? Do other NA communities practice and foster this method? Certain sociocultural issues might be in play here. Principals, coaches, parents, and communities could be placing sociocultural pressures on these children to perform athletically. A goal is to investigate these experiences as a whole and to provide readers with a clearer understanding of these issues. One of the first steps is attempting to gather some lived narratives from adult Cherokee citizens that have been in this system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain further insight into sociocultural experiences of an underrepresented population. More specifically, the purpose is to examine, using a phenomenological approach, the sociocultural experiences of Cherokee citizens surrounding athletic competition and sport. The rationale for this project is to provide a platform for the

minority voices of the Cherokee participants to be heard. Furthermore, the research should provide significant knowledge to areas such as NA research, sports psychology, psychosociology, sport theory, physical education, cultural identification, race, race identity theory, institutional racism, motivational theory, and social identity theory.

Research Question

What are the sociocultural experiences of Cherokee citizens surrounding athletic competition and sport?

Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is a term used in qualitative design that refers to the researcher as contributing personal characteristics to the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This qualitative design afforded me dual roles through the process: first as the principle investigator and second, to act as the research instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990, 2002). Thus, this academic journey has lead me to reflect on and project my own theoretical sensitivity into this subject matter.

Professional Experience. Prior to securing a full-time teaching position I was gaining valuable experience as a guest teacher, however, the majority of my professional career has been in the secondary setting. Moreover, I have spent time teaching at all levels of K-12 public education, particularly in physical education and health. I was a health and physical education teacher, as well as a coach for multiple sports, for approximately nine years. Through many different settings and situations, I have gained invaluable knowledge that has allowed me to share my professional opinion and experiences with others. These include time spent in the classroom teaching, coaching, and mentoring. I maintain that these professional qualities allowed me to build rapport with the participants and with the Cherokee community.

As a researcher, I have attained considerable professional experience in the area of academic research in higher education. Practice in areas such as fieldwork, reading and interpreting results, and situational understanding of quantitative and qualitative research has broadened my knowledge and understanding in academia. This understanding affords me an opportunity to provide some clarity into certain phenomena within my field of work.

Personal Experience. I was born and raised in the county where the study took place. I played sports, went to school, attend events, and go to church in this community. I currently live in the community. I have friends and family of Cherokee blood that I maintain relationships with on a daily basis. Some of these relationships include elected tribal leaders. Administrators and coaches at the country schools, where the interviews and observations took place, know me by my first name. I feel a connection to the community because it's my hometown and a community I see my family living in for a long time.

Definition of Terms

The proceeding section contains a record of major concepts and key terms defined and used for this study. For ease of understanding, both the major concepts and key terms are associated with contextual definitions.

Athletic competition and sport. Any sport or physical activity whereby individuals play a competitive game. Traditional sports such as football, basketball, softball, and track were used in the context of this study

Cherokee Nation (CN). Cherokee Nation is a federally recognized government and Native American tribe for the Cherokee people and is headquartered in Tahlequah, OK.

Indigenous Populations (IP). In 2015 the World Health Organization define indigenous populations as: Communities that live within, or are attached to, geographically distinct

traditional habitats or ancestral territories, and who identify themselves as being part of a distinct cultural group, descended from groups present in the area before modern states were created and current borders defined.

Native Americans (NA) & American Indians (AI). Used interchangeably for this study. Specifically, NA/AI are direct descendants of tribally recognized Indians of the U.S. and North America. For Cherokees, there is no blood quantum, but proof of at least one direct Cherokee decedent on the Dawes Rolls.

Non-native & Non-indigenous. Specific to this study: any person not Native American or American Indian.

Parental Pressure. As defined by myself through the context of this study, parental pressure is: the social and cultural expectations to perform athletically in sporting competition. Typically, assigned negative social context by some ('motivator' or 'facilitator') and contrasted by terms such as parental 'support', 'involvement' or 'influence'.

Phenomenon. A particular event, often uncommon, which can be observed and typically multifaceted in nature and difficult to explain.

Sociocultural. A correlation to social learning theory, yet operationally, the definition of sociocultural throughout this study is a concept that the researcher used to describe the arrangement of social and culture dynamics of real-life conditions.

Limitations

Although potential discoveries from this research could contribute to various academia outlets, a reflection of the limitations should be considered and noted. The limitations of a qualitative study are often related to the biases of the researcher. First, potential findings could have perceptual misrepresentations and interpretations, which can lead to potential limitations.

For example, one of the duties of the qualitative researcher is to use themselves as a research tool and ‘read into’ particular phenomena that may not be seen by an outsider. Second, the interview question protocol(s) and the elicited responses could yield bias. In spite of this, it is the duty of the investigator to control and eliminate these biases through interview design and protocol. The goal is to provide a controlled study that welcomes thick, descriptive results and can add to the foundation of the literature base. Additionally, a perceived lack of generalizability within qualitative research can be viewed as a limitation. With this in mind, a careful consideration of the small group of participants will be examined. In fact, generalizing may be difficult in this case study because the sample may not represent the NA group as a whole. The results may require the researcher to interpret the results as transferable; identify contexts and/or interpret details for further investigation.

Significance of the Study

A qualitative design using a phenomenology approach was implemented for this study to infuse an interpretive spirit regarding the sociocultural experiences in athletic competition and sport of Cherokee adults. Data collected, analyzed, and interpreted through this study can effectively add to the lack of research on Native Americans in general. The study could enhance academic knowledge of specific group of NA, specifically in regards to the Cherokee population. Additionally, the study may provide researchers with a widening knowledge base for a more complete understanding of the sociocultural aspects of athletic competition and sport. There are numerous aspects of this study that can be applied and be beneficial to various fields, particularly the fields of sport psychology and the sociology of sport. Further interpretations of the benefits of athletic competition and sport could be uncovered within this study, particularly in ethnic minority populations. Likewise, the accrual of this descriptive data could enhance research

application within sociology of sport in the areas of race, racism, and cultural identification. As mentioned earlier, areas within behavioral health could benefit from this research; perhaps a clearer association between physical and mental health can be identified and be used across multiple disciplines.

The results yielded from this study could benefit Cherokee Nation, Cherokee citizens, American Indians, minority and indigenous populations around the globe. Specifically, the findings could produce valuable interpretations of complex sociocultural issues surrounding sport, competition, motivation, and health behaviors of Cherokee citizens. In addition, Cherokee Nation and researchers can utilize the findings for future research endeavors to enhance the knowledge of these sociocultural issues. The Cherokee people could gain more self-awareness and empowerment derived from the modern narratives of their own people surrounding the cultural arrangement of the research. Currently, research suggests that most racial and ethnic minorities are represented inadequately in research trials (Castillo & Schwartz, 2013) and the study aims to provide a foundation of knowledge and outcomes to this underrepresented field of study.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter Two is a review of literature for this qualitative study and begins with a brief explanation of the search strategy utilized. The initial approach taken to this literature review is an examination of historical facets and sociocultural theories corresponding to the study's population and the interconnection of athletic competition and sport. Two avenues of content were taken into consideration here. First, the raw and historical perspective on Native American athletic competition and sport was considered, and next the sociocultural importance of athletic competition and sport from native and non-native points of views were then examined. As a comparative, the non-native content included a narrower view of parental, coaching, administrator, peer, and community influences. Subsequently, a historical overview of the Cherokee Nation, and considering the record of events proximate to the Cherokee tribe, an illustration of sociocultural topics were addressed. Next, a compilation of literature was arranged regarding the details of athletic competition and sport in Native American populations and communities. Furthermore, literature relevant to the sociocultural evolution of athletic competition and sport in the U. S. was then reviewed. This was then followed by an examination of how physical education, athletic competition, and sport have impacted Native American and non-native lives during recent history. The chapter then concludes with two complemented topics arranged within the context of the study: first, the kinship of academics in sport, and second, qualitative research within physical education, athletic competition, and sports.

Historical Perspective: The Cherokees

The Cherokee Nation (CN) is one of the three federally recognized Cherokee tribes in the U.S. (the other two being the United Keetoowah and the Eastern Band) and is headquartered in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation is essentially its own country. A chief, vice chief, and council members are elected and a written governmental constitution is in place. There are roughly 315,000 tribal members spread out all over the world. However, the highest concentrations of tribal members, 126,000, reside within the nation's fourteen counties in Eastern Oklahoma; roughly 7,000 square miles of jurisdictional boundaries. To be considered a citizen of Cherokee Nation one must be a direct descendent of a family member from The Dawes Rolls (1898-1914). The Dawes Rolls were the final roll call of the western Cherokee; the citizen must provide documentation of at least one ancestor listed on the final rolls (Tribal Citizenship, 2016).

Cherokees have inhabited this area of Oklahoma since the time of Indian Removal, around 1838, known as the Trail of Tears. Upon arrival in Eastern Oklahoma, Tahlequah became capital of the Cherokee nation and the tribe settled on a new constitution in 1839 which was eventually ratified in 1976 (Our History, 2016). During the first half of the 20th century, the majority of Cherokees struggled and became impoverished due to Oklahoma statehood and land allotments (Strickland, 1977). Individual Cherokee land owners were bought out by white, wealthy, land owners who sought oil rich acreage. During the Dust Bowl (1930-1940), it is estimated that at least half of the Cherokee population in Oklahoma migrated west, primarily California, seeking better fortunes (Strickland, 1977). Yet, some Cherokee stayed and grew strong roots in 'Green Country'. Strickland suggests that tribal leaders such as Jesse B. Milam (1946 federally appointed Chief) and others turned the negative circumstances around, and as a

result the tribe has since seen a resurgence in culture, vitality, governmental leadership, economic growth, and land repurchasing. Under a strong vision from its leadership and the stewardship of the citizens the Cherokee Nation has become an influential entity within Oklahoma and Native American tribes across the U. S.

Even through prosperity and successes as a sovereign nation through the last half of the twentieth century, it should be noted that some Cherokees are presently facing health and economic hardships. The study took place in one of the fourteen counties of the Cherokee Nation. According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2010) the county has a poverty level above 27 (where approximately 45% are Cherokee citizens) and just above 20 for Cherokee County (the location of CN headquarters). These poverty levels are elevated compared to the state average of 16.1 and the U. S. average of 15.6. The American Indian and Cherokees face many disparities when it comes to their health status as well. Barriers such as inadequate education, health care discrimination, poverty, and substandard social conditions lead to shorter lifespans and increased propensity for diseases (IHS, 2016).

Native American Athletic Competition and Sport

In 1841, George Catlin, a famous artist and probably one of the earliest Native American ethnographers, observed Indian tribes of the Missouri Valley. He explained to his audience the games the people played but also described the athletic figures he saw before him:

beautiful models that are about me...models equal to those from the Grecian sculptures transferred to the marble; such inimitable grace and beauty...whose daily feats, with their naked limbs, might vie with those of the Grecian youths in the beautiful rivalry of the Olympic games. (Catlin, 1965, p. 15)

Native American culture has had an extensive history with athletic competition and sport (King, 2004; Oxendine, 1988). North American Indians have been playing a form of stickball for centuries, known as lacrosse today. Other forms of sport like wrestling, swimming, archery,

and running were noticed by the early Euro-Americans (King, 2004) and were evident in traditional ceremonies or religious events (Oxendine, 1988). Ali-Christie (2013) proposed in her work that games and play has a purpose or goal in most Indian cultures. She explains that the stickball game played by the Choctaw tribes was used to heal individuals or even a group. The importance of these games to the NA were believed to enrich the physical, social, spiritual, and cultural conditions of the tribe (Ali-Christie, 2013). The history and subsequent research studies of the Tarahumara Indians of Northern Mexico have been well documented. The story goes, as means for hunting the Tarahumara Indians would chase animals, on foot, until their prey succumbed to exhaustion (Ali-Christie, 2013; Plymire, 2006). Ali-Christie concludes that this particular tribe has used running for survival throughout time but it has played an important role in their culture and heritage too.

Sociocultural and racial identity can often be associated with a particular sport within the NA community. Throughout history NA societies demonstrated a love for competition and value the athletic abilities shown by their people (Ali-Christie, 2013). For example, in the early years of Indian assimilation and education, around 1900, the Indian schools of Carlisle and Haskell formed football and track squads that competed against non-native schools. Many great Cherokee athletes have attended these schools and are proud to say it; often the descendants and family members of these students take satisfaction in speaking of their grandfather or uncle who attended the all-Indian schools. Bloom (2000) suggests these sport-specific activities formed a cohesive group of NA students whom were prideful and created a positive cultural identity within sport and competition. However, according to Bloom, sports were strictly restrained forms of competition that was controlled by the government. NA students sought ways of escape during the, often degrading, assimilation process through sport and play. Bloom also stated in

his work that the boarding schools fostered athletic competition and sport more so for the male students than the female students. He adds to this by providing an example of how NA girls were seen using the playground as their outlet for recreation. The playground offered the girls a gentler side of exercise such as swings and jungle gyms. It is further elaborated in Gems' (1998) work that the NA could develop benefits both through community and subcultural identities through participation in sport, particularly in the sport of football. Gem offered the idea that Indians could form or even redefine their racial and psychological identities through sport. Gem suggests the games had more meaning to the Indians and gave them an outlet to display their culture and subject their opponents to a 'measure of vengeance'. In spite of these findings, Gem expresses the loss of traditional lifestyles by stating, "football may have served a surrogate function as a means to assert the skills and bravery previously displayed in war and the buffalo hunt" (p. 139).

