

ADAPTATION IN AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES: PERCEPTIONS
OF OLDER WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

ADAPTATION IN AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES:

PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER WOMEN

Julie Reed Watson

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. The subjects were 10 American Indian women from 50 to 78 years of age, from Ardmore, Oklahoma and the Dallas-Fort Worth areas. The study investigated perceptions held by women about dominant society influences on American Indian family life, traditions, and values. The nine themes that resulted from semi-structured interviews were: (a) importance of education; (b) value of job and employment opportunities; (c) teaching, speaking, and listening to Indian language; (d) attending tribal functions to maintain cultural identity; (e) sharing stories, ceremonies, and traditions with children; (f) adjusting to dominant society; (g) need for dominant society to be more knowledgeable about American Indians; (h) responsibility to the family; (i) less commitment to

traditional American Indian family lifestyle. Two additional findings were: (a) influence and changes of American Indian youth and (b) losing American Indian identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Questions	5
Theoretical Framework	5
Definition of Terms	7
Summary	9
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	10
Introduction	10
American Indian Family Structure	10
American Indian Kinship	12
American Indian Identity	13
American Indian Community Changes	14
Family Life Among Members	14
American Indian Women and Perceptions of Life	18
Summary	21
III. METHODOLOGY	22
Introduction	22
Subjects	22
Pilot Study	23
Interview Procedure	24
Analysis of Data	25
Summary	26

CHAPTER

IV. RESULTS	27
Introduction	27
Background on American Indian Tribes	27
Sample Description	29
Overview of Indian Reservations	31
Background on Urban American Indians	32
Results	34
Importance of Education	34
Value of Job and Employment Opportunities	35
Teaching, Speaking, and Listening to Indian Language	37
Attending Tribal Functions to Maintain Cultural Identity	37
Sharing Stories, Ceremonies, and Traditions	38
Adjusting to Dominant Society	40
Need for Dominant Society to be More Knowledgeable About American Indians	42
Responsibility to the Family	43
Less Commitment to Traditional American Indian Family Lifestyle	45
Influence and Changes of American Indian Youth	46
Losing American Indian Identity	47
Summary	48
V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS	50
Introduction	50
Discussion of Results	50
Conclusions	55
Limitations	56
Implications	56
Recommendations	57
REFERENCES	59
APPENDICES	61
A. Introductory Letter	62
B. Interview Guide	64
C. Consent Form	66
D. Personal Data Sheet	69
E. Research Questions, Interview Questions, and Themes: Results Matrix	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Tribal Affiliation	28
2. Demographic Description of the Sample	30

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American Indian culture continues to change and evolve with modern or dominant society. There is little information about how American Indian families adapt to the growing urbanized society and its influences on American Indian family life. The Second National Indian Conference on Aging held in 1978, addressed broken family structures as families attempted to adapt to the majority culture. The perception at the meeting was that values and cultural beliefs generally taught through oral traditions have been modified, replaced, or have vanished completely. The much respected status of the American Indian Elder also had been affected and the aging elders were now struggling to fit into a divided family system (National Indian Conference on Aging [NICOA], 1978).

Almost 20 years later, family issues and acculturation remain one of the areas of concern for the American Indian. In 1995, the National Indian Conference on Aging determined that a need existed for training on stress and divided families. The conference revealed a strong interest in preserving cultural values and traditions. An additional

issue was that promoting healthy family relationships would contribute to elder health and functional independence (NICOA, 1995).

American Indian families also experience change in family structure as they assume a role of primary caregivers for elders and/or grandchildren. A study of American Indian family caregivers identified female American Indian relatives as the family member most often assuming the role as primary caregiver. The research revealed strains on family relations and negative effects on personal health and well-being (Hennessy, 1996).

The 1990 U.S. Census reported a population of nearly 2 million Native Americans living in the United States. There are over 500 Native Nations, 4 of the Nations, Chippewa/Ojibway, Navajo, Cherokee, and Sioux (Lakota/Dakota/Nakota) have populations over 100,000. Native Nations are considered "federally recognized tribes" and are Native Nations that have been acknowledged to exist by the United States. The federally recognized tribes and members are entitled to special services and resources (Weaver, 1997).

The population of Native Americans grew from 0.4% in 1970 to 0.8% in 1990. Although the population increased, American Indian population remains comparatively small in size which may account for the lack of information about modern American Indian families. The information that

is available reveals that American Indian families struggle economically and culturally (Benokraitis, 1999).

This study explores the adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life as perceived by older American Indian women. Such research knowledge is valuable to social workers, health care workers and other groups who work with American Indian people. This work also will contribute to a better understanding of modern American Indian families and their family needs.

Statement of the Problem

As the decline of the traditional American Indian family structure continues to fade, American Indian families face the challenge of adapting to unfamiliar structures and customs. The absence of the traditional family structure has forced many American Indian families to struggle through a process of creating a new family system based partly on cultural family tradition and modern society traditions.

Adaptation and acculturation of the American Indian population has been the topic of past research. Studies have primarily included gathering data about the cultural aspects of the American Indian people. Earlier researchers provided a basic cultural understanding of the American Indian people as a group.

It is important to begin hearing from American Indian women and their needs to continue to maintain a family structure rooted in cultural values and traditions. There is a need to be aware of the challenges that face the modern American Indian family. There are few empirical studies about American Indian family life and family systems. As American Indian families continue to change and adapt to increased urbanization and dominant society structure, knowledge of their experiences will be necessary for designing and delivering programs and services to meet their family needs. This study investigates how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and the influences on family life.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. Interviews of older American Indian women were conducted to explore family experiences, values, family communication, and traditions related to adaptation and influence on family life. A qualitative research method was used based on phenomenological point of view.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were explored:

1. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family life and family members?

2. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family traditions and beliefs?

3. What changes in family life have been influenced by adapting to a dominant society do older American Indian women perceive?

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology explores phenomena as they are perceived firsthand by individuals as social participants. Perceptions begin with individuals and their conscious experiences. The foundations of experience involve a social world of lived experience known in common with others (Levesque-Lopman, 1988).

Phenomenologists attempt to understand the meaning of interactions and events of ordinary people in their everyday social environment. This study is based on the social

theoretical framework of social phenomenology influenced by philosophers Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Alfred Schutz, a social philosopher, adapted philosophical phenomenology to study how understanding social life is established and organized. He suggests that the individual's perspective of the social world includes individual judgment, knowledge of other people, and individual awareness of reality. His goal was to investigate the meanings and natural attitudes that could be found in an individual's experience of their social world (Levesque-Lopman, 1988).

The task of the qualitative researcher is to present the perceptions of interpretation and meanings from people's own words and observable behavior to establish their definitions of reality. Social world and social environments are defined in different ways by different individuals. Each social participant brings a unique past and various meanings to what is seen and heard in everyday life (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

Ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism are two theoretical approaches that converge with phenomenological tradition. Symbolic interaction includes socialization as a process of meanings acquired by beliefs and attitudes of a

culture. Definitions and interpretations are continually processed and continued as the individual moves from one social situation to another (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

Ethnomethodology is viewed as a process of interpreting how individuals explain, describe, and apply meanings in the world in which they live. They examine the individual's beliefs and application of rules to their specific situations (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

The research questions sought to capture the thoughts, meanings, and perceptions of older American Indian women about how adaptation to a dominant society has influenced the American Indian family. The phenomenological perspective appeared to be an appropriate approach for this study.

