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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Tiffany R. Chenery

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Social Emotional Development of Rural Alaska Native and

American Indian Maltreated Children

by

Tiffany R. Chenery

MS, Kaplan University/Perdue Global University, 2013

MS, Walden University, 2019

BA, University of Alaska Anchorage, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Developmental Psychology

Walden University

February 2024

Abstract

Child maltreatment is an ongoing social phenomenon that has impacted Alaska Native and American Indians for several generations. Many affected children reside in rural areas where outsiders are not allowed or must receive permission to enter. These communities are private and have a general mistrust in researchers, which has caused ongoing intergenerational trauma. There is a significant lack of research concerning Alaska Native and American Indian rural child maltreatment impacting social emotional development. The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore rural Alaska Native and American Indian child maltreatment impacts on social emotional development. Social disorganization theory was the conceptual framework used to explain relationships between concepts. Research questions were designed to explore lived experiences of participants through semi structured interviews. Inclusion criteria for the 10 participants included having experienced child maltreatment prior to the participants' 18th birthday. Thematic analysis was applied resulting in predicted and unpredicted themes. Major themes identified during thematic analysis included embarrassment, alcoholism, special education, behavioral health problems, and other social emotional development implications. Not all themes were listed due to multiple social emotional development implications. Study findings can be used to develop a conceptual framework geared toward mitigating rural Alaska Native and American Indian child maltreatment. Findings can also be used to increase rural social emotional development practices. Positive social change implications include preventive program implementation in rural areas for Alaska Native and American Indian cultures.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to the Alaska Native and American Indian cultures who have shown strength and resilience in the face of oppression for generations. The privilege of being born and raised in Alaska has afforded me countless opportunities to experience these special populations. Their diversity, grace, dignity, and power are unmatched. I could never thank them enough for allowing me to grow and flourish in their lands. I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my family. My parents, Craig and Angela Chenery, encouraged me to reach for the stars and pursue the highest degree possible that would align with my morals, beliefs, and upbringing. I would also like to thank my brother, Matthew Chenery, who has been my silent cheerleader and confidant for as long as I can remember. My mentor Janece Richard who motivated, challenged, and inspired me to be a powerful, strong, and successful black woman in leadership. Janece, you gave me the one chance I needed fresh out of my master's degree to prosper in the psychology field. I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to all my friends, family, and colleagues who provided support and words of encouragement as I progressed through this degree. I would be nothing without all of you.

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I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my parents, family, and friends for supporting me for the duration of my schooling. I would also like to thank my professors and colleagues for pushing me to my fullest potential in and out of the classroom. I would explicitly like to express my endless gratitude to my chair, Dr. Caramela-Miller and committee member, Dr. Dizney. This journey would have never been possible without all the support, encouragement, and patience exhibited by the two of you. I am forever indebted to you both. Dr. Caramela-Miller, you gave me inspiration when I thought hope was lost for even obtaining a chair to mentor me through my dissertation. You provided a safe but firm place to bring ideas and passions that pushed me along this journey. Dr. Dizney, without hesitation you agreed to be my committee member. Meeting you was such a great experience, especially when presenting for my oral defense. I was so nervous, and your calm presence made the presentation smooth and flowing. To my classmates, all I can say is wow! You all have inspired me with your encouraging words and responses to discussion board posts. The joy I felt in reading responses weekly is unmatched. I will forever be your biggest cheerleader in completing your PhDs. Keep your head held high, and your faith in God strong and I promise you will make such a difference in this ever-changing world. Thank you all for pushing me to be Dr. Chenery. Best wishes to you all! You can do it!

Table of Contents

List of Tables v

List of Figures vi

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study 1

Background 4

Problem Statement 8

Purpose of the Study 9

Research Questions 10

Theoretical Framework 10

Nature of the Study 11

Definitions 14

Assumptions 15

Scope and Delimitations 16

Limitations 17

Significance 19

Summary 20

Chapter 2: Literature Review 22

Literature Search Strategy 24

Theoretical Framework 25

Social Disorganization Theory 25

Social Disorganization Theory as a Conceptual Framework 28

Literature Review Related to Key Variables 33

Forms of Child Maltreatment 34
Social Emotional Development 45
AN+AI 48
Rural Areas 52
Studies Related to the Research Questions 55
Summary and Conclusions 59
Chapter 3: Research Method 63
Research Design and Rationale 63
Qualitative Design and Phenomenology 66
Role of the Researcher 68
Researcher Bias, Relationships, and Ethical Issues 70
Methodology 72
Population 72
Sampling Strategy 73
Data Collection Instrumentation 76
Data Analysis Plan 78
Issues of Trustworthiness 80
Ethical Procedures 81
Summary 83
Chapter 4: Results 85
Setting 85
Demographics 86

Data Collection 87
Sample Selection 88
CTQ-SF 88
OCS 89
Data Recording Method 89
Data Variation 90
Data Analysis 91
Evidence of Trustworthiness 93
Credibility 93
Transferability 94
Dependability 94
Confirmability 95
Results 95
Theme 1: Embarrassment 96
Theme 2: Alcoholism 99
Theme 3: Special Education 101
Theme 4: Behavioral Problems 103
Theme 5: Social Emotional Development Implications 105
Summary 106
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations 108
Interpretation of Findings 110
Limitations of the Study 116

Recommendations....118
Implications....121
Theoretical Implications....122
Potential Positive Social Change....125
Recommendations for Practice....126
Conclusion....127
References....130
Appendix: Interview Questions....144