Athletic competition and sport among contemporary Native American societies has evolved over time. Since the 1970's, organizations attempted to hold large scale sporting events for indigenous people. And in 1990, The North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) attempted to duplicate the unity and successes of the Olympic Games by bringing together NA tribes from all over North America to compete on the athletic fields (Lazore, 1997). The forming of the NAIG Council in 1993 solidified the support role of improving and protecting the 'social, cultural, and spiritual fabric' of the Indigenous community (NAIG, 2016). Additionally, The Native American Sports Council was formed in 1994 to 'promote community wellness through culturally appropriate youth-oriented sports programs' (NASC, 2007). Despite these movements, Native Americans in higher education, particularly within intercollegiate athletics, seem to be grossly marginalized (Ali-Christie, 2013). The NCAA report on student-athlete race

and ethnicity, recognized 1,534 American Indian/Alaskan Natives competed in a Division I, II, or III sport over the 2009-2010 academic year, compared to 434,233 other student-athletes the same year (NCAA, 2010). Therefore, American Indians represent only three-tenths of percent of the total athletes across all three divisions of the NCAA.

Ali-Christie (2013) advocates that athletics in today's society can be the change within NA tribes and communities. She goes on to state, "the lessons that athletics can teach-preparation, competitiveness, overcoming obstacles, and cultural revitalization-seem particularly apt for American Indian children today" (p. 107).

Development of Athletic Competition and Sport in the United States

A closer look at key sociocultural factors for athletic competition in non-indigenous communities within the United States is warranted at this point in the literature. A point-by-point analysis of these key features will lay the groundwork when taking a closer look at the experiences in this particular Native American community. As a society, key sociocultural factors such as cultural identity, ethnic values, and even child rearing practices can be leading determinants of experiences and influences in one's life.

Generally speaking, the early part of the 20th century was the golden age of sports in the United States (Nelson, 2005). The large scale interest in professional sports gave us the iconic sports hero. Sports legends such as baseball's Babe Ruth, boxing's Jack Dempsey, and golf's Bobby Jones headlined the American sports theater. The American public became interested spectators at college sporting events as well, particularly at college football games. The U. S. was also experiencing some prosperity due to industrialization and economic growth happening at the time. Leisure time, athletic competition, and the development team sports saw an increased participation from men and women across all social classes (Nelson, 2005). Political

leaders, schools, and parents also saw that the youth could benefit from athletic competition and sports. This youth sports movement gave birth to many organizations that are still around today, such as, Little League Baseball (1939) and Pop Warner Football (1934). Keeping children off the streets and out of trouble became a cause for parents and citizens alike in the U.S. Sports and ‘extra-curricular activities’ became outlets for these children to compete and have fun.

Organizations such as YMCA, AAU, and public schools stepped up and began offering athletic leagues and competitions to America’s youth. As the decades passed, professional athletes kept gaining ground in popularity (Koester, 2000), thrusting sports into the mainstream for American youth. According to Koester, by 2000, 20 million youth participated in some form of organized sports. Today, that number is well above 45 million youth (Merkel, 2013), having more than doubled in less than fifteen years. According to (Nelson, 2005), sport can provide us, as a society, with important social and cultural substance. Like it or not, sport is woven into the social fabric of our country and individual communities. Sports are often influenced by parenting techniques, social norming, and education practices (Macri, 2012). Other key stakeholders such as communities, schools, peers, teachers, and coaches possess some influential powers and are in touch with the influence sports has on the youth of today. Parent, coach, community, and peer influence will be discussed throughout the next few paragraphs.

Parental Influence. Speaking strictly from my own experiences as a white male, my father had the single biggest influence on my athletic career. In fact, he was my coach or assistant coach for several years in multiple sports. In the end, my experience was positive. Weiss and Fretwell (2005) echo this sentiment in their paper, noting that the parent-coach dual role is a customary occurrence in most of the U.S. In a 1998 study, Brown estimated 90% of volunteer coaches are parents. The literature also suggests (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005) that

fathers' and mothers' influences into sporting activities directly affect the socialization of their child and can provide enjoyable experiences. Fredericks and Eccles (2002) also pointed out that motivation, from the parent(s), can be established by the level of family expectations, which continues over time. However, this doesn't always hold true. In 1992, Coakley's study suggested that as intensity levels of parents increase, burnout can occur in some children. The key words in the work from Coakley is *intensity levels*. These intensity levels of parents could vary from different groups of people or varying ethnic groups. For example, a white parent might handle parenting techniques, regarding youth sports and competition, differently than a Native American or African American parent. When looking at children's perception regarding parents placing importance on sports, boys tend to feel parents place more importance on participating in sports than did girls (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Eccles and Harold also noted that culture, life experiences, and self perception determines activity choice for children. Additionally, the same study revealed that parents ultimately have the most social influence on their children when it comes to the children's perception of their own athletic abilities. With evidence mounting, it is essential to recognize and evaluate the role of parental influence in youth today.

Coaches. There is a growing body of literature concerning the influence of coaches that encompasses everything from theory to competence. Coaches can influence their athletes on a daily basis and can play an important role in their lives (Koester, 2000; Murphy, 1985; Quain, 1989). Brown and Butterfield (1992) estimated that youth athletes could spend an average of over 300 hours with their coaches during a season. Key areas such as motivation, team building and self-esteem are blended into practice schedules each and every day. Gilbert, Gilbert, and

Trudel (2001) highlight the influence of coaches and propose this in their manuscript on coaching strategies for youth sports:

Coaches must realize that they play an important role as socializing agents for youths whose personal values and perceptions are still forming. Coaches can help create a positive developmental experience for young athletes through the design and implementation of appropriate and effective coaching strategies that address behavior and performance, personal characteristics, parental influence, and team organization. (p. 46)

Literature also suggests that coaching behaviors that relate directly to motivation and feedback have a relational influence during youth sport competition (Horn, 2002; Wong & Bridges, 1995). It is obvious that some coaches have the ability to lead, inspire, and influence their athletes. Weiss and Fretwell (2005) say it best, “There is no doubt that coaches are powerful socializers in the context of children’s sport” (p. 286-305). Conversely, other studies have found that coaches can also play key roles in attrition in youth and adolescent sports (Guillet, Sarrazin, Carpenter, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002; Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, & Brière, 2001). These studies examined enjoyment levels, autonomy, competence levels, and coaching support in team handball players. Both studies suggest that coaching influence on the psychological well being of the athlete partially determined enjoyment levels and dropout rates mutually.

Community and Peers. There is an intersection of social influences and youth sport involvement in North American sports history. At these crossroads, communities shape the cultural identity and values of their youth. Jordan (1999) stated, “values reflected in athletic competition—striving for excellence, fair play, sportsmanship, hard work, and commitment to a goal—are inextricably linked to our nation’s mainstream cultural values” (p. 54). Moreover, the characteristic makeup of a community significantly influence sport participation, particularly those communities set in a more rural area (Barker & Gump, 1964; Fejgin, 2001; Marsh, 1993; McNeal, 1999; Videon, 2002). These studies suggest youth within rural areas are often seen as

leaders of their peers and therefore are often given more responsibilities. The communities seek to keep tradition alive, thus one generation teaches the next how important it is to compete and play sports. Another contributing influential factor may include region (Videon, 2002); for example, the upper East coast has its lacrosse communities and the South cherishes its undying obsession with football.

U. S. children eventually develop and grow into mature athletes competing in a wide range of sports. Yet, there are many influences affecting their journey along the way. The community in which they live and play has a tremendous effect on lived experiences, both socially and physically. Literature noted that peers within these communities have impacted the lives of youth throughout their sporting experiences (Jordan, 1999). It was also noted from the reviewed literature that coaches and coaching style had some influence on athlete experience and contributed to athlete success and dropout rates for certain youth (Koester, 2000; Murphy, 1985; Quain, 1989; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). Most notably described in the literature review was that of parental influence, which seems to have had deepest impression on children's lives as they experience athletic competition and sport. (Coakley, 1992; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005)

As we juxtapose non-indigenous and Native Americans within this topic, researchers have identified some cultural and social commonalities and differences. In 2006, LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, and Whitbeck studied American Indian (AI) youth resilience. Their study confirmed that AI youth faced many stressors (e.g. poverty, social oppression, discrimination) which impact daily lived experiences, both culturally and socially. LaFromboise et al. also recommended and is supported by other findings (LaFromboise & Medoff, 2004), that Native American communities bear some responsibilities for caring for the families and children that are in need of assistance.

Physical Education and Sport: Elementary Focus

There has been research and discussions within the professional realm of physical education, in regards to the elementary curriculum, to determine the benefits, values, experiences, and issues of sports education in youth (Capel & Whitehead, 2012; Hardman & Marshall, 2005; Pringle, 2010). A simple illustration of this idea would be PE teachers teaching a fine motor skill such as cup stacking to third graders versus coaching the same group to execute the fundamentals of a pick and roll in basketball. The distinguishing factors here are what is being taught. Cup stacking is a fine motor skill learned in physical education that a wide range of students can draw upon and use throughout their lives across multiple facets, whereas executing a fundamental pick and roll only benefits a limited sector of the youth population.

This teacher-coach role conflict issue has placed PE teachers and coaches at odds in school districts for many years (Locke & Massengale, 1978). In some cases (e.g. rural elementary schools in Oklahoma) many individuals serve as physical educator and athletic coach, especially in the primary schools that offer competitive team sports. In some regards, sport education is offered as *the focus* within physical education curriculums and not as a complementary piece. Sidentop defines the sport education curriculum as a instructional model used in physical education that provides the students with a more straightforward sport experiences (1994). Traditional physical education curriculum is typically offered into shorter skill and activity based units. Sidentop suggests that sport education contrasts traditional style because it is offered over extended units or seasons throughout the school year (1998). Sport education is void of serious competitive actions like that seen in high school physical education and adult sport based activities (Sidentop, 1998). Rather the students are fully engaged throughout the time period and the skills required are developmentally appropriate for each

individual student (Sidentop, 1998). Sport education also recommends a more direct, one-on-one and peer directive as opposed to mass direction typically found in traditional physical education curriculum (Carlson, 1995; Grant, 1992; Sidentop, 1994). From observations, conversations, and personal experience, it should be explained that the elementary schools within the county of this study may believe they are following a version of the sport education curriculum model in their respective physical education classes. However, as one examines closer, the focus of these physical education classes seem to turn more toward the competition aspects of sports rather than the intended experiences and outcomes of sport education. A closer examination of this phenomena is warranted and is investigated in this study. Additionally, researchers have also asked if sport education curriculum is the right path for our youth (Penney, Clarke, & Kinchin, 2002). Their study challenges the legitimacy of the sport education model within physical education and determined that the concept be further evaluated.

Another potential subtopic at issue in education is the concept of hidden curriculum. This concept suggest to undermine the efforts of schools to teach students practical or functional behaviors in preparation for normal societal situations. Regalasky and Laurie eloquently speak to the authoritarian power of schools and the hidden curriculum, “Historically the school has introduced itself as directly representing the nation state authority and its symbolic system within the rural community space. As part of a ‘foreign’ power it has spoken a ‘foreign’ language, endangered the cohesive effects of oral institutions and has given urban answers to rural problems” (2007, p. 239). Social and educational research has publicized the idea of a hidden curriculum (Luykx, 1999) in educational institutions, including PE classrooms (Bain, 1985; Bain, Kirk, & Tinning, 1990; Weis, 1982). This concept is presented to highlight the idea of preparing students to assume athletic norms within physical education in some regards.

Unknowingly, PE teachers and coaches could be driving home a concept completely unrelated to lesson objectives in order to seize a coaching strategy or athletic skill. This complex issue could be taking hold within non-native, NA communities, and shared school systems alike.

Academics

The benefits of social development, psychological health, and academic achievement of children seem to be the primary research emphasis within the physical activity and competitive/team sports contexts. Since No Child Left Behind (2001), research has targeted academic outcomes associated with physical activity and sports. Howie and Pate's (2012) research indicated there are mostly positive academic achievement results from increased physical activity. However, they go on to note that most research done within the past 10-15 years has shown mixed results in this area, observing that some research tends to only highlight positive results (Howie & Pate, 2012). A comprehensive research review on the social and psychological benefits of sport participation for children was conducted by Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, and Payne in 2013. Their review concluded that sports participation does positively impact children's psychological and social health. Other social development research, like that of Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin (2003), suggests children who participate in sport had a higher negative peer interaction rates as they attended school. This may be in part due to the competitiveness of some children while engaging in sport competition.

There have been numerous empirical studies showing the impacts, both positive and negative, of athletic competition, sport, and physical activity on academics at the secondary and collegiate levels (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Broh, 2002; Clark & Parette, 2002). Specific theories such as *the leading crowd* hypothesis (Rehberg, 1969) propose that participation in sports and high peer status attribution are interconnected. Essentially, Rehberg theorized that often high-

achieving (often college bound) student-athletes tend to coningle, thus contributing to increased academic performance. As student-athletes achieve more success on the playing field their efforts outside can often suffer. Conversely, a study by Blann (1985) indicated that college athletes are negatively affected by high level competition, thus compromising their education plans and competence to chose career goals.

Qualitative Research In Physical Education and Sport

The serious study of sport within academia has been mostly understated (Majumdar, 2002). Researchers can certainly fall short when collecting evidence for their study. However, it is the duty of the researcher to ensure quality and quantity of the data collected. Yin (2011) proposes that a qualitative researcher uses all accounts of evidence, not just their firsthand evidence, to validate points made. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) make a request in their article to maintain reliability and validity within qualitative research. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) established early on the concept of trustworthiness to ensure rigor within qualitative research.