Definition of Terms

American Indian refers to any individual who is identified as an American Indian or Alaska Native and is determined by their tribe to be a fully enrolled tribal member (Champagne, 1997).

Dominant culture or society refers to Euro-American beliefs, values and lifestyles.

Family refers to family members directly related and other close members of family unit not directly related, such as community members or individuals who are considered belonging to the family by acceptance.

Family members refers to grandparents, parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, family unit or kin-related family.

Nondominant culture or society refers to ethnic groups such as American Indian, Hispanic, Asian, African-American and other ethnic groups which are not of the dominant culture.

Older American Indian for the purposes of this research refers to an American Indian who maintains a cultural identity through tribal affiliation or community recognition and is 50 years and older.

Indian Reservation refers to lands set aside by the United States government to be used and occupied by a group of Indians (Champagne, 1997).

Urban Indian community refers to a group or community of American Indians living in a city environment.

Summary

This exploratory study investigated how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. The U.S. Census reports an increase in the Indian population and points out the existing Indian population as being small in comparison to the total U.S. population. The theoretical framework of social phenomenology was used as the foundation to guide the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. As background for the research this literature review focuses on traditional characteristics of the American Indian family, structure, values, and strengths.

Social science has primarily studied American Indian structures based on deficit models and viewed American Indian families from a problematic approach (Red Horse, 1997). This literature review will note the strengths of the American Indian family structures associated with characteristics which have influenced adaptive processes.

American Indian Family Structure

Research literature includes values, beliefs, spirituality, and extended family communities as components of the American Indian family system. These concepts serve as

strengths of daily Indian life in traditional communities. Red Horse (1997) addresses extended kin relationships and emphasizes attributes of the traditional American Indian family as mirrored from the past. Red Horse supports the perception of dramatic change that Indian societies have experienced over the last century (Red Horse, 1997)

Red Horse (1997) reports that traditional communities continue to exist along with the efforts of governmental social services that provide the American Indian communities with the benefits of American social values. The American Indian families cling to knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of their cultural traditions. The kinship system comprised of residents of the household related by marriage, blood, or adoption often is referred to as the extended family. The extended family provides the family system with a community environment that includes work activities involving children and elders, commitment to cultural values, spirituality, and community responsibility (Red Horse, 1997).

Characteristics of the extended family of the past included closer ties, protectiveness of family members, and more organization. Today, extended families are found more commonly on American Indian reservations and have remained a very important element of the family system. Kinship

families provide a strong support system among its members (Benokraitis, 1999).

Garrett (1994) provides a clear distinction of the meaning of families among the American Indian culture. He describes the family relationship as an important source of connection and worth. Garrett (1994) includes the kin relationship and how the family is perceived universally. The boundaries of family extend to cousins, clan members, community members, and nature as a whole. The meaning of family for American Indians is embedded in a unique perspective of the process of life (Garrett, 1994).

American Indian Kinship

According to Medicine (1981), complete assimilation to the dominant society within the Indian communities has not occurred because of its success of adaptive strategies. The American Indians have been able to maintain their beliefs, traditions, and structure of kinship on and off the reservations. Medicine (1981) reports that the extended family serves as an adaptive function. The report describes the social unit of an operationalized extended family. The basis of the unit includes the union of female and male. The union may be a licensed marriage, "the Indian way"

(consensual and arranged), or an "Indian marriage" (consensual). These relationships are recognized by the community as a union of kinship. The two kinship groups provide the support and commitments within the kinship structure. Child care exchange, caring of the elderly, errands, chores, residence, and automobile services or ownership are considered contributions to be shared to the well-being of the extended family unit (Medicine, 1981).

American Indian Identity

Steele (1973) observed that American Indians who reside in urban areas for economic reasons find the activities of nearby reservations or Indian communities as a means of continuing their Indian identity. Indian communities or reservation activities include powwows, socializing, native religious groups, dinners, and other events. An adherence to unique Indian values and credentials were found to be important to Steel's observation group, which included members of the Pottawatomi or Kickapoo tribes. The values were distinguished by formal and informal credentials. The formal credentials included certified membership in a recognized tribal group. Certified membership is generally dependent on the amount of proven blood descent of a specific degree which is determined by the tribe members. Examples of

informal values of Indian identity include strong support of family life and obligations, ethnic aid which includes support to other tribal members and other Indians, as well as kin, ability to speak a native language, and participation in Indian ceremonies (Steele, 1973).

American Indian Community Changes

The Indian communities have experienced changes socially and economically. One change that has been experienced is the tendency of Indian wives to work in the native communities. This affect has been the source of social and economic role change among the sexes. This change has also impacted the child care role which has moved the care of children from the home to day care centers or to a child care giver in the community (Medicine, 1981).

Indian communities have also entered into an era of becoming more socially organized. The development of Indian centers have become the centralized unit of most Indian activity. The organization of Indian communities have contributed to bringing a better understanding among local and non-local Indians (Steele, 1973).

Family Life Among Members

The American Indian family not only consist of extended families, evidence exists that premarital pregnancy is

relatively common without any stigma attached to having children outside of marriage. Regardless of economic hardship, abortion is disapproved because of the importance of children to the family. Children generally spend considerable time learning tribal and spiritual values and participating in ceremonies. They learn the customs of respect for authority figures such as elders and are taught to listen and not interrupt. The most important values of American Indian families include sharing, harmony with nature, cooperation, and integrity. These values are quite different from the values of competitiveness and achievement emphasized in the dominant society (Benokraitis, 1999).

As a result of dominant society education availability to all children, the American Indian parents at times feel disadvantaged at not being able to provide assistance toward their children's education needs (Benokraitis, 1999).

A recent study by Wood (1996) explored the perceptions and assumptions regarding the value of education as a determinant of academic motivation among American Indian high school students. Involved were related perceptions of economic opportunities and the job market. The findings of the study indicated that increased Indian ancestry lead to less adaptability of dominant society beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. The study also indicated a relationship between Indian culture attachment and school attachment. As Indian

culture attachment increased, the ratings in favor of school attachment also was favorable (Wood, 1996).

The study also indicated that American Indian students are aware of the possibilities of unequal opportunities that exists in society and how the awareness can result in decreased achievement motivation. Wood's (1996) study predicted that American Indian students who have become more adapted into the dominant society would be more assimilated to schooling in the Anglo tradition and perform better academically. The study revealed the importance of the role that parents and grandparents provide as a support system of American Indian culture and the degree of dominant socialization (Wood, 1996).

Wood (1996) mentions the Indian Education Act and the Indian Self-Determination Act as two programs that provide American Indian tribes the opportunity to become active participants in the educational system of their children. The enactment of these programs have contributed to the presence of American Indian teachers, and other educational professionals, to serve as mentors and role models (Wood, 1996).