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Interviews 87

Table 2. Participant Open-Ended Response Samples 90

Table 3. Themes and Subthemes..... 92

Table 4. Hermeneutic Phenomenological Responses According to Theme 105

List of Figures

Figure 1. Demographic Details 87

Figure 2. Participant Maltreatment Types 97

Figure 3. P7 Outlier Responses 102

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Child maltreatment is an ongoing social problem exacerbated by cultural factors in underprivileged communities (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021). The effects of child maltreatment on social emotional development across Alaska Native and American Indian (AN+AI) cultures has not been fully explored due to cultural barriers (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Alaska Native (AN) development has not been sufficiently explored due to a generalized mistrust in researchers, AN community's limits for space, and varying research priorities (Hiratsuka et al., 2020). Secrecy within AN+AI populations has caused inconsistency within previous research (BlackDeer, 2023; Hopkins et al., 2023). Effects of child maltreatment on social emotional development were researched to address this gap. Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are populations that have been overlooked, misrepresented, and underrepresented for many years (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian populations are more likely to experience child maltreatment in cases related to trauma, abuse, and neglect than other cultures (BlackDeer, 2023; Giano et al., 2021). Historical trauma is a norm within these cultural groups, causing their experiences with child maltreatment to be extremely unique (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). These unique experiences have resulted in increased contact with child protective services, leading to the discovery of ongoing child maltreatment (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Child maltreatment has become expected and normalized in rural areas. Elders within rural communities assert the expectation of silence across all people (BlackDeer, 2023). The expectation for silence increases resilience and mental health

concerns as children grow into adults (Giano et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Mental health concerns have impacted child rearing among AN+AI individuals. Mental health concerns and socioeconomic factors within AN+AI adults have increased child maltreatment in specific geographical residencies (Austin et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Child maltreatment victims may struggle with interpersonal relationships and attachments. Social emotional skills in children are protective factors when managing violence stemming from assaults (Malti, 2020). Lack of secure and healthy attachments could lead to mental health problems in adulthood if not properly addressed (Newins et al., 2019) and increased adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) scores (Choi et al., 2020; Giano et al., 2021). Social emotional development includes social skills, learning approaches, behavioral problems, temperament development, relationships with others, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Meng, 2020). Social emotional development has three domains representing aspects of child maltreatment impacted by violence: other-oriented social emotional processes, self-oriented social-emotional processes, and emotional self-regulation (Malti, 2020). Behavioral and mental health professionals use aspects of social emotional development to understand aspects relating to human growth and development (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020).

Chapter 1 includes current research regarding social emotional development, child maltreatment, and AN+AI cultures. The problem statement indicates why this study was necessary. The need stemmed from child maltreatment being an ongoing social problem

that has not been sufficiently explored in AN+AI communities, regarding social emotional development. The purpose of this study was to explore child maltreatment and social emotional effects on AN+AI individuals. Associations between AN+AI cultures and child maltreatment is known to researchers. The absence of information about how child maltreatment impacts AN+AI social emotional development remains (Hopkins et al., 2023). A phenomenological qualitative research approach was used to explore effects of social emotional development among this underrepresented population (Burnette et al., 2019; Neubauer et al., 2019). Insight may be gained into experiences from AN+AI child maltreatment victims.

Interview questions presented were used during semi-structured interviews which described experiences of child maltreatment and social emotional development. Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were conducted to solicit information regarding lived experiences of the target population. This design was appropriate aligning with the problem statement and purpose as it allowed participants to use aspects of their history to answer interview questions (Neubauer et al., 2019). Interview questions were based on research questions described in this chapter. Research questions were derived from what is still unknown about relationships between social emotional development, child maltreatment, and AN+AI cultures. Social Disorganization Theory was the conceptual framework used (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). A brief description of Social Disorganization Theory was presented with justification for using this conceptual framework. Archival data from the Permanent Fund Dividend Division in Alaska and Alaska Office of Children's Services (OCS) are used. These data were most

appropriate due to population vulnerability and topic sensitivity. Details regarding the scope of this study are also presented to ensure confidentiality and generalizability. Implications for positive social change and study significance are also addressed.

Background

Child maltreatment includes physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment, neglect, or exploitation of children (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Child maltreatment is associated with mental health problems including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and alcoholism (Newins et al., 2019). This ongoing social phenomenon has impacted many cultures for generations (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Historical and generational child maltreatment are most prevalent amongst AN+AI cultures (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). AN+AI individuals are reported as the number one culture experiencing child maltreatment (Lacey et al., 2021). Silence is an expectation and cultural norm asserted by elders of rural communities (BlackDeer, 2023; Braithwaite, 2018). Secrecy is a barrier for addressing child maltreatment within AN+AI individuals that continues to prevail within their communities (BlackDeer, 2023).

Child maltreatment can lead to actual or potential harm to a child's health or development, decreasing their trust in relationships (Smith et al., 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are more likely to experience many forms of maltreatment including sexual abuse (BlackDeer, 2023; Giano et al., 2021; Lacey et al., 2021). Individuals in underrepresented cultures go overlooked due to residential geographic regions where they reside (Hopkins et al., 2023). Alaska Native and

American Indian individuals residing in those rural areas have scarce resources which has led to increased maltreatment factors (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2023; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Some geographic regions are rural areas where AN+AI families have resided for generations. Generational trauma is prevalent amongst AN+AI populations (Burnette et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022). The likelihood of reporting occurring abuse is low (BlackDeer, 2023;) increasing ACEs scores amongst AN+AI peoples (Giano et al., 2021; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023).

Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are considered the first people of North and South America who maintain tribal affiliations with their lands (Walters et al., 2023). These individuals have unique relationships with the government due to tribal rules and exceptions (Walters et al., 2023). Indigenous populations still struggle with preventive programs protecting children from abuse (Hopkins et al., 2023). Mental health professionals are mandated to be trauma informed, supporting vulnerable populations (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Trauma informed mental health professionals can understand how trauma presents itself in AN+AI populations based on culturally acceptability (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures serve to identify child maltreatment symptoms (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Information regarding trauma and social emotional development are aspects of understanding vulnerable populations.

Indigenous people have been known to experience maltreatment and psychological distress one and a half times more than any other culture (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Maltreatment of indigenous people has led to psychological

disorders. The framework of historical oppressions, resilience, and transcendence (FHORT) is an assessment tool used in a previous study to explain and prevent social disparities (Burnette et al., 2019). The FHORT served to help emphasize psychological health disparities explaining levels of violence experienced by indigenous peoples (Burnette et al., 2019). The FHORT aided in explaining suicide and depression levels amongst indigenous people which could connect social emotional development concerns (Burnette et al., 2019). Social emotional development with child maltreatment among AN+AI individuals could link to increased depressive symptoms and social disparities. Social disparities include familial disruption, neighborhood poverty, and community violence according to social disorganization theory (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Yahaya et al., 2013).

Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are considered vulnerable, misrepresented, and underrepresented (Giano et al., 2021; Hopkins et al., 2023). There are AN+AI peoples residing in rural areas. Current knowledge on child maltreatment in rural areas was explored according to geographic regions (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Differences were shared between urban and rural populations relating to race and child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Child maltreatment is more prevalent in rural areas when compared to other areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Socioeconomic factors are also directly related to child maltreatment (Choi et al., 2020). The socioeconomic factors related to child maltreatment have long lasting, severe consequences (Choi et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Social emotional development is directly linked to some socioeconomic factors

(Austin et al., 2019). Socioeconomic factors included smoking, age, education, and intimate partner violence (Austin et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022). The relationship between child maltreatment factors and prenatal indicators of child abuse is important to understand how social emotional development is impacted. Factors may be used to predict whether AN+AI social emotional development is impacted by Child Protective Services (CPS) contact. Contact was higher with CPS when compared to non-Native children due to child maltreatment (Austin et al., 2019). Child maltreatment continues to prevail in rural areas occupied by AN+AI peoples. Further research studies are needed to address social emotional development, prenatal indicators, and CPS contact (Austin et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022). The connection between mental health problems and child maltreatment is well documented (Choi et al., 2020; Giano et al., 2021). Relationships between AN+AI populations, child maltreatment, and rural areas is not fully explored or understood (Connolly et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2021). Failure to explore these relationships thus far confirms the need for this study. Exploration of the relationship between child maltreatment, AN+AI, child maltreatment, and rural areas could lead to more trauma informed mental health professionals (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Further knowledge of AN+AI cultures could support the need for preventive programs in rural areas. These programs could be beneficial for decreasing child maltreatment amongst misrepresented cultures (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). A decrease in the prevalence of child maltreatment in AN+AI cultures would be beneficial to addressing this ongoing social phenomenon (Giano et al., 2021).

Problem Statement

Child maltreatment on social emotional development has not been studied within AN+AI population s. Studies have not been completed addressing impacts relating to child maltreatment on social emotional development of AN+AI individuals, residing in rural areas. Information would have allowed researchers to explore feelings relating to social emotional challenges or successes based on victim recollections. Alaska Native and American Indian populations are very secretive in nature, decreasing the ability for outsiders to enter their communities (Burnette et al., 2019; Connolly et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Current known facts about maltreatment include mental health problems in childhood leading into adulthood, when not properly addressed (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022) Impacts of child maltreatment on social emotional development remains unknown regarding AN+AI youth residing in rural areas. Results could mitigate child maltreatment and developmental concerns within AN+AI cultures.

Alaska Native and American Indian youth have been subjected to child maltreatment for many generations resulting in mental health issues (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). High contact with CPS is prevalent in ACEs, which are reported by adult survivors stemming from child maltreatment (Austin et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020). Preventative measures are lacking in AN+AI cultures, due to scarce resources within Alaskan rural areas (Connolly et al., 2019). Rural geographic regions with high maltreatment factors lead to increased abuse (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Child maltreatment negatively impacts families and communities. Long-term effects associated with child victims of abuse include mental health problems (Newins et al., 2019). Mental

health problems linger into adulthood when not properly managed (Choi et al., 2020; Giano et al., 2021; Newins et al., 2019).

Social emotional development is impacted by many factors including child maltreatment (Malti, 2020). Social emotional development includes social skills, learning approaches, and behavioral problems (Meng, 2020). Emotional health in children is pivotal for the ability to deal with distress and adverse experiences across environments (Malti, 2020). A child's social emotional skills serve as protective factors when managing violence stemming from assaults (Malti, 2020). Three domains of social emotional development are other-oriented social emotional processes, self-oriented social-emotional processes, and emotional self-regulation (Malti, 2020). Each domain represents an aspect of social emotional development impacted by violence including child maltreatment. Child maltreatment is an ongoing social problem impacting all cultures and populations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore child maltreatment and social emotional effects on AN+AI individuals. Adult AN+AI individuals who resided in rural areas were interviewed. Mental health issues resulting from child maltreatment have been studied (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). No research has been done exploring effects of social emotional development amongst this underrepresented population (Burnett et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). A secondary purpose was to gain insight into experiences from AN+AI individuals who suffered from child maltreatment. Few studies used interview methods to gain insight into what AN+AI individuals experience regularly from residing in rural areas. Relationships between the concepts are not fully understood.