Qualitative investigators have sought out meaningful and descriptive data, uncovering thought provoking results with regards to research pertaining to health, physical education, sport, and recreation professions. Some of these notable studies include Hassandra, Goudas, and Chroni's (2003) study on intrinsic motivation in physical education, Hill and Shaw's (2013) qualitative investigation into choking in team sports, and Burnett and Hollander's (2004) exemplar work on South African children's games. These studies highlight the significant impact of qualitative research within these subjects and the how crucial it is that qualitative research continues to be carried out.

The methodological idea of *emergent design* may be defined and explained at this crucial point for the purpose of this study. Emergent design is a methodology approach of qualitative research that permits the inductive analysis and continuous assessment of the data (Dick, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is the *understanding* that the researcher seeks, not just a statistical number. This method involves a critical human comprehension of the ‘what is happening here phase’ of qualitative research. Therefore, the researcher must not transfer any preconceived findings because this would discredit the overall conceptual layout of this type of qualitative research.

Summary

The literature gathered and reviewed in Chapter Two reflects the knowledge and ideas relevant to this topic of research. Highlighted first in the review was the culturally rich history of the Cherokees. Evidence from the forced removal of the Cherokees from their original lands in the Eastern U. S. has shown a lingering distrust among the Cherokee people toward the U. S. government. Hence, the Cherokee Nation takes pride and ownership in self-governance. This government has provided leadership for its people through good times and bad. The population of Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma has reached 126,000. Furthermore, the Cherokee Nation governs the fourteen counties within its tribal jurisdiction, operates businesses, and provides financial support to the communities and schools of the nation. While most of the Cherokee Nation sees progress both socially and economically, there are isolated areas that have seen and continue to see socioeconomic stagnation. The Cherokees continue to face many health disparities too. These barriers include inadequate education, health care discrimination, poverty, and substandard social conditions. As with most populations these barriers often lead to shorter lives and increased propensity for diseases.

The second piece of reviewed literature is Native Americans in athletic competition and sport. Sociocultural and racial identity within Native Americans are often tied to specific activities (e.g. stickball and endurance running). These traits were examined and documented throughout Indian assimilation and education in the 1900's. Indian assimilation schools like Carlisle and Haskell produced many notable sports figures of the time. Most notably, Jim Thorpe became a sports icon and Olympic hero after his time at Carlisle. Through rich history the Native American athlete can be revered, however, the contemporary Native American athlete, especially college bound athletes, are few in numbers; self-identified Native Americans offer less than one percent of college athletes.

A review of athletic competition, sport, and physical education in the United States was examined next. Merkel suggested that approximately 45 million U. S. youth participate in sports today (2013). The prodigious number of parents involved in youth sports, as well as community and school involvement, has become commonplace. Moreover, parent/coach, school, peer, and community influences have been examined within many different research areas such as, social identity, physical education, and psychological research (Carlson, 1995; Grant, 1992; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Howie & Pate, 2012; Sidentop, 1994).

The benefits of sports and physical activity to student performance in academics was the next topic of review. Research continues to support a positive link between physical activity and increased academic performance (Davis et al., 2011; Howie & Pate, 2012; Roberts, Freed, & McCarthy, 2010). These studies suggest positive social contributions (e.g. peer interactions) of physical activity (e.g. athletic competition), while others show negative contributions. There are mixed reviews on this topic and further studies are warranted.

Finally, a brief review of qualitative research in the areas of physical education and sport revealed the impact of several noteworthy studies. One such study of importance was Hassandra, Goudas, and Chroni's 2003 piece. This research determined that social/environmental factors can influence a student's intrinsic motivation in physical education. These social or environmental factors impact the way students or a person in general view their situation and could determine one's experiences.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter Three is comprised of the methodology and research design, which begins with the site and sample selection for this qualitative study. The selection process of the participants are explained next, which are then followed by the conceptual design. The chapter continues with research design and timeline as well as an explanation of depth versus breadth within the study. Chapter Three culminates with the data collection methods, the researcher's role in the management of the data, how trustworthiness was achieved, and analysis of the data.

Site and Sample Selection

Cherokee Nation encompasses fourteen counties in Eastern Oklahoma and one of these counties served as the site for the study because of the prodigious number of Cherokee Nation citizens-roughly 61% (State of the Cherokee Nation Health Report and Plan, 2013). Due to the qualitative nature and confidentiality of the participants, the researcher chose not to identify the county name, community names, and participant names. A homogeneous sampling technique was utilized for the participant selection based on the elite informant representative of this group (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). IRB regulations were stringently followed in order to protect participants and their given statements. Consent was given prior to any interviews. Developing a sound recruitment strategy for identifying participants is critical for any study, and for this study a participant recruitment plan was set into action. The first step, as the principal investigator (PI), was to attend five random community-based sporting events, prior to approaching any participants for interviews; this was utilized as an initial participant recruitment tool and to build proper rapport within the communities. As the study progressed, face-to-face recruitment, word of mouth, texts, and phone calls were used to facilitate participant

involvement. The goal was to recruit a homogenous group of participants that are sensitive to the sociocultural context of the study; therefore, some social and contextual conversations took place prior to selection of participants.

Participants

The study consisted of 15 adult participants (Creswell, 1998), who are Cherokee tribal members and live in Oklahoma. The PI was the only person conducting the interviews. Prior to each interview, each participant consented to the study by signing and initialing the consent forms, which, if desired, was emailed or given to the participant in person. Before each interview session, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, as well as the confidentiality of their answers. Each participant was given a twenty-dollar gift card following completion of the interview.

As seen in Table 3.1, 15 total participants, 8 male and 7 female, were interviewed for this study and were primarily selected based on three criteria (1) Cherokee citizenship, (2) adult over the age of 21, and (3) experienced athletic competition and sport while growing up in the county where the study took place. Participants were also identified and chosen based on what elementary school they attended for the purpose of broadening the scope of elementary school representation within the county. Occupation was also asked but was not part of the recruitment process. The principal investigator used word-of-mouth, phone calls, text messages, and community meetings to recruit participants. Additionally, Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board (CNIRB) as well as the principal investigator's Institutional Review Board gave full approval prior to the start of the study. CNIRB agreed to be the IRB on record, and any changes or issues that arose was first approved by the dissertation committee, then by university IRB, and finally by CNIRB committee.

Table 3.1*Interviewee Demographics*

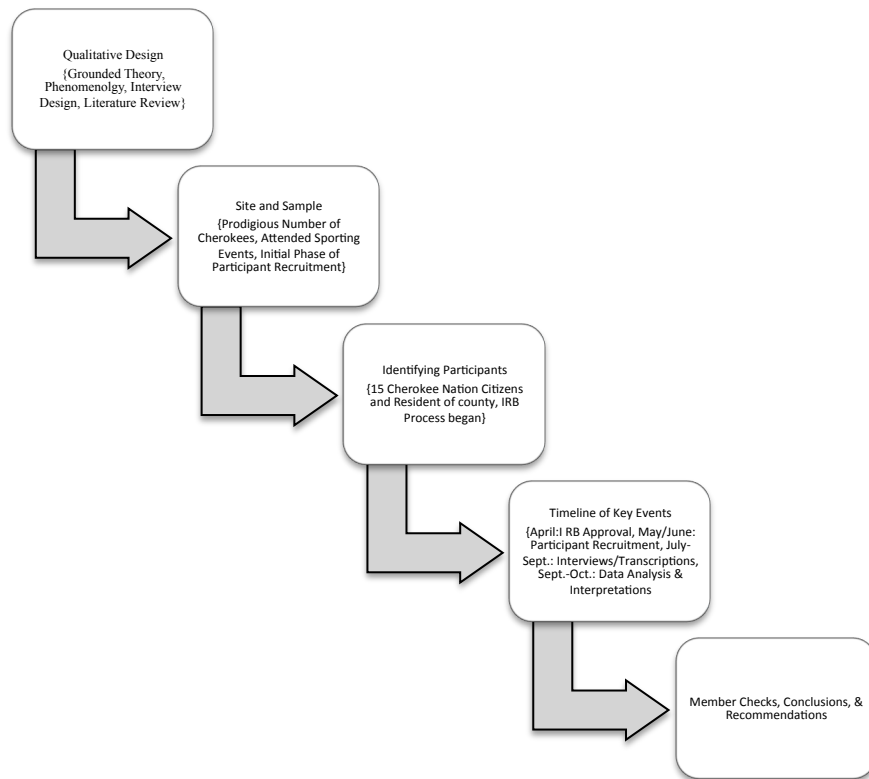
#	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
1	<i>Emma</i>	Female	38	Professional
2	<i>Thomas</i>	Male	54	Education
3	<i>Sarah</i>	Female	38	Education
4	<i>Nora</i>	Female	47	County
5	<i>Robert</i>	Male	51	Electrician
6	<i>Levi</i>	Male	21	Student
7	<i>Eli</i>	Male	36	Construction
8	<i>Leah</i>	Female	41	Education
9	<i>Melanie</i>	Female	46	Project Director
10	<i>Abby</i>	Female	37	Education
11	<i>Lucy</i>	Female	32	Teacher Assistant
12	<i>Parker</i>	Male	34	Electrician
13	<i>Dirk</i>	Male	36	Self Employed
14	<i>Cole</i>	Male	34	Finance
15	<i>Stan</i>	Male	45	Education

There were no anticipated risks to participating in the study. The goal was to utilize strategies within the qualitative research field to protect participants, such as clearly stating purpose, obtaining consent, protecting confidentiality, and reflexivity throughout the analysis (Richards & Schwartz, 2002). If participants felt uncomfortable at any time while being interviewed they could remove themselves from the study without penalty.

Conceptual Design

The purpose of the conceptual design is to provide the reader with a visual representation of the qualitative research used within the design of the study. *Figure 3.1, Qualitative Research Design*, is an arrangement of the specific qualitative processes utilized for this study.

Figure 3.1 Qualitative Research Design



Research Design and Timeline

The qualitative study was designed to examine the sociocultural experiences of Cherokee adults surrounding athletic competition and sport. A phenomenological approach was employed to examine the lived experiences of the participants. Additionally, grounded theory was used as an application to collect and analyze the data. Semi-structured interview protocols (See Appendix *Interview*) were used to assess the range and scope of these sociocultural experiences. The study took place from May, 2016 through October, 2016. IRB protocol was approved by the researcher's institution and through Cherokee Nation IRB prior to start. Research design

elements such as site and sampling procedure, choice of participants, depth versus breadth, and data collection are discussed in further detail throughout this chapter.

Depth and Breadth

The strength of data collected will ultimately rest within the density of the contextual information (Todres & Galvin, 2008). Qualitative researcher looks to uncover this strength, which is embodied by the depth of the data. Depth and breadth will be achieved using phenomenology. Phenomenology involves cyclic research, which seeks to understand particular phenomena of lived experiences (Van Manen, 1997, 2007). Such extensive sociocultural aspects of life such as pressures in youth sport involvement, community settings, ethnic and racial histories, can all be dynamic details and tell vivid stories. This story-telling journey best describes breadth within the conditions of this study. The goal of achieving depth and breadth throughout this research is twofold: (1) to provide insight into this often overlooked population and generate thick description and meaning for future research, and (2) to understand a complex lived experience in the participant's culture and world. Conversely, quantitative research relies heavily on formed hypotheses and applied deduction from the data analysis.

Trustworthiness

In general, a qualitative study relies heavily on the trustworthiness of the researcher. Trustworthiness was achieved through four levels of trustworthiness from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) established techniques: (1) prolonged engagement (2) persistent engagement (3) triangulation of the data (4) member checks. The following sub-headings addresses each of these trustworthiness strategies. Furthermore, I discuss how each of these strategies were woven into the fabric of trustworthiness throughout this study.

Prolonged Engagement. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the trustworthiness of a researcher and his or her scope of study is partly dependent on prolonged engagement. In the case of this study, my time (29 years) spent living in the community, learning the intricacies of the Cherokee culture, and building the proper trust allows me to better understand the context of my research question (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Yin, 2014). During the approximately six months of the study the researcher spent approximately twenty hours at various sporting events observing, carrying on conversations, and building trust within the community. This allowed adequate time to recruit participants, discuss the context of the study with participants, conduct interviews, and allow for member checks.

Persistent Engagement. The idea of persistent engagement is another tool to reassure the reader of the trustworthiness of the data provided. It allows the researcher to identify specific characteristics of a culture, note many of the important attributes, and any special traits that are keys to the importance of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Erickson noted that researchers can assure readers of adequate data through discrepant case analysis (1986). This process, which was utilized throughout analysis, involved repeated comparisons of analyzed findings and situational phenomena to disconfirm the data (Morrow, 2005). This search process revealed no discrepant cases and verified the true experiences of the participants involved. The homogeneous sample had similar experiences and this was confirmed through parallel answers in the data and member checks. Exploring the details, learning more about the culture of the Cherokees, and having experience in research design ensure that an appropriate level of persistent engagement was reached.

Triangulation. Qualitative researchers also strengthen their studies by using a simple strategy called triangulation. There are many ways to apply triangulation, but Denzin (1987)

identifies four basic types of triangulation: (1) data triangulation (2) investigator triangulation (3) theory triangulation (4) methodological triangulation. In qualitative research there is no set framework or outline to follow when it comes to triangulation. Yin (2011) even suggest that triangulation can be used as a mindset as opposed to a method. However, in the instance of this study, a combination of Denzin's basic types of triangulation was borrowed to further support its trustworthiness and credibility. The convergence of the interpreted data (data triangulation) and existing theory (theory triangulation) as represented in the findings can be detected throughout the study, particularly in the data analysis. The qualitative research design allowed for other triangulation to occur through interviews, observations, and the researchers own lived experiences (methodological triangulation).