Family communication among adults and children is an area mentioned in the literature that has been affected by adaption to a dominant society. A gap of communication between the children and the parents has begun to occur with

the traditional methods of discipline not working. As a result, American Indian youth complain that parents do not understand the times and parents are beginning to feel the loss of control over their children's development and behavior. Additionally, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has reported that at least 375 youth gangs now exist on the reservations. Indian Elders believe the destructive behaviors are due to poverty and a lack of economic opportunity (Benokraitis, 1999).

Grandparents and elders have traditionally filled leadership positions with the American Indian families. Their opinions are respected and play a central role in decision making. Decision making includes child rearing and decisions affecting family members. Children are many times taught to address all elders as grandparents and to treat them as very close family members. Navajo tradition describes the life cycle as a caring system that begins at birth, and learning and preparing to care for others, and the responsibility of caring for elders (Benokraitis, 1999).

The elders serve as role models in the American Indian community and provide the new generations with the knowledge of family rituals and traditions that continue the preservation of family. Others among the American Indian communities such as spiritualists or medicine people also

provide support to the American Indian families in times of family crisis (Weaver, 1997).

American Indian families have become aware of changes in the families as elders find that less time is spent with grandchildren. Grandchildren are becoming accustomed to watching television after a full day of school. As young adults search for better housing, employment opportunities, and continuing education, a move off the reservations is becoming more common. Grandparents are continually making an effort to have the grandchildren live with them if possible in hopes to preserve the Indian way of life (Benokraitis, 1999).

American Indian Women and Perceptions of Life

Several studies using qualitative research methods revealed perceptions of American Indian women and their personal experiences of balancing a dominant system with nondominant values, beliefs, and Indian traditions.

A study conducted by Hill, Vaughn, and Harrison (1995) focused on American Indian women and their views about tribal traditions and American Indian culture. The study included interviews which provided perceptions of how American Indian women balanced traditions and values with dominant society values. Mentioned in the study was the fact that between the

1960s and 1970s, many American Indians began to resist adaptation and assimilation by making an attempt to reclaim and practice historic Indian culture and values. The major shift placed more importance on community and less emphasis on individuality Hill et al. (1995).

The 5 women included in the Hill study were selected from various Indian tribes and all had been reared in families that practiced traditional cultural values. American Indian values that appeared to be most important for the American Indian to maintain were Indian identity and community relationships. All 5 women related early teachings of cultural traditions and language from grandparents, grandmothers, and extended family. Information from women in this study revealed adapting to the dominant society occurred from attending schools and other educational systems. Hill et al. (1995) reveal that the participants in this study balanced traditional beliefs and family values by making compromises to the dominant society. Family roles such as mother, grandmother, and provider were evident in the participant's personal and professional life. The present study explored the perceptions of older American Indian women and sought to observe similar compromises and influences on American Indian families.

A study by Plumbo (1995) examines how nurses of American Indian heritage balance traditional beliefs and values with dominant society values as related to their professional and personal lives. The study seeks to understand the experiences and adaptation of modern and cultural values and often refers to their experience as "walking in two worlds" (Plumbo, 1995).

The Plumbo (1995) study mentions the extended family and cites examples of family devotion. The American Indian women in this research strongly supported their family life and obligations. This strength was observed as Indian women generally dropped out of the nursing education program because of family commitments. The research also presented themes of respect, family, pride, tradition, and harmony (Plumbo, 1995).

Mihesuah (1996) provides an extensive essay written in support of increasing the amount of American Indian research about women and their role in American Indian families. Discussed are the issues of tribal social systems, cultural change, and personal motivations among American Indian women. The struggles of American Indian women to adjust to cultural change while preserving traditional roles and values in the family are areas of concern. Addressed is the need to

further explore the feelings and emotions of American Indian women and their relationships among families and friends (Mihesuah, 1996).

Summary

A review of the literature indicates the need to better understand how adaptation to a dominant society has influenced the American Indian family. The majority of the literature indirectly revealed some of the perceptions of the changing environment of the American Indian family.

The widely shared values demonstrate generosity, respect, cooperation, sharing, and harmony among the tribes and kin groups. These values strengthen and sustain the American Indian family's identity within the dominant social structure (Benokraitis, 1999). In conclusion, the literature suggests the need for more in depth research about how adaptation to a dominant society influences the American Indian family.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. A qualitative method based on social phenomenology was used as the foundation for the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were audiotaped and analyzed for recurring themes. The interviews consisted of five questions relating to the participants' perceptions of how American Indian families had been influenced by a dominant society.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were American Indian women age 50 and older. Snowball sampling was the method used to obtain participants for the study. Volunteers were selected by using referrals from a tribal representative from Ardmore, Oklahoma and from other American Indian referrals in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. A total of 13 subjects were contacted

and invited to be interviewed. All interested participants were given a copy of the Introductory Letter (see Appendix A). There were 3 subjects not included for the following reasons: (a) no response, (b) not yet 50 years old, and (c) reported to the referral source that subject had never been allowed to identify American Indian status.

The tribal representative from Oklahoma provided assistance as a referral source and support for the interview sessions scheduled in Oklahoma. Referrals were contacted and arrangements were made for an audiotaped semi-structured interview. Appointments for a interview lasting no more than one hour was scheduled.

Pilot Study

A pilot study with one subject was conducted to evaluate the interview questions and probes (see Appendix B) and the procedures of the interview. An evaluation about the interview questions also was obtained from the tribal representative. The researcher collaborated with the subject to rephrase the question about their perception of ways families had changed to adapt to a dominant society. The original wording of the question was, "Describe ways your family changed to adapt to a dominant society?" The subject suggested a word change for

this question. The question was, then, changed to, "What are some of the ways your family has changed to adapt to a dominant society?" A less formal structure of the interview question was preferred by the subject. A change in the questions was also made for the interviews given in Oklahoma. The wording of dominant society was changed to non-Indian society. Since, the initial procedures used during piloting were not changed, the pilot subject interview was included in the study.

Interview Procedure

The interviews were conducted at the home of the participant or at a location requested by the volunteer. The first part of the session was the explanation of the study and the informed consent agreement(see Appendix C). After this part, the participant was asked to fill out a Personal Data Sheet (see Appendix D). An identifying number was assigned to each subject's Personal Data Sheet and audiotape of the interview.

The researcher, then, began the interview by reading a review of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and a brief explanation about the audiotaping of the interview and how the data would be handled. The interview session was then conducted utilizing the interview guide and the probes to

elicit more information. A conversational style was used to encourage greater depth answers.

When the subject indicated that she had no more to add to a question, the researcher moved to the next question. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 45 minutes in length. An effort was made to conduct the interviews as similarly as possible.

Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed according to procedures recommended by Bogdan and Taylor (1975). After each interview, the researcher listened to the audiotape of the interview and then transcribed them on computer disks. Each transcription was made as soon as possible after the interview.

During the transcription, the researcher left blank lines between subject's comments indicating a change of thought or idea. The researcher read each transcript twice, highlighting with a colored marker the significant themes, ideas, and statements in order to formulate a coding system on recurring themes.

A key word was assigned to each coding category. Each transcript was read a third time in order to assign a key word to each highlighted section representing a significant thought or idea. The coding categories and key words were re-evaluated

and modifications were made to determine the final coding categories.

The transcript, then, was cut into sections and the sections were sorted according to the assigned categories represented by key words. The coded, sorted data were placed in separate labeled manila folders according to categories.