Phenomenological methodology was used to gather an in-depth understanding into the lives of AN+AI child maltreatment survivors. Interviews were conducted with participants who resided in rural areas and experienced maltreatment as children. A qualitative methodology using phenomenology allowed participants to fully explain and share their perspectives (Neubauer et al., 2019). These experiences resulted in emerging developmental themes relating to social emotional development. This contributed to understanding AN+AI cultures and their historical trauma because of child maltreatment. Clarification on the need for intervention services in rural communities came from this study. AN+AI individuals were provided with a voice deviating from silence and secrecy which are cultural norms (BlackDeer, 2023; Connolly et al., 2019).

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do AN+AI adult survivors of child maltreatment describe their abuse in rural areas?

Research Question 2: How do AN+AI adult survivors of child maltreatment describe the impacts on their social and emotional development?

Theoretical Framework

Social disorganization theory was originally designed to understand variations in juvenile delinquency in 1942 (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory was the theoretical framework. Social disorganization theory has been adapted and applied to other social problems including child maltreatment. Poverty-stricken neighborhood descriptions, family disruption, and proximity to urban areas are leading indicators of child sexual violence prevalent with

this theory (Yahaya et al., 2013). Social disorganization theory is used to support research indicating minimal social supports and ethnicity are possible indicators of child maltreatment in rural areas (Choi et al., 2020; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Low socioeconomic status, limited preventive programs, and high ACEs scores are additional indicators of deviant behavior leading to child maltreatment in rural areas (Austin et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020; Hopkins et al., 2023). Social disorganization theory correlates with criminality and social factors predicting child maltreatment in rural areas among misrepresented cultures (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023).

Social disorganization theory was used to explore study variables. Variables included child maltreatment, social emotional development, and AN+AI cultures. Each variable served to represent an aspect of social disorganization theory that has been adapted and is applicable to social issues. Aspects of the theory are family disruption, child sexual violence, deviant behavior, minimal social supports, and proximity to rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Yahaya et al., 2013). Key concepts were thoroughly explained in Chapter 2. Social disorganization theory was used by researchers to explore how rural areas are impacted by violence and criminality regarding minimal social supports and family disruption (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Previous researchers explored child sexual violence in relation to social disorganization theory (Yahaya et al., 2013). Child maltreatment in AN+AI cultures have not been researched using concepts in this theory.

Nature of the Study

Research questions in this qualitative study were addressed using the specific

research design of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that is used to focus on individuals' lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Hermeneutic phenomenology was specifically used to explore individual AN+AI maltreatment experiences when they resided in rural areas. Hermeneutic phenomenology serves to consider participant's history, viewing their social, cultural, and political aspects of their environments objectively (Neubauer et al., 2019). The target population was male and female AN+AI individuals ages 18 and older. Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were conducted to solicit information regarding lived experiences of the target population. This design was appropriate aligning with the problem statement and purpose as it allowed participants to use historical aspects in answering interview questions.

Qualitative research methods were used to gather multiple data sources (DeJohnkheere & Vaughn, 2019). Data were also obtained from Alaska's Office of Children's Services (OCS) and the Permanent Fund Dividend Division. Data sources provided AN+AI heritage confirmation and presence in Alaska during childhood. The Child Trauma Questionnaire Short Form (CTQ-SF) was used to determine childhood trauma inclusion criteria (Bernstein et al., 2003). The target population was male and female AN+AI individuals ages 18 and older. The sample was limited to individuals who resided in rural areas during child maltreatment occurrences. Semi-structured interview methods were used to explore how child maltreatment impacts social development across participants. Open ended forms of data included interviews and documents which will be used to allow participants free expression of their experiences (DeJohnkheere & Vaughn,

2019). Participants provided historical and generational information when qualitative interview methods were used. Themes were created based on historical and intergenerational data that were gathered during the interview process.

Archival data from OCS and the Permanent Fund Dividend Division in Alaska were used for this study. Data sources provided AN+AI heritage confirmation and presence in Alaska during childhood. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals ages 18 and older, male, and female were included in this study. A majority of the sample were female while the remaining participants were male. The sample was comprised of 100% AN+AI individuals with no other ethnicities included. The sample was limited to individuals who resided in rural areas during child maltreatment occurrences. This was not limited to adults still residing in Alaska or other rural communities.

This qualitative study is designed to explore whether social emotional development impacted AN+AI individuals who were victims of child maltreatment. Phenomenology through semi-structured interviews was the research method used. The use of semi-structured interviews serves to provide participants an opportunity to express details about maltreatment from their perspectives (DeJohnkheere & Vaughn, 2019). The CTQ-SF served to provide necessary information to rule out individuals who did not meet inclusion criteria (Bernstein et al., 2003). Demographic information including age, sex, and specific AN+AI tribes was collected. Information pertaining to tribal heritage was collected to understand which rural areas were previously occupied by participants. Additional details about design specificity are provided in Chapter 2.