Member Checks. Member checks was another source of trustworthiness used to establish meaningful credibility of the data recorded and initiate the data analysis process. Participants were asked to read over the transcribed interviews and make the appropriate corrections. Following qualitative design, themes and codes were extracted and ultimately written out into the researcher's interpretations. Once again, participants were granted the right to read through all portions of their interview and the researcher's interpretations. Participants could challenge any of the findings as well as volunteer more information at their digression (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Procedure

The primary qualitative strategy was face-to-face, semi-structured, and open-ended interview questions. While using myself as the research instrument, and having been born and live in the county, a proper amount of rapport was established prior to approaching interviewees

in order to secure particular contexts within the interview process. The data collection process, which mostly involves the interviews, is described below in more detail.

Interviews. Interviews took place in person (Patton, 2002), in the community, using a interview protocol script (see Appendix *Interview*), a simple recording device, and hand written notes. Participant informed consent was obtained prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted in a quiet location so that the recording device picks up both voices. Demographic questions were asked first and then a semi-structured script of questions and probes followed. Clarifying and follow-up probe questions followed each of the questions to provide participant answers with more detail and richness. A conversational mode of interview was the goal throughout the interview. This structure allowed the participant to respond in a relaxed and open manner, which is more conducive in a qualitative setting. Generally, the interview attempted to be non-directive so responses are true to the lived experiences and in their own words. The questions were open-ended and semi-structured in nature to ensure a descriptive narrative in the responses. The average interview session was forty-five minutes.

The questions were thoughtfully designed to deliver the appropriate attention to the context of the study and were approved through two faculty experts and a CNIRB qualitative expert. However, to initiate refinement into the study, the interview protocol was piloted twice with two different adult Cherokee citizens to troubleshoot any errors. These pilot interviews were recorded and transcribed so that the PI and faculty experts could check for any linguistic errors, detect ambiguities, and proper question representation to decide if any items should be altered or omitted. Pilot interviews and subsequent edits followed all IRB procedures, rules, and regulations.

Researcher's Role in Management

As the principal investigator, I functioned as the research instrument throughout the interviews. Having been raised in the community where the study was conducted, I feel a connection to the people of Cherokee Nation and to the circumstances surrounding the sociocultural contexts of the research question. The link I have had to the community and its members allowed me to make personal contacts prior to the study and stake out where the actual study took place. The exclusiveness of this culturally significant study allowed for thick, descriptive responses and the genuine lived experiences of the participants.

Managing and Recording Data

As the principal investigator, I was in charge of all data collection and management. Confidentiality throughout the entirety of the study was stringently followed. Interviews were recorded via handheld audio recording device and then audio files were immediately placed onto a password secure personal laptop computer. Each audio file was deleted from the handheld device after the file was backed up with a thumb drive. The files were labeled by interview sequence, [*Audio File Interview_1*, for example], instead of names to secure anonymity of the participants. All thumb drives and personal computers were locked up in file cabinets when not in use. The audio files were then transcribed via transcriptionpanda, a secure online transcription service.

Analysis of the Data

The objective of this study was to closely examine the experiences of Cherokee citizens in athletic competition and sport while growing up in a rural Oklahoma county. However, the fundamental goal of this research project was to form meaning to a specific phenomenon. This design fell under a phenomenological framework or philosophy. In phenomenology, the primary

source of data (as with this study) came from the interview transcripts. This style ensured an investigation into a particular phenomenon case via real world context (Yin, 2011). However, the main qualitative method for collecting and analyzing the data drew from the grounded theory (GT) approach (Charmaz, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is a tried and true qualitative research method which was established by qualitative researchers, Strauss and Corbin in 1967. As defined by Strauss and Corbin, “the grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (1990, p. 24).

Essentially, GT is the empirical application of data collection and analysis. This approach allowed the researcher to develop theory based on the data. Throughout the grounded theory method researchers must identify concepts and sources, distinguish between commonplace and phenomenon, ignore norms, construct new perspectives, organize raw data, and formulate theory (Charmaz, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The goal was to originate sociocultural theory about a particular phenomenon based on the human evidence derived from the data (Miller, 1999) and grounded in the literature (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Early on, inductive procedures supported by theory and the development of theory could not take place until the data revealed itself to the researcher (Creswell, 2012). From the ongoing analysis and the sociocultural complexity of the data two theories served as application for the theoretical course. The application of multiple theoretical perspectives in qualitative research is not unusual (Andersen & Kragh, 2010; Lewis & Grimes, 1999). Andersen and Kragh offer this statement in regards to developing theoretical course, “the ability to apply multiple theoretical perspectives is an essential aspect of gaining theoretical sensitivity in theory-building qualitative research, because it may prevent researchers from becoming blinded by one particular theoretical perspective” (2010, p. 51). The first theory

is Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory. It essentially suggests that individuals develop a sense of person based on a group. And the second theory is athletic identity theory, supported by Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, (1993). It proposes athletic identification of an individual's identity is perpetuated by their athlete role. The social identity these individuals (the participants) were aspiring to achieve are intrinsically linked to their athletic identity. It should be noted to the reader that these theories are discussed further in the interpretation of the data in Chapter Five.

The task of the researcher during the coding process was to synthesize the sizeable amounts of data. Therefore, after the interviews and transcription process, the data were analyzed beginning with the open coding phase. Using myself as the research instrument, I read and re-read the transcriptions multiple times looking for themes and concepts. The data was then coded by hand and line-by-line, highlighting common words, phrases, and concepts that appeared across all transcriptions (Hahn, 2008). This initial 'breaking down' process produced the open codes from the data. These open codes were then grouped into categories and given a name. The second phase yielded the axial codes or themes through an inductive connection of the open codes (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Yin, 2011). During this exploratory phase, identified themes emerged from the open coded categories thus producing the six axial codes. The six axial codes identified here are: reputation, influence, culture, community, psychosocial identity, and family. The axial codes are discussed with greater detail in Chapter Four. Finally, the selective codes were extracted by identifying the key attributes and properties of the axial codes, thus producing core categories, which give this study meaning and detail. The data logically revealed themes and categories, which emerged from the participant's quotes (Strauss & Corbin,

2008; Yin, 2011). This eventually led to the establishment of the three selective codes: Cherokee Culture, Psychosocial Identity, and Athletic Competition.

Additionally, and once the data is analyzed, the qualitative strategy of narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008; Chase, 2005; Clandinin, 2006; Murray, 2009) was used to relay findings to the reader that emphasize the real world conditions unfolding. As with the interview style approach here, the data rolled in like waves; therefore, it was imperative to conduct ongoing analysis of the data and discover possible discrepant cases (Robinson, 1951). It is hoped that by the transparency of the design process, the phenomenological framework, researcher experience, participant involvement, and data collection, a non-prescriptive interpretation was discovered throughout the study and relayed to the reader (Nolen & Talbert, 2011). The coding process and selective code analysis is discussed further in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Chapter Five also recaps the grounded theory method utilized in this research and from that, how the selective codes were determined.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into a sociocultural phenomenon within the Cherokee culture surrounding athletic competition and sport. Chapter Four is the presentation of the data from the transcribed interviews of the Cherokee participants. The chapter is comprised of a description of the audience, interviewee demographics, transcriptions, audit trail notations, and the presentation of axial codes.

Transcriptions

The fifteen interviews took place over a month long period. Each interview was face-to-face and semi-structured using a script of questions and follow up probes (see Appendix *Interview*). Each interview was captured digitally using a hand held recording device and was then transcribed word for word. To protect the participant's confidentiality, no relating or identify information was used in this document (i.e. county name, schools, community, workplace, residence). Brackets were utilized to protect identifying information. The following are examples of how identifying information may be used later in the document: "*When |school name| goes to play other county schools during the school day the students get out of class around nine and don't return until lunch.*" If a community name was mentioned, it was bracketed and the phrase *community name* replaced the real name of the community: |community name|. Pseudonyms were used for participants' real names to protect confidentiality as well (Table 3.1). The following is an example of how this will appear in the rest of the document: in the context of a direct quote, "*I believe athletics is important to most Cherokees*" [Emma, 4]. Emma is the pseudonym for the participant and 4 is the page number in that individual transcription. Another example is, if a community name was mentioned, it was bracketed and the phrase *community name* replaced the real name of the community: |community name|.

Presentation of Axial Codes

The first level of the coding process generated the open codes. These were determined based on the frequency, specific actions or events, and contextual details within the data or essentially data-driven, using the exact words of the participants. Next, in an attempt to move to a higher conceptualized space, axial codes were established by systematically linking the open codes (Yin, 2011). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define axial coding as “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding” and is accomplished by “utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (p. 96). Table 4.2 is the presentation of the axial codes accompanied by samples of open codes associated with that axial code. Data were analyzed and coded by hand. The analyzed data uncovered six axial codes: reputation, influence, culture, community, psychosocial identity, and family. The open codes data were interviewee’s own words from the transcriptions and the axial codes were then discovered through the analysis of the open codes. The axial codes are discussed in detail next with detailed analysis as well as participant verbatim quotes.

Table 4.1*Axial Codes with Sample of Open Codes*

Axial Codes	Sample Open Codes
Reputation	Known for something P.E. class being athletics Starting Early Rarely missed a game Its what we did Supposed to play
Influences	Peers Coaches Family Assumed you were going to play Just the way you were raised
Culture	We're all Indian, let's go do it Part of culture Prideful
Community	Church Attending games Filling up stands Poor area Everyone play sports
Psychosocial Identity	Strength Self-discipline No fighting Respect the game Compete
Family	Dad Older sibling Uncle Brother Pride in kids

Note. Axial Codes are categorical concepts and open codes are grouped data in the interviewee's own words.

Axial code: reputation. Reputation is the first axial code within this analysis. More examples of open codes in this group included: starting early, rarely missed a game, P.E. class being athletics, it is what we did, supposed to play, tradition, competitive sports are started at a young age, competing against each other during the school day, and thought I was better. To further aid in discovery of evidence, the following are the presentation of verbatim quotations from the transcribed interview associated with the axial code reputation.

When discussing her experiences in elementary school, Abby stated, “We actually never lost a ball game. Just kidding” (Abby, 2). But, I knew she wasn’t kidding, because her team actually never lost a basketball game in seventh or eighth grade. Later in the interview she talks about how other schools might view their system of starting students/kids at such a young age. “They thought we were crazy because we're playing ball against other teams in third grade” (Abby, 6).

Reputation as an axial code revealed itself again in the interview with Eli. He was speaking about the competitive sports in the county. “Nowadays it's really starting to get to be serious. Competition is really getting serious, and they take it to the extremes in this area” Eli, 10). Eli goes on to discuss some of the Cherokee reputation in sport and how it’s specifically viewed from the Cherokees themselves.

Right now, I think it's very important to the Cherokees because in the past there's been several Cherokees excel at different levels of competition and it always makes people in this area proud to see somebody going on to do big things. (Eli, 11)

Later, Eli stated his view on how athletics and sports are handled in the county. “Around here, it's a way of life, athletics, sports, and competition. It's just a way of life. That's what people live for and you can see that all over” (Eli, 15).

More participants explain how schools in the area have certain reputations. “I think that competition that we experienced at |school name|, because it is a play to win school, you know... it's always been that way” (Cole, 9). “I just know the schools in |county name| are real competitive” (Robert, 8). “You had no choice in elementary school, and in rural Oklahoma you played sports” (Nora, 3). “Tradition. They've always been competitive. In order to be competitive and win ball games, you got to practice. You started in third and fourth and you just kind of built on that” (Abby, 6).

I think it's important and it's a good part of school because you'll have so many kids, especially around here, that's the only reason they go to school because they want to play football or whatever. So, if that gets them in school, then I think that's a good thing. (Sarah, 9-10)

At |school name|, P.E. and athletics were the same thing because we were such a small school. Either you played the sport or you did nothing. So, usually, everyone participated in softball practice or basketball practice. (Sarah, 5)

I guess it had just always been that way. That's what you do. All the schools compete against one another in all the same sports. That's just how it is. I don't know if I know why. That's just how it was always done. (Nora, 6-7)

Then Dirk shared thoughts on the some of the coaches in the county.

I was shocked at the coaching, the way they were hollering. One coach took a basketball and slammed it on the ground. Anywhere I'd ever been--in Kansas and Missouri, that would've been a technical foul. They would've probably ejected him or whatever. But here, they just say, "Oh, that's just old coach so-and-so. That's just how he is." (Dirk, 21)

The interviews with Parker, Stan, and Lucy gave even more insight into the county's competitive sports culture reputation. Parker stated, “They start them really young and have a lot of first and second grade tournaments now, more than they did before. They have a lot of leagues around here now” (Parker, 13). He added to this later, “Hopefully, everything's working out for everybody, where they're going to keep wanting more and more. The goals will keep getting higher and higher, whether they are Cherokee Indian or non-Cherokee. I just want the

kids to do good” (Parker, 14). “I think we produce really good athletes in [county name], because when we go and play other counties they go and play and they succeed. Like, they did really well” (Lucy, 20). Stan states his thoughts on the abilities of Cherokee youth in athletics,

[The youth] have good hand-eye coordination. Strength. They're stronger at a younger age. And they may not be as big as some of the other kids, but they'll be just as strong and faster. We just develop more at a younger age. (Stan, 17)

Dirk speaks to the reputation of Cherokees and non-Cherokees and their position on athletic competition and sport within the county. “I think it's because the population's so small that everybody wants to be known for something, or at least their kids known for something” (Dirk, 5). Dirk speaks to the importance of sports.