The researcher developed a results matrix to represent the research questions, interview questions, and the themes which emerged (see Appendix E).

Summary

This research used semi-structured interviews to investigate how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. The data collected from the audiotaped interviews were analyzed using qualitative methods and phenomenological approach from which common themes emerged.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This study was designed to explore how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on the American Indian family life. This chapter includes background information on American Indian tribes, sample description, an overview of Indian reservations, background information on urban American Indians, and major themes which emerged from the interview questions. To better understand the results of the analysis, background information about American Indian tribes, Indian reservations, and urban American Indians have been included in this section. Themes were drawn from the responses of the questions and from the entire interview.

Background on American Indian Tribes

The sample subjects represent tribes from the group of the "Five Civilized Tribes" which include the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole nations (see Table 1). The tribes were called "civilized" because of their accomplishments and abilities to self-govern the Indian

Table 1

Tribal Affiliation

Tribe	Number of Subjects
Chickasaw	2
Chickasaw/Creek	1
Chickasaw/Choctaw	1
Choctaw	3
Choctaw/Chickasaw	1
Laguna/Apache	1
Pueblo	1

Territory of Oklahoma (Waldman, 1974). These groups are generally known as the southeastern tribes.

The Choctaws originated in Mississippi and are the original Choctaws. A majority of Choctaws were forced to move to Oklahoma territories where Oklahoma Choctaws now reside. Together, the 2 groups, (Mississippi Choctaws and Oklahoma Choctaws), number more than 45,000 with 6,000 or more living in Mississippi (O'Donnell, 1994).

The Chickasaws originated in northwestern Alabama, northern Mississippi, western Kentucky and Tennessee. Today, there are more than 8,000 who identify themselves as Chickasaws. The governor and council of the Chickasaw Nation located in Oklahoma gather annually in Byng, Oklahoma. The

tribe provides educational programs and economic opportunities for the Chickasaw people (O'Donnell, 1994).

The Creek Indian tribe originally lived in areas of Alabama and moved to the Oklahoma Indian Territory. The descendants today live in Alabama and Oklahoma and have migrated to other areas of the United States as other tribes have (O'Donnell, 1994). Table 1 shows the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes represented by 8 subjects in this study.

There were 2 subjects that represented the Pueblo tribes of New Mexico, generally known as the southwestern Indians. There are about 19 New Mexico pueblos that have maintained strong traditional communities and continue to perform and practice dances and rituals of their religion. Many American Indian artists, pottery makers, poets, storytellers, and scholars are from the New Mexico Pueblos (Ortiz, 1994).

Sample Description

The sample was comprised of 10 American Indian women living in the area of Ardmore, Oklahoma and the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Of the 10 subjects interviewed, 5 subjects mentioned education beyond High School. The 10 subjects ranged in age from 50 to 78 (see Table 2). There were 5 who were married, 2 subjects were either divorced or separated, and 2 widow.

Table 2

Demographic Description of the Sample

Descriptor	Number of Subjects
Age:	
50 - 60	6
61 - 70	2
71 - 80	2
Marital Status:	
Married	5
Separated/Divorced	2
Single	1
Widow	2
Number of Children:	
1 - 4	5
5 - 8	5
Number in Household:	
1	1
2	5
3	1
5	3
Place of Residence as Child	
Indian Reservation	2
Urban Indian Community	6
Dominant/Majority Environment	2
Residence of Raising Family	
Indian Reservation	0
Urban Indian Community	6
Dominant/Majority Environment	4

There were 5 subjects that had raised 1 to 4 children and there were 5 subjects that had raised between 5 and 8 children. The number in household revealed that most of the children in the families were grown. There were 3 subjects that reported 5 in the household which would indicate possibly children living at home. There was only 1 subject with a 1 person household. A total of 5 subjects reported a 2 person household and 1 subject reported a 3 person household. The majority of the subjects lived in a 2 person household (see Table 2).

Overview of American Indian Reservations

Indian reservations have been considered a fundamental area of American History that represents the relationship of Indian and majority society relations. Indian reservations can be defined as areas of land that were set aside for Indian tribes to inhabit during the Euroamerican colonization. In 1990 the United States recognized 12 as state reservations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has recognized 287 federal Indian reservations with a total of about one million American Indian residents. The largest federal reservation is the Navajo Reservation which is located in New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. It has been estimated that nearly half of the total American Indian

population continue to live on the reservations. The reservations provide tribal identity and a strong sense of home, family and community. In addition, reservation living provides a secure environment by making tribal and federal programs available, exemption from some federal and state taxes, and assistance with housing is more readily available. As the number of educated American Indian professionals increase, many are returning to the reservations with a commitment to support the tribal community (Davis, 1994).

Background of Urban American Indians

The 1990 U.S. Census reported that over 1.8 million American Indians in the United States were living in urban areas. Most of the urbanization of American Indians is due to the migration to cities and towns from rural areas. One major factor of migration has been the Bureau of Indian Affairs's relocation program. This program began in the 1950s and assisted American Indians with moving from reservations to selected urban areas. The program also provided vocational training, employment counseling, and educational assistance (Davis, 1994).

Today, many American Indians have continued to move to cities and towns without the assistance from the relocation program. American Indians frequently move from reservations to urban areas in search of employment. Urban American

Indians have been identified in 3 groups: (a) living in urban areas and remaining connected to their reservation by moving back and forth from city to reservation; (b) skilled laborers who live on the outside of the city; and (c) those who live in majority society neighborhoods and are sometimes involved with American Indian activities (Davis, 1994). In addition, one subject reported that some American Indians prefer to assimilate and not be identified as American Indian.

Urban American Indians maintain their tribal culture by living in American Indian communities or neighborhoods. Many American Indians living in urban areas keep regular contact with their reservation and families and are active in their local cultural center. Participation with tribal communities enables communication with others in order to maintain tribal language, health services, and American Indian identity (Davis, 1994).

The majority of the subjects in this study are considered urban American Indians. Table 2 shows that 6 of the subjects are currently living and raising their families in an urban Indian community area. There are 4 subjects that are living and raising their families in a dominant or majority society environment. At the present time, there were not any subjects residing on an Indian reservation.

Table 2 shows that a majority of the subjects were raised in an urban Indian community. There were 2 subjects

that were raised on an Indian reservation and 2 were raised in a dominant or majority society environment.

Results

In order to answer the research questions regarding how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on (a) family life and family members, (b) family traditions and beliefs, and (c) changes in family life, the researcher asked the women 5 interview questions. The results matrix (see Appendix E) shows each research question followed by the interview questions. The themes which resulted from the interview questions are listed after the interview questions (see Appendix E). The following themes emerged from the interview questions and are listed in the same order as the questions to which they correspond.

Ways Family Has Changed to Adapt

There were 2 themes that were derived from the first interview question about ways the family adapted to get along better in a dominant society. These are: importance of education, the value of job and employment opportunities.

Theme 1: Importance of Education. A majority of the subjects reported the importance of education or the importance of becoming involved with the educational system of their children. Education was found to be an important

family value among all the women interviewed. The following quotations support this theme.

They [my children] went on to college and got degrees. . . .Because my children were raised outside the reservation, they have all gone on to school and become very successful.