Definitions

American Indian (AI): American Indians are considered descendants of the first people in North and South America (Liebler, 2018; Walters et al. 2023). These individuals maintain tribal affiliations and attachments to their communities (BlackDeer, 2023; Liebler, 2018; Walters et al., 2023).

Alaska Native (AN): people are defined as those who are members of Alaska's tribes. Those tribes include Aleuts from the Aleutian Islands and Eskimos. Yupik and Inuit people are considered Eskimos (Connolly et al., 2019).

Child maltreatment: Child maltreatment includes witnessing violence in childhood and child abuse (Lacey et al., 2021). Child abuse includes physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment, neglect, or exploitation of children (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021;). These actions may lead to actual or potential harm in a child's health or development, decreasing their trust in relationships (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021).

Rural areas: Rural areas are territories, populations, and housing units that are outside of urban areas and urban clusters (Bennett et al., 2019). A place is rural, remote, or a frontier if it is fifteen minutes away from a city or town with 2,500 to 9,999 people. This rural area must also be an hour or more away from a city or town with 50,000 people or more (Bennett et al., 2019).

Social emotional development: Social emotional development includes social skills, learning approaches, behavioral problems, temperament development, relationships with others, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Meng,

2020). Social emotional development is a child's ability to form adult and peer relationships, regulate emotions, ultimately expressing those emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways (Im et al., 2019). Children should be able to explore and learn about their own environment across familial and community settings (Im et al., 2019).

Assumptions

There were two assumptions regarding the methodology and generalizability of this study. The first assumption was that data obtained from the Permanent Fund Dividend in Alaska, OCS, and CTQ-SF were accurate. This assumption was needed because information needed for the study was obtained through archival data and participant report. The CTQ-SF was used in this study to collect information regarding childhood trauma, and to rule out those who did not meet inclusion criteria (Bernstein et al., 2003). The second assumption was demographic information provided was correct. AN+AI individuals are underrepresented populations that are often private in nature (BlackDeer, 2023; Hopkins et al., 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals were the only population included in this study. Access to this population is limited as it represents the number one culture suffering from generational child abuse and maltreatment (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023).

A third assumption was that AN+AI participants were truthful about experiences. The participants self-reported experiences through interviews and surveys. Multiple AN+AI adults were studied so data could be reviewed from different age groups and genders. Interviews are completed with multiple participants allowing themes to be discovered in the data and properly coded (Guest et al., 2020). The assumption that

participants are being truthful must be made. A mistake often made with interviewers and interviewees is not establishing rapport, which could cause participant reluctancy (Pessoa et al., 2019). Reluctancy and improper coding is prevented by researchers taking time to build rapport with participants (Guest et al., 2020; Pessoa et al., 2019).

Scope and Delimitations

Child maltreatment effects on social emotional development of AN+AI individuals residing in rural areas were explored in this study. There is minimal information on AN+AI individuals due to cultural secrecy (BlackDeer, 2023). There is a lack of information on how child maltreatment impacts AN+AI social emotional development in general. Child maltreatment affects the mental health of all cultures (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals represent the number one culture worldwide suffering from child maltreatment (Lacey et al., 2021). Research exploring social emotional aspects of development is nonexistent regarding AN+AI individuals. Research served to explore and understand child maltreatment effects on social emotional development of rural AN+AI individuals through phenomenology.

Archival data from the Permanent Fund Dividend in Alaska and OCS were used. Results from the CTQ-SF were also used as part of inclusion criteria needed for this study (Bernstein et al., 2003). The population of interest was AN+AI individuals ages 18 and older who resided in rural areas during child maltreatment. These populations are six times as likely to experience sexual abuse and are the number one reported abused population worldwide (BlackDeer, 2023; Lacey et al., 2021). Male and female victims

were included with no investigation into sexual differences or preferences. The individuals who were not of AN+AI descent were not included, nor those who did not reside in rural areas. Results will not be generalizable to those who did not reside in rural areas or who are not considered AN+AI.

Social disorganization theory is the framework used for this study (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Social disorganization theory was selected to explain relationships between deviant behavior, familial disruption, and abuse in rural communities (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). This theory further supports research indicating that minimal social supports and ethnicity are possible indicators of child maltreatment in rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Low socioeconomic status, limited preventive programs, and high ACE scores are additional indicators of deviant behavior leading to child maltreatment in rural areas (Austin et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020). Social disorganization theory aims to capture criminality and social factors predicting child maltreatment in rural areas among misrepresented cultures. The purpose of the study is to explore child maltreatment effects on social emotional development of AN+AI individuals residing in rural areas. Social disorganization theory is suitable for exploration of those factors.

Limitations

A limitation to this study was reliability. Reliability of information obtained in the interview came into question due to participants having very different viewpoints on child maltreatment as it is defined. Evidence from various data sources was used to effectively educate participants. The definition of child maltreatment must be clear between researchers and participants based on previously defined key words and phrases

(Lacey et al., 2021). Positive rapport between the researcher and participants had to be established. This is to ensure participants feel comfortable disclosing child maltreatment experiences within contextual guidelines. The short nature of this study may have prevented a complete positive rapport from being built, which could have resulted in participants failing to fully disclose experiences.

A second limitation was bias. Bias is a tendency preventing judgmental consideration of questions during research (Zvereva & Kozlov, 2021). Bias may occur at any time during research. The type of bias specific to this research is interviewer bias. Interviewer bias is a systematic shift in how research is solicited or interpreted (Zvereva & Kozlov, 2021). Previous Alaska residents are the LPCs making them privy to certain cultural factors. Interviewer bias may be prevented by making the interviewers' interactions with participants standardized and limited (Zvereva & Kozlov, 2021).