I think it's pretty important to a lot of Cherokees that the kids play ball and do good at it. I think they put emphasis on kids that maybe aren't physically built for certain sports, but they want them all to play and all to be good and to get playing time. I think it's a pretty big thing with Cherokee people. (Dirk, 16)

Additionally, Emma, Thomas, and Levi stated this about the reputation, “Maybe it's because just everybody plays sports around here. Everybody does softball, basketball, and track. Those are the sports that are played. There isn't an outside sports club here” (Emma, 6). “There are sports played at a young age in P.E. class. Athletic competition and sport starts out really young—in first grade, even kindergarten” (Emma, 15). “Around our place, either you were playing sports or you were working, so that was an easy choice. We played sports all we could” (Thomas, 6). “I kind of did it because people always talked about doing it” (Levi, 2). “It always seemed like everybody assumed you would play sports, so I believe it's kind of a norm” (Levi, 16).

In summary, the first axial code extracted from data was reputation. The participants’ verbatim quotes expressed, on many levels, the reputation of being competitive and sport minded while growing up in the area. These experiences, from starting sports at a young age, to playing

competitive tournaments all the way through school and even outside of school, even being viewed from outside communities as a known for taking sports seriously has become partly the county's reputation.

Axial code: influence. Influence is the second axial code. Examples of open codes that were in this group included: peers, coaches, family, supporting, assumed you were going to play, just the way you were raised, be a state champion, dad always pushed me, only reason they go to school, be good, and schools.

Participant's discussed their biggest influences for competing in sports while growing up in the community. Here are examples of particular influences that are displayed in the following verbatim quotes from the transcriptions.

Most of the participants spoke about an array of influences while growing up and playing competitive sports in the county. Peers or friends, coaches, and relatives seemed to keep coming up in the interviews most often. Additionally, influence from the area or culture contributed to participant's experiences in athletic competition and sport. Emma begins with this statement,

It was assumed I was going to do it. My mom assumed I was going to do it. My teachers, my coaches, and my friends — we all did it. So, I think it was probably just a combination of everybody and everything around us. (Emma, 7)

Emma goes on, but discusses the socioeconomic climate of the area and how class might influence particular situations,

We're in a poor area and sometimes education takes the back burner to the need to make money, and it's that need for money in the present that is sometimes more important than the opportunity to go out there and get a better job later in life. Sometimes the need to make money is more important, or you just don't see yourself or don't see anybody from your neighborhood or your community going to get that higher education degree, and you don't feel like it's even an option. (Emma, 14-15)

Furthermore, participants state who or what had influenced them to play and compete in sports. “I would say my biggest influence was my group of friends. Because everybody did it, so that's what I was going to do” (Cole, 6-7). “I always remembered him [an uncle] because they talked a lot about him, how good he was. I wanted to be like him as I grew up, because he played every sport, and I wanted to be like him” (Parker, 6). “I would say definitely the biggest influence was my coaches at [school]” (Abby, 7). “I always worshiped my older sister, so I wanted to do whatever she did. And because, at [school name], you just played the sport and of course, my dad always pushed me into basketball and stuff” (Sarah, 7).

It had to be my dad, because he was a coach. Not that he ever made us play, but just because he knew and he could help us and he encouraged us and he worked with us at home, or took us to a gym so we could. (Leah, 7)

“Probably my dad. I've heard him talk about playing sports when they were young. Sports always just interested me, always” (Robert, 8).

Participants also spoke to the influence of the environment at home and how it plays an important role in this context. “They push their children to play and to compete, and as adults some Cherokees still participate in tournaments and do things in sports” (Lucy, 12).

I think they know it makes their parents proud that they play in their particular sporting event. I do think some of them feel pressure from home to play because that's what mom or dad wants them to do, and sometimes they're just out there to be out there. And then they get scolded on the side because they didn't play well or, you know, "you need to practice more," because I've heard that as a spectator just watching the events. (Leah, 20)

I'm specifically talking about my experiences in this area, so when you're in competition and sport in this area, that's 90%, that's what you're around, is Cherokees and Native Americans. So, I think they really put a lot of emphasis on it nowadays. (Eli, 10)

I think that pressure comes from home, but also I think that comes from a lot of the coaching and a lot of the adults that are working with them. Not necessarily the school coaches, but also the youth coaches. (Abby, 25)

“Well, for me, it was just no question I was going to do it, so I guess I would say just everybody in my environment or the culture of the area” (Emma, 7).

In summary, influence is the second axial code of the data analysis. Participants stated on many occasions that peers, family members, and coaches had the most influence on them when it came to competing in sports. The data also revealed that the area (small town, rural area) home culture of the Cherokees played a vital role in influencing participant’s experiences in athletic competition and sport.

Axial code: culture. Culture is the third axial code. Open codes that were in this group included: culture of the area, culture shaping people, we’re all Indian-let’s go do it, country kids, Cherokees are more in tune to athletic competition, promote the culture, Cherokees do struggle with the importance of education, part of culture, shy, summer softball, basketball, volleyball, horseshoes, education is down on most lists, compete with one another, tough for us to go on, don’t like crowds.

In this context, the word *culture* is used to describe the Cherokee belief system, customs, a way of life in this particular area, and may or may not reflect the entire Cherokee culture. Moreover, culture could be a distinct way of acting, behaving, or social practices within a specific group of people.

Stan and Dirk state similar thoughts on the culture and how their experiences were growing up in the area. “We practiced every day. It's always been done that way” (Stan, 4-5). “It's just the way you were raised” (Stan, 12). “I think it was because of the people around me, you know cultural. I think, you know, everybody wanted to be the star athlete for something, so it was just something I think that everybody did” (Dirk, 3).

I think that's part of the culture-is to compete with one another. They have a Cherokee stickball, they call it, and I know people that play, and they'll be

bleeding, cut up, diving, and dirty. And nobody ever fights. They respect the game and the culture. You're not supposed to get mad and fight even if somebody, you know, roughs you up a little. That respect for the culture; you're not supposed to fight out there. But that competition, I think, is a big part of the culture. It's baseball and different sports. (Stan, 10)

“It was just whatever the season was. If it was football, then everybody was playing football. If it was basketball, everybody's doing basketball. When it was track, everybody was doing track” (Dirk, 5).

Robert, Nora, and Levi explain similar thoughts on the roles of athletic competition and sport within the Cherokee culture. “I think it's kind of ingrained [athletic competition and sports]. Cherokee people have always been real athletic” (Robert, 11). “You know, they played sports. I mean, even if it was just amongst themselves, families doing whatever, they did that. So, it was a part of their heritage” (Nora, 11). “I think it might be passed on from the older generations” (Levi, 18).

The Cherokee culture and the relationships with sport and games are brought up once again in these statements from Thomas and Parker.

We try to keep some of the culture. We want to promote the culture of the Cherokees and a lot of that stuff involves playing games like stickball. They have all kinds of really neat games. So it must have been important a long time ago to the Cherokees for them to do that and I think our Cherokee people have embraced the fact that games and sports and being healthy is important. (Thomas, 12-13)

There are schools that are just almost all Indian, like [school names], and they're pushing it [sport and athletic competition]. And I know that they're telling them, hey, let's go! Let's go do it! We can do this! We're all Indian; let's go do it. (Parker, 16)

Emma, Cole, and Stan added these statements concerning the combination of Cherokee culture and athletic competition in the area. “It's part of the culture here, especially basketball. That's just an important part of, I don't know, kids' lives growing up” (Emma, 6). “I think it's

probably always been very important, sport and competition, pride. Cherokees can be prideful people” (Emma, 11). “I think it's very important to the Cherokee culture as far as where they place their importance on athletics” (Cole, 16). “I think the Cherokee youth are kind of pressured more to be better at a younger age than a non-Cherokee” (Stan, 20).

Participants also discuss the Cherokee culture within specific events of the communities. “Always playing something. You go to |community name| and they're playing stickball. They're playing football. They're playing, you know, basketball, something” (Nora, 13). “There's holiday events and stuff when they'll play traditional games, which is stickball and stuff like that” (Levi, 13). “I think that sports are a very big part of the culture here in this area” (Levi, 16). Cole mentions the sheer number of Cherokee players at a single event (a youth basketball tournament). “Not to put a percentage on it, but there is a whole lot of Cherokees and Cherokee youth within that tournament every Saturday” (Cole, 16).

Melanie and Abby share their thoughts about the culture of the area regarding athletics, competition, and education. “I think a lot of Cherokees rate it [athletics and competition] higher than they do education, excelling in sports higher than they do in schooling and education” (Melanie, 9).

There's a lot of importance placed on athletic competition, and sometimes almost too much, in my opinion, because if a child doesn't excel at that, sometimes I feel like they almost slip through the cracks at some of these schools. (Abby, 21)

Finally, Parker and Stan opened up about the view some Cherokees have in the realm of sports and competition.

A lot of Cherokees are shy. They don't like attention. They don't like crowds. That's why I push so much for the kids when I talk to them to go prove it, because a lot of people when we go play far off out of state, they talk to us and ask us if we still live in teepees and all this kind of stuff, and we've got to tell them no.

But what they see out of us is just people who don't talk, who don't want to be around crowds, who just want to be by themselves. I don't like that because we're not that way. A lot of us aren't. There is some still like that, but I don't like to be acknowledged as that when you go somewhere else. I want them to know that we're happy, we can do whatever they're doing. (Parker, 8)

The culture, it's tough for us to go on. I knew there's a few that have gone on, played in college, and even pro ball. If you look into it, it was the Cherokees that played, but the majority, we don't make it. (Stan, 24)

In summary, culture is the third axial code of this data analysis. The way of life in this area is often expressed through play and sport. Starting their youth in athletic competition and sport at an early age, often five or six years old, has been part of the tradition for years and seems to be practiced by the next generation of parents. The data showed obvious tendencies that the Cherokee culture has played a major role in the experiences of these participants.

Axial code: community. Community is the fourth axial code. Open codes that were in this group included: poor area, small town, big crowds, small community, unique situation, either you played sports or did nothing, church, attending games, filling up stands, gathering tool, everyone plays sports, pushed more around our area.

The discussion about community comes up often throughout the transcriptions. Participants suggested that the community in which they live, work, and play have had a significant impact on how they grew up and how they are currently raising their families. This is obvious from a number of the interviews. Thomas stated his thoughts on community, “It was a thing that you did in a small community, you played whatever was available to you, and that's just how it was” (Thomas, 3). He then speaks to Cherokee family unit within the community setting,

I know our Cherokee people are really good about doing things in group settings, and they do things in church, they do things with family. They like to have get-togethers, and I think they do a better job of promoting the whole family through that. I know they'll get together play wiffle ball in the backyard with all the

cousins. I think the Cherokees promote more family time than our other people do in our community. (Thomas, 9)

There are smaller communities, scattered throughout the county, which often have ‘gathering places’ for the residents. These could be churches, community centers established by Cherokee nation, or even private lands. Many of the gathering places have a basketball court (a simple concrete pad), volleyball net in the middle of a flat, grassy area, and often have a crude softball field with no fence. People from the community meet up and play various sports competitions such as volleyball, horseshoes, basketball, and softball, stickball, and Cherokee marbles at these gathering places. The following are examples of these community gathering places and the practices within these communities.

I see down here at |community name| they actually have a volleyball net set up constantly. You go down there to |community name| and see people playing softball all the time. You know, in their little community down there, I think it's pretty important because even the adults are still going to do that in their free time. (Abby, 11-12)

I know they do have teams [stickball], and I see guys playing at |park name| up there all the time, practicing. (Dirk, 10)

Around here, |community name|, these small communities and even up in the northern part of the Cherokee Nation I think it's a big thing. I don't want to say most, but a lot of Cherokees place high importance on it [sports]. They want their kids to be, you know, a real good baseball or basketball player. They'll borrow money to take their kid maybe to a camp and want them to do good. Once they get out of school here, around |community name|, they play more softball. As I mentioned earlier, there's a lot of horseshoe pitches as far as competing. (Stan, 9-11)

If you see three or four families gathered up they'll be competing against each other (Melanie, 6).

“They love it. They really do. You go anywhere down around |community name|, you'll see kids playing ball. Even adults will be out there with them. I think Cherokees like the

competition and the sport” (Parker, 10). “If you see Cherokees gathered, they're going to be doing some kind of sport and competing” (Melanie, 14). “Our church plays volleyball, softball, and basketball. They play [Cherokee] marbles too” (Lucy, 14).

The data also revealed a descriptive nature about how the communities and individuals in the county come out to support the games and the competition between the youth. “So, it can be quite the large crowds, honestly. I've been to a couple of them recently, kind of tournament type things at elementary schools, and it's impressive how many people are there” (Emma, 12). “I think the biggest sport in this county is softball. You can announce that there's going to be a softball tournament on a certain weekend and it'll bring them in” (Eli, 12).

While coding the data another open code, socioeconomic state, revealed itself in several different forms.

We live in a pretty poor area and sometimes the need to get out and get a job supersedes that opportunity to go out and get a higher education. When you go to school or college, you're not bringing in money, and sometimes that money is needed to help the family, or even the individual because they're not with their family anymore or that kind of thing. So, I think it's [education] important, but probably sometimes takes a backseat to other needs in this area. (Emma, 8)

People take off work [or could be unemployed] or there are big crowds at local elementary school tournaments; and Friday night football is a big thing and stands are always filled; and basketball games on Thursday nights or whatever at the high school are always really busy. (Emma, 17)

Kids that are coming from a poor socioeconomic region like this, education is their way out. To some kids, I know in their schools, athletics is their way out. And to me, here in |county name|, education is our chance for our kids to better themselves and make a better life for themselves. (Thomas, 6-7)

“It's a socioeconomic cycle that's not going to be broke until you get them to understand they have to go to school” (Melanie, 16).