I had to learn to be an advocate for my children . . . in the school system, because Indians were sometimes perceived as maybe having learning disabilities because of their cultural quietness.

I think . . . get a better education for myself and my children and my grandchildren.

Going to school and getting an education is important.

Good supportive family values . . . we were able to apply when we moved to the city . . . bettering yourselves, you know, eventually able to go to college and get a degree . . . we have instilled that in our children.

Making your children go to school and better themselves.

Learning to get along better with the schools.

Theme 2: Value of Job and Employment Opportunities. The dominant society values the status of careers, employment, and work accomplishments of the family. Several of the women expressed the importance of a good job and the possibilities of a better living that could be achieved with employment. Employment is a main concern as families cope with the ability to get along with a dominant society along with the stress of having to prove their abilities. The following

quotations are examples of statements that support this theme.

My husband and I have ceased going to school because he has to work full time. He's been with the same company for 15 years . . . he likes his work and doesn't mind traveling the distance . . . here its just a continuation of what he's been doing and we've adapted well. Adapting to living off the reservation hasn't been as difficult cause both of us have always lived on and off the reservation all our life.

As far as getting a job, I know we have to be the last one considered . . . I teach my children . . . hang in there till they get it.

Getting a better job . . . I try to be more determined and motivated . . . married to a non-Indian person, he really pushed me to be more . . . get out there and get something and better myself and so I took that pretty much in stride and did that.

Important for the family to find work that paid well. I think . . . work hard and stay at one job a long time and try to save money for better living conditions.

My husband has worked for the same company for 25 years . . . looking for a job, bettering yourselves . . . we have taught that to our children.

Ways Family Maintains American Indian Identity and Culture

In response to the second interview question about ways the family maintains American Indian identity or cultural values in a dominant society, three themes emerged. The themes include: teaching, speaking, and listening to the Indian language, attending tribal programs, and sharing traditions, stories, and ceremonies.

Theme 3: Teaching, Speaking, and Listening to Indian Language. A total of 5 subjects stated that the Indian language was the most important cultural value to maintain. Several spoke fluently before having to adapt to dominant society schools. Many continue to understand the dialect but find that the ability to speak fades after time spent in dominant society. Several of the subjects related more visits to Indian community centers or "going back home" in order to be able to converse and hear the tribal Indian language. Children in the urban Indian communities are being taught the basics of the American Indian language by family members. The following quotations support this view.

I speak the dialect and the children know a few words. They know how to count, the days of the month, and everyday things.

I tried to teach my kids their language, which is Choctaw.

I take my children to the Indian churches to let them hear the Chickasaw/Choctaw hymns. Also, I was involved with a tribal program . . . teaching the children some of the basic language.

Speaking the Chickasaw language and sharing Indian ways.

Attending Indian churches . . . speaking Indian when you can.

Theme 4: Attending Tribal Functions to Maintain Cultural Identity. The subjects talked about how attending tribal functions and events helped them to keep the American Indian culture alive within the family. American Indian churches

were mentioned as one of most important ways families support tribal identity. Attending powwows and being active in American Indian organizations were mentioned as sources of remaining connected to American Indian people and culture. The following examples support this theme.

My children and I attend powwows . . . I've taught my children to be proud of being Indian.

My daughter has three children and is an advocate for educating others including teachers on the correct way of presenting Indian culture. She makes sure that there is no stereotyping of Indians.

I try to encourage my child to get involved in American Indian organizations at school . . . I want him to be involved, make sure he's proud he is Indian.

My children, I raised them to be familiar with the tribal programs and what the tribal program offers for the youth.

I attend the Chickasaw Nation Senior Citizen program and try to learn more about the tribal programs that are available.

My family mainly attend the area Indian church and the Chickasaw tribal programs.

We have lived where the Indians lived and have been very active since the first year of marriage and even before then with the Indian Church. I have played the piano for the church for many, many years. Weekends (playing and coaching softball and basketball teams) . . . is still the family event, but our identity is that we are very proud of who we are.

Theme 5: Sharing Stories, Ceremonies, and Traditions with Children. Several of the subjects mentioned a responsibility and commitment of sharing stories learned in

their childhood and passing them on to children or grandchildren. Several encourage their children to pursue their interests in American Indian artwork. Traditions and ceremonies are shared by observing events that are observed in the American Indian community or Indian reservation. The following quotations support this theme.

I tell my children stories that my grandma told me, old Indian stories, old Indian ways, we talk about some of the old Indian superstitions . . . I always try to let them be aware of and know that it's a part of our identity and part of our cultural values.

Its important to tell grandchildren and great-granchildren Indian stories.

I'm a storyteller and I was raised on the reservation . . . my stories come from my father and my grandfather. I still do traditional things here at the house. We have ceremonies at the house as they do at the Pueblo. I pray early in the morning . . . I get up and face the east. I teach my children about the Kachinas that we have. They were never initiated into that particular cult. But they do know they exist.

My aunt moved back home a few years ago and I would go visit her. I videotaped my aunt who was the storyteller of the family. I am going to edit and make copies to give to all my children and grandchildren so we can keep that connection.

I do Choctaw artwork and have been included in area art festivals . . . I go sit out there and bring my art. Choctaw is not well known, and I don't sell much. She tells me that is why I want you there, because its not well known and will become well known if I keep coming. My jewelry was recently displayed at the Art Museum for American Indian Heritage month.

I try to keep their native culture alive . . . My two children draw . . . try to get their interest

in crafts. My daughter is the only one interested in it, she does pottery like I do, I'm a potter, so I keep that very much alive.

I tell my children when certain things are going on at the reservation . . . The harvest dance or whatever . . . so they know what is going on although they have never lived there.

Challenges of Family Members in a Dominant Society

There were 2 themes that emerged from the third interview question about the challenges or struggles of family members in a dominant society. There was 1 subject that could not relate the question to her family. The children had been raised as non-Indians and had difficulties relating to relatives on the reservation. The 2 themes include: adjusting to dominant society and the need for dominant society to be more knowledgeable about American Indians.

Theme 6: Adjusting to Dominant Society. The subjects mentioned the need for additional adaptive ways to get along with the majority society without compromising their American Indian way of life. Several subjects mentioned the feeling of not belonging or feeling out of place in the dominant environment. A sense of belonging was experienced by most of the women when they were back "home" or living among other American Indian families. Adapting to the dominant society

was an important issue because employment was a necessity for survival. The following statements support this theme.

It is not hard for me to adapt . . . it's just that if they want to be friends, fine, if they don't want to, then that's fine to. But it does make it hard because you're passed up for a lot of things, job wise, . . . I don't mind being discriminated against because I'm now older . . . but I do not like the idea of being discriminated against because I'm a different color.

You can feel the difference, even though, I have a lot of different races that are my friends. When I go back home, its just totally different . . . you feel so good cause everybody's speaking the Indian language . . . you know everybody . . . its good.

My two older children had a lot of problems adjusting, because they were told ugly things . . . as they were growing up and it didn't help that we lived way out there . . . where we were the only Indians at the time.