A third limitation was failure to focus on a specific age group or gender. Perspectives from a large age range could have limited the recollection from participants. Participants who were younger in age may have more vivid and recent memories yielding more descriptive experiences of child maltreatment. Participants who are older in age could have repressed certain memories of child maltreatment beneficial to the study. Gender differences could aim to account for how memories are processed. Women tend to access their memories quicker than males, use emotional terms to describe memories, and recall dates of occurrence more accurately (Handajani et al., 2023). The current research may still prove to be useful despite these limitations.

Significance

Child maltreatment is an ongoing social problem significant in rural lands (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021). Effects of child maltreatment on social emotional development across AN+AI cultures has not been determined. Social emotional development on AN+AI individuals has not been sufficiently explored. Answers to questions about AN+AI cultures could be provided from this research. Emphasis was placed on AN+AI individuals who were victims of child maltreatment while residing in rural areas. Previous research has been inconsistent with including AN+AI populations due to cultural barriers and secrecy (Garcia, 2020). Findings from this study could add to the body of literature regarding AN+AI child maltreatment.

This study is unique because AN+AI cultures do not speak on forms of maltreatment occurring in their villages (BlackDeer, 2023; Hopkins et al., 2023). AN+AI cultures have been misrepresented and underrepresented for many years (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). An adequate cultural depiction of AN+AI could be gained from lived experiences. Research served to address impacts of social emotional development on AN+AI individuals based on personal experiences. Social emotional development is a topic that has not yet been addressed by researchers with consideration to this underrepresented culture (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). The participants were educated by researchers on social emotional development prior to the interview process. An understanding was beneficial to participants and researchers when exploring this phenomenon as it served to provide a baseline for the interview questions.

Studies on mental and behavioral health issues resulting from child abuse and

maltreatment have been completed. Some mental and behavioral health diagnoses included PTSD, ADHD, and alcoholism (Hopkins et al., 2023; Newins et al., 2019). Research rarely included AN+AI individuals due to lack of resources. Results serve to provide much needed insight into AN+AI cultures and rural areas in which they reside. Insights gained should aid schools, mental health professionals, and other researchers in understanding social emotional development as it relates to AN+AI individuals. Mental health professionals, child welfare agencies, and behavioral health professionals can use this insight to implement preventative measures against child maltreatment in rural areas. Preventive safety programs for AN+AI individuals throughout rural areas may contribute to positive social change by decreasing child maltreatment and increasing social emotional development.

Summary

Child maltreatment is associated with mental health issues including PTSD, ADHD, and alcoholism (Hopkins et al., 2023). Indigenous individuals are the number one population experiencing child maltreatment (Lacey et al., 2021), and they are more likely to experience sexual abuse than any other culture (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Indigenous populations are underrepresented cultures (Hopkins et al., 2023) who are more likely to experience historical trauma, increased ACEs scores, secretive norms, expectations from elders and minimal protective factors (Choi et al., 2020; Hopkins et al., 2023). Social emotional development is impacted by many factors including child maltreatment (Malti, 2020). A child's ability to form adult relationships, peer relationships, and regulate emotions are aspects of social emotional development

(Im et al., 2019). The ability for children to learn about their own rural environments across familial settings is also part of social emotional development (Malti, 2020). Effects of social emotional development, child maltreatment, and AN+AI populations have not been thoroughly researched. The purpose of this study was to explore child maltreatment and social emotional effects on rural AN+AI individuals. The key focus was to understand if social emotional development was impacted by child maltreatment across AN+AI cultures. Social disorganization theory served as the theoretical framework (Macguire-Jack, 2021). Social Disorganization Theory originally served to understand variations in juvenile delinquency (Yahaya et al., 2013). The theory has been adapted and applied to other social problems including child maltreatment since 1942. Social Disorganization Theory is used to support research stating minimal social supports and ethnicity are possible indicators of rural child maltreatment (Gilbert & Wright, 2023; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). This theoretical model was used to explore rural AN+AI child maltreatment.

Chapter 2 includes a thorough review of research associated with child maltreatment, social emotional development, rural areas, and AN+AI cultures. Information about how the Alaska PFD Division, OCS, CTQ-SF, and social disorganization theory are related occur. Indigenous relationships with child maltreatment, historical trauma, lack of resources, residential geographical regions, and social emotional development are the focus of noted research. Current research relating to child maltreatment and AN+AI cultures is presented. Additional information relating to secrecy of AN+AI cultures is also presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is substantial research on how child maltreatment impacts mental and behavioral health across cultures (Garcia, 2020; Newins et al., 2019). Behavioral health problems in adulthood including PTSD, alcoholism, and lack of healthy attachments are results from unaddressed child maltreatment (Garcia, 2020; Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Social emotional development includes the ability to form healthy attachments (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020). Alaska Native and American Indian cultural barriers are obstacles in research related to child maltreatment and social emotional development (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). The purpose of this study was to explore child maltreatment and social emotional effects on AN+AI individuals who resided in rural areas. A secondary purpose was to gain insight into experiences from AN+AI individuals who suffered from child maltreatment. Relationships between the concepts are not fully understood.