I know there are a lot of kids that play a lot of sports in other communities. But around here it could be due to the level of income and poverty that we have

around here. Organized sports are basically something for people to do and something for people to take their kids to. (Cole, 7)

Several participants mention ORES (Organization of Rural Elementary Schools) in their interviews as an influential item within the county's dependent elementary schools. The following are two examples of this topic.

The hot thing [in elementary schools] right now in |county name| since we have all the dependent school districts is this ORES, which is an Organization of Rural Elementary Schools that has put together a competition at the end of every sport. They sponsor their own state championships, and that is the driving force right now in competition and sports in |county name|. It's the idea that their kid has a chance in fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth grade to be a state champion. And that has really driven their sports forward, I think, into more competition, better competition, and more aware of practice time, aids to help their kids get better. It is very important to these people to have their kid be involved in this ORES competition. (Thomas, 12)

There's a really neat thing called ORES that's a wonderful program for competitive athletics in rural schools. There are lots of good things from that. It's an organization, basically, that has a state competition, and you do regionals, districts, and you can make it to the state finals. (Abby, 17)

In summary, the fourth axial code is community. Communities of the county offer support in many ways. They bring together families by organizing tournaments and other friendly competitions. The Cherokee community places a high importance on spectating at athletic competitions. The data also revealed the acknowledgement that the communities within the county, in general, have been labeled as lower socioeconomic area, which could impact experiences.

Axial code: psychosocial development. Psychosocial development is the fifth axial code. Open codes that were in this group included: fun, brag, competition is good for kids, new friends, good experiences growth-wise, very positive, positive characteristics, strength, self-discipline, no fighting, respect the game, compete, gives the kid value, lack of knowledge, lot of pressure, chasing a scholarship, happy, loved the competition, life skills.

Thomas gives his thoughts on the psychosocial identity of the Cherokee people in conjunction with athletic competition and sports.

I think Cherokees are more in tune to athletic competition. They really like it more than the general public because it gives their child a chance to shine in spite of whatever their level of talent is and that they can use that talent in athletics, and it gives them a chance to be somebody; a chance to rise above the stigma, if there is a stigma, of being Cherokee. It allows them to rise above that and they can use athletic competition to better them and to get known and be known. It's a good self-esteem thing. I really believe that. (Thomas, 8)

They [Cherokee youth] have a sense of pride, of self-esteem, and I think it promotes so many positive characteristics in kids, I think that pride factor just goes way up and that want-to-work-hard factor goes up. There's just so many positive things that come from them competing in sports. (Thomas, 16)

Emma had this to say about psychosocial development,

Physical activity is good for you. Everybody knows that. It's good for your body. It's good for your health. But I think it's also an outlet. It's good for your mind as well — relieves stress, makes you feel better. I think competition is good. A little competition can make a person strive to be better, do better, excel, and I think that's a good thing. I think it helps kids be more well-rounded. (Emma, 9)

Participants continue the discussion on the social aspects of athletic competition and sports within the county. “For the kids, it's something to do. The competitive streak comes out” (Emma, 17). “I think they have fun and they get to brag when they win, and the other kids get to brag when they win. I think it's a good thing” (Emma, 18). “But yeah, it's like an event, you know, and there's not a whole lot to do in |county name|. So, going to games, you know, it's a pretty fun time” (Dirk, 10). “It gives them something to do. It keeps them out of trouble. And that's probably the only reason I stayed in school to get through |high school|, was when I went to play ball” (Robert, 10).

I think they have fun and they get to brag when they win, and the other kids get to brag when they win. I think it's a good thing. I had really good experiences growth-wise with getting to meet new people and new things. (Thomas, 2)

Nora shared her experiences and opinions on these social identities. “I was good, so it made me feel good. I wanted to be the best. I wanted to win. I wanted to be the best on the team” (Nora, 2). “Sports are important. They teach kids discipline. They teach them consistency” (Nora, 10). Abby added several comments regarding this subject, “Sports gave me confidence, because I was quicker and faster. That was one of the strengths God gave me. It gave me confidence not only on the field or on the court, but also in the classroom” (Abby, 3).

Life, to me, is all about competition. When you apply for a job, there might be ten other people, but you've got to figure out a way to make your resume and your interview go the best it can to get the job. But that's why I enjoy sports and athletic competition. I really think we learn from that life lessons. (Abby, 10)

In my opinion, a lot of kids get hooked early because they're successful. And if it makes them successful and gives them confidence and wants them to be at school and helps them with good attendance, I am all about it. (Abby, 10-11)

Parker said, “I've always loved just playing. It was awesome just the way it feels, just competing against different people. It just made me feel good” (Parker, 3).

Competition, I love it. I'll always love it. I don't like it when they say everybody should get a ribbon. I'm more for competition than that, because it teaches you life skills also, not just you deserve this because you came out to try. (Parker, 9)

Levi talks about his experiences, “Trying new things. I always wanted to try new things, see what I liked. They didn't always stick, but whenever I kept playing, it was because I liked it” (Levi, 4). “I think by middle school it [playing sports] becomes almost an identifying factor for people” (Levi, 17). “I think it gives you a feeling of being together with everybody and being a part of things” (Levi, 20).

Additionally, participants shared their feelings about the youth of the county and the social impact of athletic competition and sports. “I think if they feel successful at a young age and see what it's like to be successful and taste it, then they'll want to strive to always be

successful” (Lucy, 22). “Third and fourth grade is competitive now. Where first and second grade is the laugh and fun stuff, but I also see that as getting a little more competitive, too” (Robert, 25).

I think it's important because I think they need competitiveness. I think they need to be challenged. I think they need to learn that if they work at something, they can get better. Then you can use that in the classroom, you know. If you can practice this so many times out there on the ball field, you get better every day. If you practice your multiplication tables in the classroom, you'll get faster and better every day. (Leah, 9)

“A lot of the kids that enjoy playing sports, are your Cherokee kids” (Leah, 10). “I think they make their parents proud, but I think when you're competing in athletics, you probably feel proud yourself, of your own self” (Melanie, 23).

I think it is important for the parents to be there if they can because it just gives the kid value to know that they're cared for and that someone cares enough to come see them even if they have to take off work. (Sarah, 12)

In summary, the fifth axial is psychosocial development. Data revealed in the area suggest that athletic competition and being involved in sports as youth play an important role in the social development of these individuals. Most participants stated how they enjoyed being competitive and gain valuable experiences from playing these sports and interacting with others. The participants also shared similar ideas on the present youth within the county and how they probably feel more pressure than when they, themselves, were growing up.

Axial code: family. Family is the sixth axial code. Open codes that were in this group included: doesn't cost the kids any money, cheap for people to watch, important, parents take off work, promoting the whole family, encouraged, poor growing up, worshiped my older sister, dad, mother, uncle brother, pride in kids, get-togethers, parents involved, cousins, borrow money to take them to [sports] camp, not educated, want to help.

The family unit is very important to the Cherokee people. The evidence shed light on the togetherness of the family unit, the importance of church, the relentless pursuit of competition, and the unwavering support and fellowship of friends and relatives.

Leaning on his experiences as a youth in the Cherokee family, Stan expresses how the elders may have felt about athletic competition and sport for the family.

Our elders, grandparents and their age group, they want our kids to go to church. The elders did, you know. They didn't stress the importance to go to a ball game. They wanted you to go to church first, and we'll play ball when we have time, you know. That's the way I grew up. That's my view of it. However, to certain families, it's real important. It'll be a hundred degrees and they'll go sit out and watch their family, kinfolk play softball. And they enjoy it. They'll cook big and take it with them and just eat during the day. It's real important to them. (Stan, 10-12)

“Extended family go out and watch. We went and watched a nephew, so, I mean everybody gets involved” (Emma, 13). Leah stated, “I can drive by the little housing additions. They'll be outside playing volleyball, families will be. You'll hear the kids come to school talking about playing basketball with their friends, aunts, uncles, neighbors” (Leah, 11). “The parents really want to be involved and they want to watch their children play their sports or events” (Leah, 12). “I think some kids just learn they're going to be competitive from day one, especially if they have elder brothers and sisters” (Leah, 24). “I just think that the Cherokees push a little more with the athletics than the education versus the other people” (Leah, 18). “They (the family) want the sports, they want the kid to be great at whatever athletic competition they're involved in” (Leah, 8). Levi echoed this in his statements, “I think families get together and play a lot of sports. My girlfriend's family would always go and play basketball together. They were very proud of their heritage” (Levi, 13-14). “Everybody shows up, and even family will come out and watch” (Levi, 16). “Cherokees seem to value it a lot more. It's more of a family event for Cherokees” (Levi, 17). Cole had this to say about families,

I think it's something that it's used more for a gathering tool for people. Families can come together, friends can come together, and this is what we're going to do and this is what we're going to play today. (Cole, 11)

The steadfast support of at least one parent was mentioned throughout the interviews in multiple facets. “I've traveled all over the place to watch my daughter run track. I took off work to do it” (Robert, 15). “You see a lot of parents at ball games. I don't know if they work. I'm not sure. But I take off work to watch my children” (Lucy, 15). “I think they're really proud to see their kid out there and do great” (Melanie, 11). Thomas offers several thoughts on parent support. “It gives their child or their grandchild or great-grandchild an opportunity to be special, and every kid wants to be special” (Thomas, 9). “They have to try to find a way to swap something around at work some way to get around and go see that child. They do support their children in their activities very, very well” (Thomas, 10).

Most parents want their kids to be better than they were, whether it's in education or whether it's in sports or it's a job or whatever they do. As a parent, you want your kids to be better than you were. (Thomas, 17)

Eli stated this about the parents of the county, “Something else I've noticed is people will spend their every last penny traveling just going to watch their kids play sports. They schedule their life around their kids' sporting events” (Eli, 12-13). “I think this generation of Cherokees kind of puts a big demand on their kid to play, to try to perform well.” (Dirk, 10)

In summary, the sixth axial code is family. The data revealed the importance and impact family has on participant's experiences in athletic competition and sports while growing up in the area. The support from family has a strong impact and participants reciprocate the support and pass this on to their children as well. Parents place high demands on the children but show tremendous amounts of support that seems to agree with the competitive nature of the youth.

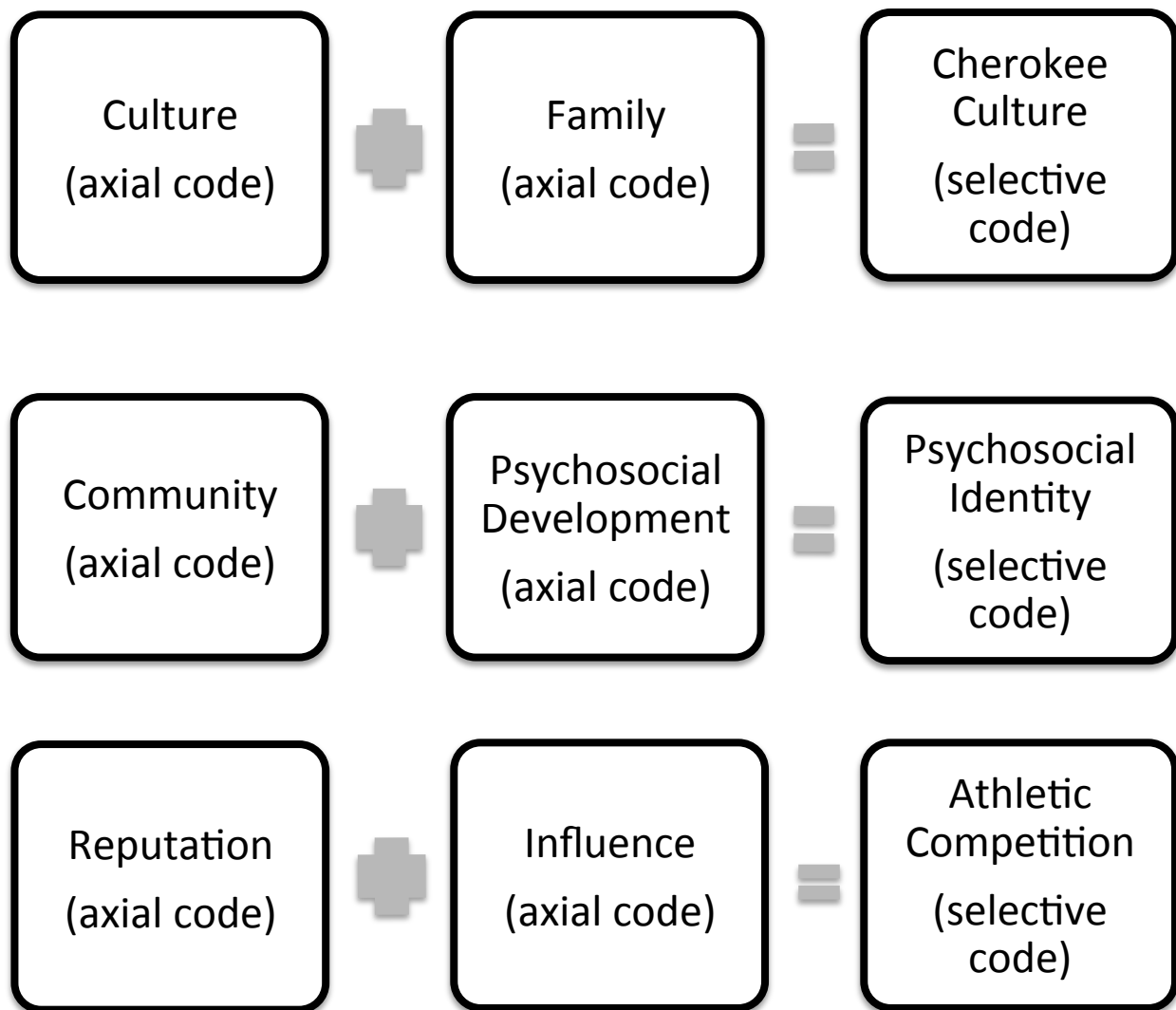
Summary

Chapter four was the presentation of the data, which revealed numerous open codes and a total of six major themes or axial codes. The first axial code was reputation. The communities within the county have a reputation of being quite competitive, especially in youth sports. The second axial was influence. Participants suggested many influences for playing and competing in sports as youth. The third axial code was culture. The culture of the Cherokees is rich in heritage and can be seen and heard throughout the interviews. The fourth axial was community. The traditional community of the past seems to be fading, but it seems this researched area has kept some traditional community affairs in place. The fifth axial code is psychosocial development. The areas of self-esteem, self-worth and pride show why athletic competition and sport play important roles within this culture. The sixth axial code was family. The family unit of the Cherokee unit is, not surprising, unflappable. The family always comes first at all cost.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The data uncovered three main selective codes: Cherokee Culture, Psychosocial Identity, and Athletic Competition. Figure 5.1 shows the reassembling process (Yin, 2011) between the six axial codes and the three selective codes.