It is very difficult and it is a very, very careful balancing act to retain the heritage and the culture. Our values people perceive as weak or stupid. Having owned a business, I was taken advantage of several times and my struggle was that I was not willing to give up my values . . . yet I had to protect myself. So it was a real fine balancing act . . . I was shocked to learn that people would do damage to you and hurt you, not even for gain, but just the fact that they could. Because they had the power to do it . . . I struggled to retain values and protect myself in a dominant society.

I think there is a need to learn skills to get along with non-Indian people.

In New Mexico . . . the area we lived in, was mostly Hispanic and Anglo Saxon . . . it was just a lot easier there, to fit in.

It was important to get along with non-Indians...work was outside the reservation . . . and I saw how life is in the reservation . . . I didn't want that for my children.

Theme #7: Need for Dominant Society to Be More

Knowledgeable About American Indians. Subjects view this theme as a challenge and many are involved in projects or organizations that are committed in the task of educating the majority society about American Indian people. The feeling of being misunderstood was experienced in social situations of the dominant environment. It is perceived that additional knowledge about American Indian life and families will help build better relations between dominant society and American Indian people. The following quotations lend support of this theme.

I had troubles with a roommate . . . she didn't have much family . . . my children are here all the time, if they are not here, I'm at their home. I have 3 children and 3 grandchildren, and we are very, very, close. We are always talking with each other throughout the day and getting together . . . she didn't understand.

Sometimes its a struggle to have non-Indians understand that we have a different set of values or way of doing things.

A lot of people think we Natives are dead. I've gone to many schools, even recently, the children keep asking, "Are you a real Indian?" . . . time and time again . . . they ask the same question . . . I tell them, yes, I am a real Indian. Even if I'm dressed in full regalia, they still ask.

There is a whole world of people out there who are uneducated about Indian culture and history . . . so some of the issues and problems that crop up now and then, I try to use that as an opportunity to educate people and to teach them and so forth. A lot of people that I run across . . . are afraid to ask you and so we have developed some really good relationships so they can ask questions . . .

hopefully we can share information and educate non-Indians as far as why we do things the way we do and why we perceive things the way we do and help them understand. I think it just really goes a long way for helping our whole community.

Sometimes its hard to convince people that I am American Indian until I start speaking in dialect . . . then they seem to believe that I am.

I find it difficult when people think I'm Hispanic, this is their immediate reaction to me . . . they think my children are Oriental because of their Navajo features.

Shared Values in the American Indian Family

Responses to the fourth interview question about ways the family has shared American Indian values in the family included statements similar to question 2. The sharing of the Indian language remains very important in the lives of the American Indian family. Several subjects mention the sharing of their tribal Indian language with their family. The language is viewed not only as a way to maintain identity, it is also a very important tradition. One major theme emerged from the fourth interview question, a responsibility to the family.

Theme 8: Responsibility to the family. Close ties with the family is highly valued in the American Indian family. American Indian children are taught at an early age to respect their elders or grandparents. Respect, support, and responsibility to the family are among American Indian family values mentioned by the subjects.

From my grandfather's teachings . . . that you have respect for the elderly . . . if either one of our parents was very ill and could not get around any more, not able to be on their own, we wouldn't leave them. The children understand that the elderly are very important and your reverence toward them should be there for them . . . that is instilled in them and even taught to the children on the reservation.

I think family tradition is important, keeping a family together, the family is your life . . . whether you have grandchildren, aunts or uncles, they are all family, not extended, just family.

In my family there is real family togetherness, believing in each other and sticking real close to each other . . . strong value among Indian people is family.

Grandparents raising grandchildren as opposed to them getting caught up in Indian Child Welfare . . . sometimes those grandparents are very elderly . . . they go ahead and raise their grandchildren . . . I was raised by my grandmother.

American Indian families take care of their own...keeping the family together is important.

Attitudes About the American Indian family

As the women talked about how living in a dominant society has changed the attitudes of family members about American Indian families, a common perception was that families are less committed to raising their families as a traditional American Indian family. Most American Indian families tend to prefer dominant society values.

Theme 9: Less Commitment to Traditional American Indian Family Lifestyle. Several of the women spoke about the Indian family's preference to adapt to dominant society values. The need for acceptance becomes a strategy for survival in the dominant society. The following quotations depict this theme.

We have changed a lot. It's too late sometimes to get our Indian way of life back. Families have to be more like the majority society to make it. Everybody works.

Some Indian families have changed a lot to be more like majority society. We all had to change. We had no choice and sometimes we have to put our attitudes and Indian beliefs aside to make it in this day and time.

Indian families are different because both parents work, or there is only one parent in the home, or grandparents are raising the grandchildren. It's hard to remember your Indian ways.

Indian families . . . they used to believe that the wife stayed at home, but now both parents are working. Indians have always been very proud and very strong. Some will not even fill out tribal applications for assistance. They don't want any help. Younger Indians have decided not to be as the elders are . . . they have decided to take advantage of the tribal programs.

Chickasaw and Choctaw families try to be more like majority society families. Both parents work. There is no time for Indian ways any more. Children's attitudes and beliefs are more like majority society.

Sometimes you have families or couples that are Indians and don't want to be identified as Indians, so they can live in the majority society.

Additional Findings

As the women answered the interview questions, several additional topics relating to influences of a dominant society and the American Indian family were mentioned. In an analysis of the additional data, two themes appeared: (a) influence and changes of American Indian youth and (b) losing American Indian identities.

Theme 10: Influence and Changes of American Indian youth. As the subjects answered the questions, additional information about how dominant society had changed or affected their children were mentioned. Several talked about how important it was to teach their children to be aggressive and more outspoken as an individual. Teaching their children to pursue leadership is a new role that the women saw as beneficial for their children's survival and success in the dominant society. Others commented on the lack of interest among the youth about their Indian culture and disrespect of family authority. The following statements are samples that support this theme.

Indians were strong and proud people, but because of living in a non-Indian society, we have had to change the course of how we raise our families. We have to teach them to be aggressive. This is completely against how Indians used to be. We have to teach them to get out there and speak up for yourself and stand up for yourself, they never had to do that before, but they are doing that now, and it's something that's new. Some of our elders shake their heads, they don't like that, but they know that is the only way we know as Indian families to survive.

My children, they say you grew up on the Reservation, this is the way it is here, children are able to do these things . . . We were taught never to talk back, regardless of whether that person or elder was right or wrong. We never spoke, unless we were spoken to. Now a child can say just about anything, and that is sad. Children are so influenced by TV . . . it even reaches the reservations, the drugs . . . everything that is in the dominant society is hitting them now, on the Reservation. It's hard to teach your own children, because there is so much peer pressure. I think it's very important that we . . . try to continue to tell our children . . . remember the true meaning of being Native and what we used to be . . . you can still be that, because you can't take something that's instilled in you out.

Young Indians do not want to know about Indian beliefs, values and traditions. They only care about fitting in the non-Indian world.

I think . . . for some young people, maybe some traditional things, spiritual things, just some traditional ways are not something they share or that they are proud of. I think in some instances that they may be embarrassed by it. And consequently don't share that with other people. I think it is probably because they really don't know how to share their culture and know how to be proud of it . . . success has become more materialistic.

Young Indian people are not interested in language, stories, or the old Indian ways. They want to be like the majority society.

Theme 11: Losing American Indian Identity. Several of the women interviewed mentioned ways American Indian identity is being lost as American Indians adapt to the dominant society. The following statements are examples that support this theme.