Alaska Native and American Indian populations are associated with high levels of child maltreatment (Hopkins et al., 2023), specifically child sexual abuse (BlackDeer, 2023; Giano et al., 2021). These populations are often overlooked and misrepresented due to a generalized mistrust in researchers, AN community's limits for space, and varying research priorities (Hiratsuka et al., 2020; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023). Child maltreatment occurs significantly more within AN+AI populations when compared to other cultures (Hopkins et al., 2023). Child maltreatment is also associated with aspects of social emotional development. Social emotional development includes social skills,

learning approaches, behavioral problems, temperament development, relationships with others, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals who are victims of child maltreatment are likely to struggle with healthy interpersonal relationships. Mental health issues result from child maltreatment and lack of social emotional development skills if not properly managed (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023).

Connections between child maltreatment, mental health problems, and AN+AI populations are well documented (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Connections between social emotional development and mental health issues are also well documented (Malti & Marwaha, 2020; Newins et al., 2019). There is a need to investigate relationships between child maltreatment, social emotional development, rural residencies, and AN+AI populations. There is also information lacking around understanding AN+AI experiences due to cultural barriers and differences (Hopkins et al., 2023; Newins et al., 2019). Information is scarce regarding AN+AI cultures, which is cause for concern. There are detrimental effects on the impact of child maltreatment within AN+AI cultures (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Clarification on the relationship between AN+AI cultures, social emotional development, child maltreatment, and rural residencies, research is needed.

Included in this chapter is a research review on child maltreatment, social emotional development, AN+AI cultures, and rural AN+AI residencies. Key concepts of social disorganization theory, the theoretical framework, are described. Descriptions of AN+AI cultural expectations and historical trauma occur. Various child maltreatment

aspects are explored, providing clear examples of how child maltreatment is defined. Studies relating to child maltreatment and social emotional development are presented. Research regarding AN+AI populations and the rural areas in which they reside relating to geographic regions is included. Qualitative research designs used to gather information on AN+AI populations are also described in this chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden University's library has databases that were used to gather information about child maltreatment, AN+AI populations, rural areas, and social emotional development. Thoreau, APA PsycINFO, SocIndex with Full Text, and Sage Publications databases were searched for peer-reviewed research from 2018 to 2023. Another database used to find additional research was Google Scholar. Each database search yielded pertinent information about the topics. Google Scholar was also searched to find relevant information about social disorganization theory. Information about qualitative methodologies used was additionally searched using Walden University databases. Studies using phenomenological approaches were specifically searched.

Keywords and databases included in the search were *Child maltreatment AND Alaska Native* in Thoreau, *Alaska Native OR American Indian AND child abuse* in APA PsycINFO, *rural villages AND child abuse* in PsycINFO, *Indigenous people AND child maltreatment* in SocIndex with full text, and *child abuse OR trauma AND Alaska Native OR American Indian* in Sage Publications. Key terms used to find research studies about AN+AI populations were *Alaska Native, American Indian, indigenous people, Alaskans,* and *Native American*. Terms searched related to child maltreatment were *child*

maltreatment, child abuse, abuse, neglect, child neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, physical abuse, child physical abuse, emotional abuse, child emotional abuse, mental abuse, child mental abuse, trauma, childhood trauma, maltreatment, and *maltreated children*. The terms searched for social emotional development were *social emotional development, social, emotional, child social development,* and *child emotional development.* Key terms for searched for rural areas were *rural, rural areas, rural residencies, rural geographic regions, rural Alaskans, rural Alaska, Alaskan villages,* and *remote areas*. *Social Disorganization Theory* and *Shaw and McKay* were key phrases used to find research about this theoretical model. Methodology related search terms included *qualitative, interview(s)* and *semi-structured interview(s).*

Key terms were searched individually and combined using filters to refine types of articles retrieved. Key terms and phrases included specified symbols to narrow down results. Searches were filtered reflecting dates from 2018 to present. Peer-reviewed journals were also included in search filters. Research about social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Yahaya et al., 2013) was an exception to the aforementioned filters. A second exception was research regarding the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire Short Form (Bernstein et al., 2003). Reference lists at the end of each article were reviewed.

Theoretical Framework

Social Disorganization Theory

The conceptual framework that grounds this study includes social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Primary tenets of social disorganization theory are low

economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility including rural areas, and family disruption (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Social disorganization theory will serve as the basis for child maltreatment in rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Child maltreatment is more prevalent in rural areas when compared to other areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Household composition, socioeconomic factors (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Janczewski et al., 2023), suicidal ideation, alcoholism, and anxiety are all factors associated with rural child maltreatment (Newins et al., 2019). Situational factors producing criminality and delinquency negatively influence child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al, 2021; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Child maltreatment in rural and urban communities is described in detail below.

Urban and Rural Child Maltreatment

Social disorganization theory was developed to monitor criminality in urban areas and has since been adapted for including child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Social disorganization theory postulates that neighborhood poverty, family disruption, and urban proximity as community disruption leads to violence within those communities (Yahaya et al., 2013). Insight may be gained into how community conditions are connected to sexual violence by using social disorganization theory (Gilbert & Wright, 2023; Yahaya et al., 2013). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are more likely to experience sexual violence in comparison with other cultures (Hopkins et al., 2023). Family disruption is a measure of social disorganization leading to child sexual abuse (CSA). Geographical clustering and families residing in certain geographical regions increase the likelihood of CSA (Yahaya et al., 2013). Geographical locations and

socioeconomic factors severely impact urban areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021).