Figure 5.1 *Reassembling of Axial and Selective Codes*



Additionally, this final chapter will revisit the research question and attempt to answer it based on these selective codes and supporting evidences. Finally, a summary of the findings as well as recommendations to the field and for future research will conclude the chapter.

Cherokee Culture was the first selective code identified through the coding process. The axial codes that led to the discovery of this selective code were *culture* and *family*. The recognition of culture throughout the data revealed that the history of the Cherokee people specific to the area, the similar beliefs system throughout the communities, and self-identity contributed to the participant's awareness of their culture. A partial quote from one of the participants expressed this awareness,

There are schools that are just almost all Indian and they're pushing it [sport and athletic competition]. I know that they're telling them, hey, let's go! Let's go do it! We can do this! We're all Indian, let's go do it. (Parker, 16)

Identifying Cherokee culture as a major theme within the scope of this study is reinforced by multiple studies across several disciplines. Cherokee culture was ultimately chosen in lieu of cultural identity because of the aim of the study and exclusivity of the Cherokee tribe within the county. The Cherokee people who live in this area take great pride in being Native American. These individuals seek to honor their culture through athletic competition. Another distinguishing trait of this particular Cherokee culture is its obsessive relationship with athletic competition and sport. This characteristic of being 'in tune' with everything sport-related, especially from a young age, has impacted the experiences of the youth and can be felt throughout the schools and communities. The beliefs and values created through competitiveness and year round sports has been rooted in the Cherokee culture for many years. I have lived it, seen it, played it, and researched it. I can offer these experiences as first hand observations and knowledge of how the Cherokee culture affects the way its people live through competition and

sport. It would be easy to assume this competitiveness and eagerness to play has been a fixture in the NA societies given the history of the tribal play (Place & Livengood, 2010). And I would suggest that the athleticism and abilities could be part of their gifts, however, the data suggest that the present Cherokee society combined with cultural heritage creates a strong willingness to compete and play sports no matter one's given abilities. This 'socio-cultural' ideology to start the youth early and cultivate competitive athletes as they grow is woven into the fabric this community and culture.

Additionally, family was related to this selective code because of the tight bonds that hold Native American (NA) families together (Spencer, 2010). This closeness is a prevalent theme in NA tribes as a collective dynamic (Martin & Yurkovich, 2014). The family unit described by participants was that of their parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and relatives by marriage. This connection is evident in a series of quotes from Levi. "I think families get together and play a lot of sports. My girlfriend's family would always go and play basketball together. They were very proud of their heritage" (Levi, 13-14). "Everybody shows up, and even family will come out and watch" (Levi, 16). "Cherokees seem to value it a lot more. It's more of a family event for Cherokees" (Levi, 17). Families see to it that honor and pride stays intact from one generation to the next and is paramount for their Cherokee culture to thrive.

Psychosocial Identity was the second selective code identified in the coding process. *Community* and *psychosocial development* were the key axial codes in the discovery of this selective code. Community, in the context of this study, was the rural communities dotting the landscape of the county. These communities most often have their own elementary school (K-8), which eventually feeds into one of the larger high schools of the county. These communities

strive to uphold athletic traditions at their respective schools and provide gathering places for their residents to compete and have fun. In turn, these communities contribute to the psychosocial identity of the individual. This is reflected in how they are raised, the school they attended, community standing, and their relationships with coaches and ultimately shapes their identities (Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996).

The adults interviewed for this study were asked about their experiences in athletic competition and sport while growing up in the area. More often than not, the participants expressed their genuine pleasure while competing in sports as youth. The benefits of competing produced good outcomes, like high self-esteem, encouraging experiences with coaches, and positive peer interactions. Research in the areas of psychosocial development and social identity theory, within sport sociology and psychology, can provide additional support within this context. Once we observe and interpret (Yin, 2011), one might notice that as individuals begin to partake in athletic competitions these experiences begin to define a strong social identity. According to Turner and Tajfel (1986), social identity theory is essentially a person's self-awareness founded on their belonging to a group. This is centered on being a part of a sports team or belonging to the tribe within the context of this study. The experiences of these youth impact the way they see themselves and, in due course, expose the individual's psychosocial identity. The competitiveness of the area, along with the influential supporting cast has shaped the social identity of these individuals. Social identity as a significant theme within this study is supported by other key studies such as Hogg and Reid (2006) and Leonard, Mehra, Katerberg (2008). These researchers suggest social identity is focused on group identities and the idea of self-conception. Essentially, people socially identify by their social groups and self-concept. Psychosocial identity is reflected again in a quote from Thomas.

I think Cherokees are more in tune to athletic competition. They really like it more than the general public because it gives their child a chance to shine in spite of whatever their level of talent is and that they can use that talent in athletics, and it gives them a chance to be somebody; a chance to rise above the stigma, if there is a stigma, of being Cherokee. It allows them to rise above that and they can use athletic competition to better them and to get known and be known. It's a good self-esteem thing. I really believe that. (Thomas, 8)

The rural elementary schools and the small communities scattered throughout the county have a reputation of being competitive and sports crazy. This reputation is projected onto the youth, as individuals, giving them a sense of social identity within their world. The reputation is cultivated from everyone around them: parents, teachers, coaches, peers, family members, church members, and the community as a whole. Once more, Stan reminds us of how the different communities emphasize athletic competition and sports.

Around here, [community name], these small communities and even up in the northern part of the Cherokee Nation I think it's a big thing. I don't want to say most, but a lot of Cherokees place high importance on it [sports]. They want their kids to be, you know, a real good baseball or basketball player. Once they get out of school here, around [community name], they play more softball. (Stan, 9-11)

Athletic Competition was the third and final selective code identified. The axial codes *reputation* and *influence* linked together to form this selective code. The idea of persons, schools, communities, and even neighborhoods developing or adhering to a certain reputation has been the focus of researchers like Permentier, Maarten, and Bolt (2007). Permentier et al. (2007) suggests this about the reputation of places, "Places are no exception to the labeling process: people attach a reputation to most countries, states, cities or neighborhoods" (p. 201). The individuals within these communities have attached a reputation to the elementary schools they once attended. This attachment phenomenon shares research space with that of athletic identity theory (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993) and is supported by research from Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick (1998). Athletic identity is defined as the individual's identification

of his or her athlete role (Brewer, et al., 1993). Webb et al. (1998) suggest this athletic identity often materializes in the conscious of the individual by the time they are in elementary school. This early connection is evident within the setting of this county. Moreover, these elementary schools in the county have specific reputations. For example, one school is known for its winning basketball, another is known for the elite baseball players it produces, and yet another is known for their endurance athletes whom compete in track and cross country. Schools often rely on sports to get students to attend school. This idea is further explained in a quote from Sarah.

I think it's important and it's a good part of school because you'll have so many kids, especially around here, that's the only reason they go to school because they want to play football or whatever. So, if that gets them in school, then I think that's a good thing. (Sarah, 9-10)

This reputation seemed to follow them well into their high school athletic careers and even into adulthood. It was also noticed that certain school reputations have evolved into a more competitive scene since the introduction of the elementary state playoffs or ORES.

All the participants in this study started competing in athletics and sports no later than third grade, at approximately eight or nine years old. However, many of the participants suggested they competed in some events as early as five or six years old. The value placed on athletic competition in these communities is very high. Several participants noted the competitive nature of the area. "I just know the schools in |county name| are real competitive" (Robert, 8). "You had no choice in elementary school, and in rural Oklahoma you played sports" (Nora, 3). "Tradition. They've always been competitive. In order to be competitive and win ball games, you got to practice. You started in third and fourth and you just kind of built on that" (Abby, 6). This is also obvious when several of the participants stated their opinion that athletic competition and sports are often viewed as more important than education within the Cherokee

community, although all of the participants from the study agreed that education (and not sports) is the most important thing for the Cherokee people to strive toward.

An additional topic of discussion here, and the association with the axial code *influence*, is the low socioeconomic status within the county. It has been and continues to be one of the poorest counties in Oklahoma (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014). This poverty level could impact overall participation in some families (Johnston, Delva, & O'Malley, 2007), which is found in similar situations, both urban and rural alike. One might ask, "so what?" Well, the playing field, and not education, seems to be the great equalizer in some instances. Once an athlete steps onto a playing surface it doesn't matter how rich, poor, or educated they are; what matters in this culture is how one competes. In some cases, the social disparities these individuals experience have impacted the sociocultural milieu of their world. This thought is best stated in a quote from Cole.

I know there are a lot of kids that play a lot of sports in other communities. But around here it could be due to the level of income and poverty that we have around here. Organized sports are basically something for people to do and something for people to take their kids to. (Cole, 7)

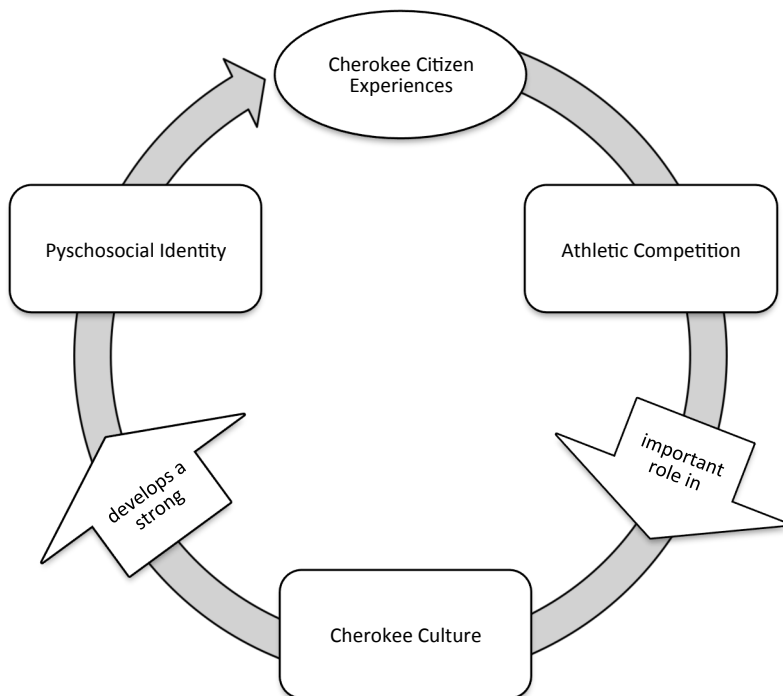
Additionally, influences from family and peers seem to be the dominant themes from the participants. It is taught from a young age that competing is important, which is not forgotten even into adulthood. That is why you not only see children competing but you see adults competing too. Athletic competition is and has been a major contributor to the social and cultural well-being of many of the individuals within this community. Emma says it best about the influences from her experiences growing up.

It was assumed I was going to do it. My mom assumed I was going to do it. My teachers, my coaches, and my friends — we all did it. So, I think it was probably just a combination of everybody and everything around us. (Emma, 7)

Summary

The data revealed that this population of Cherokee citizens takes great pride and honor while competing in athletics and sport. The Cherokees find meaning in athletic competition and sport and have passed these beliefs and value systems from one generation to the next. Cherokee families raise their children to be competitive from an early age. The extended families, schools, coaches, and communities foster this competitiveness. This ‘way of life’ has built a sense of tribal kinship that leads to positive experiences. The individuals growing up in this environment see and do as those have done previously, not uncommon in most societies. Through athletic competition and sport the Cherokee culture thrives. The youth mesh the reputation of being athletic competitor and the Cherokee culture to form their social identity within their own world. Figure 5.2 is a visual summary of the findings and shows the representation of the interconnected selective codes and their contributions to the experiences of the participants.