Family members marry non-Indians and blood quantum is lost. Most of the time, Indians, take on non-Indian ways or lifestyles when they inter-marry.

In the urban area . . . Indian people are inter-marrying with other nationalities . . . that gives the children a lost identification . . . Who are they really? . . . They don't fit here, there is not enough Indian for them to fit there. Some don't have the grandparents or community to go back to . . . they are not quite sure of their identification or their heritage.

Some Indians are adapting completely to non-Indian ways.

Summary

This chapter summarized the results of this study which explored how older American Indian women perceived adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on the American Indian family life. The sample of 10 American Indian women was described in the first section. The major findings of the study were presented in the second section of this chapter. There were 9 recurring themes that emerged in response to the 5 interview questions. Additionally, two themes emerged from spontaneous comments by the subjects.

Emerging from the first interview question were 2 themes about ways the family has changed to adapt to a dominant society: (a) importance of education and (b) value of job and employment opportunities. Three themes emerged in response to the second interview question

about ways the family maintains American Indian identity and culture: teaching, speaking and listening to Indian language, attending tribal functions to maintain cultural identity, and sharing stories, ceremonies, and traditions with children. In answering the third interview question about challenges of family members in a dominant society, two themes emerged: adjusting to dominant society and the need for dominant society to be more knowledgeable about American Indians. The fourth question about ways family shared American Indian values revealed one major theme: responsibility to the family. One theme represented the response to the last question about how living in a dominant society has changed the attitudes of family members about American Indian families: less commitment to traditional American Indian family lifestyle.

Two additional themes were discovered from additional comments made by the subjects: (a) influence and changes of American Indian youth and (b) losing American Indian identity.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This research explored how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. The subjects for the study were 10 older American Indian women ages 50 to 78, from the Ardmore, Oklahoma area and the Dallas-Fort Worth area. A qualitative method and phenomenological perspective were used. Data were collected and analyzed from audio-taped interviews. In this final chapter, the research investigation is summarized and the results of the study discussed. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study also are presented.

Discussion of results

The analysis of the data resulted in the formation of nine themes from the 5 interview questions. Two additional themes emerged from other comments made during the interview.

Influences of Dominant Society and American Indian
Family Life

A majority of the women reported the importance of education or the importance of becoming involved with the educational system of their children. Education was found to be an important family value.

This finding of importance of education is consistent with the studies of Wood (1996), who reported that American Indians have become active participants in the educational system due to the opportunities provided by the Indian Education Act. The women in the study viewed education as a very important element for survival in the dominant society.

The finding of the value of job and employment opportunities was a common response throughout the interview. The women in the study expressed the importance of a good job and the possibilities of a better living that could be achieved with better employment. This finding is suggested by Medicine (1981), where changes in the role of wives in the Indian communities were occurring. Indian wives have begun to work in the native communities which is a new trend among American Indian families. Several of the women in the study were employed and working in specific career jobs.

The subjects in the study relate ways of maintaining American Indian identity and culture. The findings of teaching, speaking, and listening to the Indian language, attending tribal functions to maintain cultural identity, and sharing stories, ceremonies, and traditions with children are consistent with the literature. Steele (1973) observed that American Indians in the urban areas remained connected to the Indian culture by attending powwows, socializing at reservation or Indian community events. He reported that an adherence to unique Indian values were important to the urban American Indians (Steele, 1973).

The subjects reported the challenge of the family to adjust to a dominant society. The finding of adjusting to a dominant society without compromising their American Indian way of life is suggested in the literature by Red Horse (1997). The literature reports that traditional Indian communities are continuing to exist along with the efforts of social services programs that provide the American Indian communities with the benefits of American social values. The American Indian families cling to their beliefs, attitudes, and cultural traditions (Red Horse, 1997). Subjects mentioned the feeling of not belonging in the dominant environment. A sense of belonging was experienced while living among other American Indians or when they were "back home."

The subjects identified the need for dominant society to be more knowledgeable about American Indians. It was perceived by the subjects that more education and knowledge about the American Indian people would bring a better understanding beneficial to the Indian and non-Indian society. This finding is suggested by the research by Steele (1973) which reports that Indian communities have entered an era of becoming more socially organized. The development of Indian centers have become a centralized unit of Indian activity. This organization of Indian communities have contributed to bringing a better understanding among local and non-local Indians (Steele, 1973).

Shared Values in the American Indian Family

The older women in this study perceived responsibility to the family as the most important American Indian value shared with family members. This finding is consistent with the literature presented by Benokraitis (1999) which reported that grandparents and elders have traditionally filled leadership positions in the American Indian families. Their opinions play a central role in decision making.

Attitudes About the American Indian Family

The women in the study reported less commitment to traditional American Indian family lifestyle. This finding is

suggested by Benokraitis (1999) that American Indian families are aware that elders are finding less time spent with grandchildren to share the American Indian culture.

Grandparents are the members of the family that are continually making an effort to have the grandchildren live with them if possible, in hopes to preserve the Indian way of life (Benokraitis, 1999).

Responses from the women also included the influence and changes of American Indian youth. Several women spoke of the difficulties of raising American Indian children in a dominant society. This finding is consistent with the literature of Benokraitis (1999) which reported that family communication among adults and children have been affected by adaption to a dominant society. A gap of communication has begun to occur with the traditional methods of discipline not working. The American Indian youth complain that parents do not understand the times and parent's are beginning to feel the loss of control over their childrens development.

The second additional finding was the loss of American Indian identity. This finding was not specifically found in the previous research although the literature of Benokraitis (1999) addresses the American Indian family's awareness of

less time spent with elders where knowledge about the tribal language and traditions could be supported.

Conclusions

This research study explored the following questions:

1. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family life and family members?
2. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family traditions and beliefs?
3. What changes in family life have been influenced by adapting to a dominant society do older American Indian women perceive?

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions are justified from the research results:

1. Older American Indian women and their families have been influenced by the dominant society values of education and the workforce.
2. Older American Indian women and their families value their American Indian identity and culture. They are committed to preserving the culture by sharing tribal language, attending tribal functions, and teaching children about American Indian ways.

3. Older American Indian women and their families are respectful, supportive and highly value family traditions and beliefs.

4. Older American Indian women perceive a less commitment of American Indian families toward raising their families in the traditional American Indian family lifestyle.

Limitations

This study provided an insight to information about the perceptions of older American Indian women about adaptation to a dominant society and influences on the American Indian family.

This study is limited by the small sample size and by some reluctance to share thoughts about American Indian families. Cultural shyness exists among the American Indian people and many of the women mentioned the difficulties of being more aggressive and outspoken.

Implications

There are several implications from this research which may be useful to educators, American Indian programs, business leaders, social and health care workers and urban

Indian agencies. American Indian families place high values on interconnectedness of their members. The American Indian women in this study strongly supported their family life and obligations. American Indian families continue to balance their cultural values with a dominant system. Resistance to assimilate to a dominant environment should be viewed as a strength of the American Indian people to preserve and revitalize traditional American Indian life.

Recommendations

Additional research could be useful in learning more about American Indian families by interviewing children and American Indian husbands. The research would allow comparisons to be made about the perceptions of all family members about how adapting to a dominant society has influenced the family.