Figure 5.2 *Summaries of Selective Codes and Findings*



This qualitative study sought to better understand an underrepresented ethnic culture and produced the following research question: *What are the sociocultural experiences of Cherokee citizens surrounding athletic competition and sport?* The data exposed rich data, which was then synthesized and contributed to answering the research question: The Cherokee individuals in this study experienced an unwavering passion for athletic competition and sport. They are raised in and continue to live in an environment that fosters opportunities, that allow for social, cultural, and athletic growth. Family, schools, and community provide a stable foundation for pursuing athletic competition and sport. These Cherokee individuals start forming their social identity from an early age, around ages six to ten, through these athletic pursuits. The experiences in athletic competition are rooted in Cherokee culture and develop strong social identities of individuals throughout the different communities. The elementary schools throughout the various communities offer the Cherokee youth an opportunity to showcase their athletic skills. The reputations of the community, which is often upheld by the athletic prowess of the elementary schools, play an important role in the experiences of these participants. Furthermore, the community cultivates the reputation by hosting athletic events at gathering spots and supporting youth and adults alike. Many Cherokee people attend these athletic events. Sporting competitions such as horseshoes, volleyball, softball, and basketball are most common. Occasionally, traditional Cherokee events like stickball, marbles, or archery contests are hosted. The Cherokee families use these events as a gathering tool, using the time to spectate and for fellowship. As the youth grow up, they continue to attend these events either as a competitor or as a spectator. The participants experienced a number of athletic endeavors that had an obvious impact on their lives. These endeavors were heavily influenced by the importance placed on them by the Cherokee culture and communities. Throughout the experiences, the participants

began to develop a firm sense of social identity for themselves. The passion for athletic competition and sports coupled with the richness of the Cherokee culture has produced a clear psychosocial identity that is formed at an early age for these participants.

Recommendations to the Field

The Native American cultures are rich with history and tradition. The aim was to uncover sociocultural issues, if any, related to Cherokee citizens surrounding athletic competition and sport. Another goal was for the Cherokee people to have a vision of what is happening within their communities and schools, allowing an internal reflection of their traditions and values. With the sheer lack of research on these marginalized populations being apparent, it is imperative that Native American and minority research studies are more commonplace.

A qualitative study of this nature would appeal to many audiences across many different disciplines and professions including, program developers, policy makers, cultural project coordinators, educators, political leaders, psychologists, social workers, Native Americans, sport psychologists, coaches, anthropologists, and ethnographic researchers. The goal for mentioning the audience is to provide the context of *who cares?* In the end, the objective is to present the findings inside chapter four so that these audiences, and many others, can collect and digest this information into an organized manner.

Listed below are recommendations for, but not limited to, the fields of physical education, Native American research, Native American tribal leaders and stakeholders, minority research, sport psychology, sport sociology, psychosocial development, anthropology, and ethnography.

1. Based on the results from the study, it is recommended that leaders-tribal, school, community-within Native American communities examine how competition can benefit

its members. It was clearly shown how important competition is to the Cherokee culture as a whole. For example, how can leaders provide more opportunities to get the youth more involved within a variety of sports, which have been shown to increase the likelihood of success in the classroom?

2. The findings suggest that family, peer, and community support had impacted the individual experiences on multiple levels. It is recommended that these sponsorships should be supported and continue to grow. The positive interactions between the youth and their communities must be enhanced to better all lives. One way to see this happen, particularly in this studied area, is to continue to offer safe gathering places (outside of schools) for youth and adults.
3. The data also suggest that athletic competition and sports are given more value than education, both from the adults and the youth within particular areas of the county. This is reflected in the open code: reputation. It may be beneficial for stakeholders within these communities to investigate this and target why this may be the case. Ask, is this a problem or can it be resolved through the positive attributes athletic competition and sports offer?

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are offered as future research.

1. Future research into other Native American tribes within the context of this study could yield some rich data.
2. Future studies could examine the Cherokee family closer and see how sports impact the family unit and how it has evolved over time.

3. There should be additional research on the psychosocial aspects of this study, particularly the relationships of parent/child and athlete/coach.
4. Future qualitative research could be conducted with ethnographic techniques, using prolonged engagement to provide a more detailed account of what is taking place.
5. Researchers could explore specific blood quantum in the Cherokee population; e.g. look at percentage of blood quantum and the relationships within athletic competition and sport.
6. Future qualitative researchers could interview Cherokee children to gain additional voices and a clearer understanding of the sociocultural issues facing ethnic minorities.
7. The participants from this study were partially chosen based on competing and playing sports as youth. Future research could include Cherokees who were not athletes and didn't compete in sports while growing up in this culture.
8. Additional future research could investigate if there is a correlation, with regards to athletic competition, between Cherokee populations and areas outside of this studied area.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Date _____ Research Participant # _____

Confirm Cherokee Nation Tribal Member & Blood Quantum: _____

Adair County Residence: _____ community/town

Circle One: M/F Age: _____

Occupation: _____

Level of Education: HS Vocational Some College AS BS MS Doctorate

Introduction

Hello, thank you for taking the time to help me out with my study. My name is Mike Merrie and I'm a student at the University of Arkansas. I am conducting this research to complete my degree. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

The purpose of the study is for us to better understand the sociocultural experiences of Cherokee citizens in athletic competition and sports.

The interview is straightforward. I will start by turning on the audio recording device and it will remain on for the entire interview. I will begin by asking you the first question from my interview sheet. Most of the questions are open-ended. For example, I may ask you to describe something. You will then begin answering. There is no right or wrong answer. I may ask you additional follow up questions. Please answer honestly. As the interview takes place I may also be taking notes. At any point you may ask questions. For example, you may need clarification on a specific question. I will end the interview by saying "thank you and that's all."

Do you have any questions before we start?

Test audio recording device.

Smile to make participants feel comfortable.

When you are answering these questions I just want you to think about your past and present experiences within athletic competition and sport while growing up in [County Name].

1. What elementary school did you attend?
 - a. What high school?

2. What age or grade did you first experience athletic competition and sport?
 - a. Was it in school or out of school?
 - b. Can you describe some of these experiences?
 - c. How did you feel?

3. What were the main sports you played?
 - a. Why did you play these sports?
 - b. What were the seasons like?
 - c. How often did you play a game?
 - d. How often did you practice?
 - e. Who did you compete against?

4. Can you explain your P.E. experience at school? (Or) What did you do during P.E. class?
 - a. Why do you think it was like this?
 - b. Do you think most schools do this in Oklahoma or in other States do the same things? Why or why not?

5. Who or what was the biggest influence for competing in sports growing up?

6. What sports do you participate in presently? Athletic competition?

7. What are your views on education?
 - a. Why do you feel this way?
 - b. Do you think most Cherokees feel this way?

8. What are your views on athletic competition and sport?
 - a. Why do you feel this way?
 - i. Important/not important?
 - b. Can you tell me more?

9. In general, how do you think Cherokees view athletic competition and sport?
 - a. Do you think this view differs from the views of the elders or other generations?
 - b. What roles do you believe athletic competition and sport play in the Cherokee culture?
 - c. Are there any other times Cherokees play sports?
 - i. Probe: Family gatherings? Parties? Holidays? Church? What kind of sports: Traditional sports i.e. stickball (specific to the Cherokee people)
 - ii. Spectating? Parents taking off of work?
 1. Do you think this is different from non-Cherokees?
 - a. How?

10. In general, how do you think Cherokees view education?
 - a. Why do you think this?
 - i. How do you feel about this?
 - ii. How do you think this differs from non-Cherokees?
11. Can you give me a general overview of athletic competition and sports in [County Name]?
 - a. Please tell me more about it.
 - b. Can you provide some examples?
12. How do you think athletics or sports are handled in [County Name] than the rest of the state?
 - i. Probe: Cherokee culture?
13. In your opinion, how much importance is placed on athletic competition and sports for Cherokee youth?
 - a. Can you tell me more about this?
 - b. Why do you think that is?
 - c. Do you think this is different than non-Cherokee youth?
14. In your opinion, how much importance is place on education for Cherokee youth?
 - a. Can you tell me more about this?
 - b. Do you think this is different than non-Cherokee youth?
15. How do you think Cherokee youth feel when they compete in sports?
 - a. Why do you think they feel this way?
16. What are your thoughts/opinions on the County schools competing against each other during the school day?
 - a. Are there any advantages/disadvantages to this?
 - b. Do you think this is good or bad?
17. PROBE: Do you have any children? How do you think your child feels (or will feel) about competing in sports?
 - a. Will you be encouraging them to play sports?
 - b. Will you elaborate on this?
 - c. What will you tell your child/children about education?
18. Is there an age you think children should start participating in competitive sports?
 - a. Can you tell me more/why?
19. Ok, last question. Do you have anything else to share?

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study



Title: Examining the Sociocultural Experiences of Cherokee Nation Citizens in Athletic Competition and Sport

Who is the Principal Investigator?

Michael Merrie, M. Ed
219 HPER Building
University of Arkansas
mdmerrie@uark.edu

Faculty Sponsor?

Cathy Lirgg, Ph.D.
308N HPER Building
University of Arkansas
clirgg@uark.edu

Cherokee Nation Sponsor?

Dr. Sohail Khan, MBBS, MPH
Director of Health Research
Co-Chair, Administrator, Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board
sohail-khan@cherokee.org

Your Rights: This is a research study. Individuals who participate in research studies must volunteer for them. You have the right to volunteer for the study or say no. If you are not satisfied with the way this study is performed, you may direct your complaints, anonymously if you chose, to the University of Arkansas or to Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board.

Description: The purpose of this study is to look at the cultural experiences of Cherokee citizens surrounding athletic competition and sport. You are being asked to participate because you are a Cherokee citizen that can provide the study with a detailed description of your experiences in athletic competition and sport.

Why the study is being done? The purpose of the study is to give the Cherokee citizen participants a voice and to provide a better understanding of experiences in the areas of athletic competition and sport in Cherokee and Native American communities.

How many people will take part? Up to 30 Cherokee citizens.

What is involved? Participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate, the principal investigator will interview you one time for approximately 45 minutes and record your answers with a audio recording device. The question will be about your experiences in athletic competition and sport as a Cherokee citizen. The style of the interview is conversational;

meaning there are no right or wrong answers. Additional questions include age, gender, and occupation.

Risk and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study. If you feel uncomfortable at any time while participating in the interview, you can remove your involvement in the study. You will not be penalized for removing yourself from the study. Although there are no direct benefits to you, the research will be contributing to the limited knowledge base and research studies within Cherokee Nation and Native American communities throughout the U.S.

Will this cost me? No, there is no cost to be a participant.

Will I be paid for participating? Yes, a \$20.00 gift card will be presented to you upon completion of the interview.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected? All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law, as well as University policy. Your responses will be anonymous, meaning that no identifying information will be asked during the interview. All information will be held in the strictest of confidence. However, the results of this study may be published or presented at a conference.

Right to Withdraw: You are free to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will bring no negative consequences-no penalty to you.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns? Any of the persons listed on the first page, either by phone or email.

Informed Consent

I have read the Informed Consent, including the description and purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time. My signature below indicates that I freely agree to participate in this research study and understand all items above.

(Signature of Participant) (DATE)

(Printed Name of Participant) (DATE)

(Signature of Principal Investigator) (DATE)

(Printed Name of Principal Investigator) (DATE)

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Letters



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CHEROKEE NATION®
P.O. Box 948 • Tahlequah, OK 74465-0948 • 918-453-5000 • cherokee.org

Office of the Chief

Bill John Baker
Principal Chief
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S. Joe Crittenden
Deputy Principal Chief
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March 23, 2016

Michael Merrie, M.Ed. Ph. D. Candidate, Health, Human Performance and Recreation College of Education and Health Professions University of Arkansas

Dear Michael,

The Cherokee Nation Institutional Review Board has completed its review of the proposal entitled, “Examining the Sociocultural Experiences of Cherokee Nation Citizens in Athletic Competition and Sport” , of which you are the Principal Investigator. where applicable. On behalf of the Cherokee Nation IRB, I am writing to inform you that this proposal is now **approved** with the following recommendations,

1. *It is CNIRB policy, that any publication, presentation, abstracts, which is linked to an approved protocol, must be reviewed and approved by the CNIRB publication committee prior to its dissemination outside of the Cherokee Nation. A copy of CNIRB publication policy is being enclosed with this letter for your convenience.*
2. *Any **unanticipated adverse event** that is linked to the research study must be reported to the CNIRB within **seven (7) working days** of the investigator/research staff first learning of the event. However, the severity of event may mandate immediate notification, the timing of reporting must be proportionate to the nature and severity of adverse event and risks to the subjects and others.*

Please note that this CNIRB decision will remain in effect until **March 16, 2017** and must be renewed annually thereafter. In addition following guidance is being provided here for submitting future requests for continuation, protocol modifications or final closure of the study.

Continuation requests and final study closures– Renewals should be submitted as early as possible, but no later than 60days in advance of the approval expiration date, to ensure the continuation review does not occur after the expiration date. If the project is not reviewed and approved by the expiration date, new enrollment to the project must cease. Current study subjects who remain in follow-up or active therapy may continue to do so only, if they are placed at an increased risk.

The following information must be submitted for continuing review:

- Copy/copies of approval letter/s from IRB's with jurisdiction.
- All significant findings/discoveries from the approved research protocol.
- The current consent document or any newly proposed consent document (if applicable)
- Protocol Summary updated with any proposed changes, if applicable
- Subject withdrawal from Study– If any subjects were withdrawn from the study due to adverse reactions, noncompliance or other reasons please attach a summary. If this is a multi-center trial, attach a summary of all reports.
- If a subject withdraws from the study voluntarily for medical or non-medical reasons, provide a description of any known reasons for why each subject withdrew.



April 27, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Merrie
Cathy Lirgg

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-03-666

Protocol Title: *Examining the Sociocultural Experiences of Cherokee Nations Citizens in Athletic Competition and Sport*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 04/27/2016 Expiration Date: 04/26/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 30 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.