Further research with all family members also could assist in determining the American Indian family needs for community and family programs.

Past research about American Indians have covered information about the culture or information about health services. Studies are sparse that include comments from

American Indians voicing their opinions about what they are experiencing and how they perceive situations.

The American Indian people have recently realized that programs that teach coping skills and parental skills would be beneficial to American Indian families in order for the younger American Indian generation to gain knowledge about how to raise their families in a dominant society, yet keeping the American Indian culture alive.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Introductory Letter

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Title of the Study: Adaptation and American Indian Families:
Perceptions of Older American Indian Women

Researcher:
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Research Advisor:
Dr. Gladys J. Hildreth (940) 898-2694

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Family Sciences at the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. This study is being conducted to meet the research requirements for a master's thesis. The purpose of the research is to describe how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on American Indian family life.

A tribal representative assisting the researcher has identified you as a subject that could provide knowledge in this area of study. Participation in the research study will be completely voluntary and will be kept confidential.

If you decide to volunteer to participate in the study, it will be necessary for me to interview you. You will be asked to sign a consent form granting permission for an audio-taped interview. The interview will last no longer than one hour. To ensure confidentiality there will be a number code assigned to the interview. A brief personal data sheet will need to be completed before the interview and should take less than five minutes. Recorded tapes will be erased and transcriptions will be destroyed by shredding on June 29, 1999.

If you volunteer to participate in the study, please contact the research assistant. The research assistant will set up the interview.

Thank you for your consideration to participate.

Sincerely,

Julie Watson

Appendix B
Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Question

1. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family life and family members?
2. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family traditions and beliefs?
3. What changes in family life have been influenced by adapting to a dominant society do older American Indian women perceive?

Interview Questions

1. What are some of the ways your family has changed to adapt or get along better in a dominant society?
2. What are some of the ways your family maintains American Indian identity or cultural values in a dominant society?
3. What are the challenges or struggles of family members in a dominant society?
4. What are some of the ways your family has shared or included American Indian beliefs, values, and traditions in your family life?
5. How has living in a dominant society changed the attitudes and beliefs of elders, wives, husbands, and children about the American Indian family?

Probes

Really?

Silence.

What was that like?

Hm, um hm etc.

Yes.

(Nodding)

Appendix C
Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Adaptation and American Indian Families: Perceptions of Older American Indian Women

Researcher:
Julie Watson (940) 898-3720

Research Advisor:
Dr. Gladys J. Hildreth (940) 898-2694

I understand that this study involves research which is designed to investigate how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influences on American Indian family life. I understand that I will be answering questions that relate to my perception of adaption to a dominant society and the influences on family life.

I understand that I will be consenting to a one-time commitment to respond to questions within an interview process. I understand that the interview will be approximately 1 hour and will be audiotaped in order to be transcribed and analyzed. I understand that I will be asked to complete a personal data form after the interview process. I understand that no name will appear on the audiotape nor on my personal data form to preserve anonymity.

I understand that the interview questions may have possible risks and may cause discomfort. The researcher will make every effort to prevent any complication that may arise from this study. I understand that if I experience any adverse effects from the research I should report to the researcher, promptly. The researcher is prepared to advise me. I have read the list of risks below and understand the steps taken to minimize the risks.

Risk: Confidentiality

Steps to minimize risk: The taped interview and transcription of the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. A number code will be assigned to each transcription and audio taped interview to preserve anonymity. Participants are assured that audio tapes will be erased and transcriptions will be shredded on June 29, 1999.

Risk: Emotional Distress

Steps to minimize risk: Interview questions that may cause distress or discomfort do not have to be answered. Participants are assured that there are no right or wrong answers. Participants are assured that data will be kept confidential and their names will be kept anonymous by using a number coding system. Only the researcher will hear the audiotape and have access to the transcripts. The results will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Risk: Coercion

Steps to minimize risk: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. The participants are assured that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

I understand that there are no benefits from participating in the study other than the potential benefits of the experience of being part of a research study and receiving an abstract of the findings if I desire.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. I should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help me. I understand, however, that TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for

injuries that might happen because I am taking part in this research.

If I have any questions about the research or about my rights as a subject, I should ask the researchers: their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If I have questions later, or wish to report a problem, I may call the researchers or the Office of Research & Grants Administration at (940) 898-3377.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that the refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

The purpose of this study has been explained to me and my questions and concerns about it have been answered. The researcher has provided me with a copy of the dated and signed consent form to keep.

I do hereby consent to the recording of my voice by Julie Watson, acting on this date under the authority for the Texas Woman's University. I understand that the material recorded today may be available for the purpose of exploring how older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on American Indian family life. I am assured that my responses will be handled with complete confidentiality as only the researcher, Julie Watson will have access to the audiotapes for transcribing and analyzing purposes. I understand the audiotaped responses will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will be erased on June 29, 1999 and do hereby consent to such use.

I hereby release the Texas Woman's University and the undersigned party acting under the authority of Texas Woman's University from any and all claims arising out of such taking, recording, reproducing, publishing, transmitting, or exhibiting as is authorized by the Texas Woman's University.

Signature of Participant

Date

The above consent form was read, discussed, and signed in my presence. In my opinion, the person signing said consent form did so freely and with full knowledge and understanding of its contents.

Representative of Texas Woman's University

Date

Appendix D
Personal Data Sheet

Personal Data Sheet

Code Number: _____

1. Age: _____

2. Tribe affiliation: _____

3. Number of people in Household: _____

4. Number of children: _____

5. Where did your family live while you were growing up?

(Check all that apply)

Reservation _____

Urban Indian Community _____

Dominant Society Environment _____

6. Where did you raise your family?

(Check all that apply)

Reservation _____

Urban Indian Community _____

Dominant Society Environment _____

7. Marital Status:

Married _____

Divorced _____

Separated _____

Widow _____

Appendix E

Research Questions, Interview Questions,
and Themes: Results Matrix

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, AND THEMES: RESULTS MATRIX

<u>Research Question</u>	<u>Interview Questions</u>	<u>Themes</u>
1. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family life and family members?	1. What are some of the ways your family has changed to adapt or get along better in a dominant society? 2. What are some of the ways your family maintains American Indian identity or cultural values in a dominant society?	1. Importance of Education 2. Value of job and employment opportunities 3. Teaching, speaking, and listening to Indian language 4. Attending tribal functions to maintain cultural identity 5. Sharing stories, ceremonies, and traditions with children
2. How do older American Indian women perceive adaptation to a dominant society and its influence on family traditions and beliefs?	3. What are the challenges or struggles of family members in a dominant society? 4. What are some of the ways your family has shared or included American Indian beliefs, values, and traditions in your family life?	6. Adjusting to dominant society 7. Need for dominant society to be more knowledgeable about American Indians 8. Responsibility to the family
3. What changes in family life have been influenced by adapting to a dominant society do older American Indian women perceive?	5. How has living in a dominant society changed the attitudes and beliefs of elders, wives, husbands, and children about the American Indian family?	9. Less commitment to traditional American Indian family lifestyle
	<u>Additional Findings</u>	10. Influence and changes of American Indian youth 11. Losing American Indian identity