Rural areas are territories, populations, or housing units that are outside of urban areas and urban clusters (Bennett et al., 2019). Child maltreatment is more prevalent in rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals have resided in rural areas for many generations. The secret nature of AN+AI cultures residing in rural areas has impacted generational trauma (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Social organization in rural areas can be measured by local friendship networks and participation within communities (Sampson & Groves, 1989). AN+AI communities adhere to expectations of silence regarding any maltreatment (BlackDeer, 2023; Braithwaite, 2018; Hiratsuka et al., 2020), which has resulted in increased ACE scores within those populations (Austin et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020). Participation within their rural communities, adhering to silent cultural expectations has produced social disorganization, increasing criminality and mental health problems (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Newins et al., 2019). Child maltreatment has led to mental health concerns, suicide, anxiety, alcoholism, and generational trauma (Hopkins et al., 2023; Newins et al., 2019). Child maltreatment includes emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect (Humphreys et al., 2020). Child maltreatment occurs more often in rural and urban areas than any other community (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). AN+AI cultures are exposed to violence within their rural communities, specifically sexual violence six times more than any other culture (BlackDeer, 2023; Hopkins et al., 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian populations also experience psychological distress one and a half times more than any other culture (Burnette et al.,

2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). This population is often overlooked due to geographical locations (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021), secrecy (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023), and low socioeconomic status (Austin et al., 2019). Each factor is a key element of ACEs scores within AN+AI populations (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022; Janczewski et al., 2023).

ACEs scores within this population are higher than any other culture (Austin et al., 2019). Some key factors determining ACEs scores are socioeconomic status, household composition, ethnic differences, and specialized healthcare needs (Janczewski et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Each ACEs score factors into how child maltreatment has infiltrated AN+AI rural communities at high levels. Alaska Native and American Indian child maltreatment includes historical trauma that has occurred within their rural areas over many generations (Janczewski et al., 2023; Riley et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Trauma informed professionals have limited interactions with AN+AI people based on cultural expectations (Hopkins et al., 2023; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023), and inability to be present in those rural areas (Hiratsuka et al., 2020). Elders within AN+AI rural areas assert silence and rarely allow outsiders into their communities (Hiratsuka et al., 2020) leading to social disorganization. Lack of resources within AN+AI communities served to provide rationale for generational trauma and social organization necessity (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023; Riley et al., 2023).

Social Disorganization Theory as a Conceptual Framework

Social disorganization theory elements have been reviewed in various contexts with criminality. Social disorganization theory was originally designed to understand

juvenile delinquency variations in 1942 (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). An environment where there are poverty-stricken neighborhoods, family disruption, lack of local friendship networks and participation results in social disorganization (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Sampson & Groves, 1989). Minimal social supports and ethnicity are possible indicators criminality including rural child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Findings are based on research completed in rural and urban populations (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Social disorganization theory correlates with criminality and social factors predicting rural child maltreatment in amongst misrepresented cultures (Hopkins et al., 2023; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Additional research is needed to confirm this specific relationship for AN+AIs.

Effects of juvenile delinquency in urban areas have been explored using measures including poverty-stricken neighborhoods, family disruption, and limited preventive programs (Burnette et al., 2019; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Relationships between those measures have been directly linked to social disorganization theory. Socioeconomic status has been identified as the main variable leading to delinquency (Sampson & Groves, 1989). There is evidence that supports adaptation of social disorganization theory to other social problems, including child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Additional research is needed to investigate specific cultural differences (Burnette et al., 2019; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). There are literature gaps regarding how social disorganization theory impacts AN+AI child maltreatment in rural areas. Potential reasons for gaps include cultural secrecy (Burnette et al., 2019), limits for space, geographical locations, and mistrust in researchers including mental health

professionals (Hiratsuka et al., 2020; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023).

Crime rates are measured by ethnicity, residential mobility, and economic disadvantage according to social disorganization theory (Gilbert & Wright, 2023;). Levels of criminality impacts behavior within communities. Those behaviors factor into how crime is regulated, causing social organization or disorganization (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Social control through churches, schools, and other organizations are unable to maintain stability when basic resources lack (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Increased juvenile delinquency stems from lack of resources (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021) and inability to regulate crime (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Inability to regulate crime has led researchers to explore collective efficacy. Collective efficacy promotes control within communities through resident participation, thus decreasing criminality including child maltreatment (Gilbert & Wright, 2023; Goodson & Bouffard, 2020).

Collective efficacy is a viable concept to addressing social disorganization (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Social disorganization still occurs in rural and urban communities despite collective efficacy (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Delinquency, crime, poverty, and unemployment rates all factor into social disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Varying rates of deviancy can still occur in communities having collective efficacy (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Lack of trust within communities can cause increased crime rates from residential turnover (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Ongoing residential turnover results in unstable communities and frequent community disruption (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Residential turnover makes building collective efficacy and social control challenging (Sampson & Groves, 1989).

Past researchers who have examined social disorganization theory concepts have explored its main tenets (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020; Sampson & Groves, 1989). Research regarding social emotional development of AN+AI individuals due to child maltreatment lacking (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). There is limited research on rural AN+AI child maltreatment regarding Social Disorganization Theory (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian child maltreatment research in rural areas could provide needed preventive programs according to geographic regions (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Populations in sub-Saharan Africa have been examined to address child maltreatment using Social Disorganization Theory (Yahaya et al., 2013). Research in AN+AI rural areas is needed to gain insight into cultural differences.

Social Disorganization Theory was designed to explore social, economic, and cultural characteristics in urban areas with delinquency variations (Shaw & McKay, 1942). There are three structural characteristics identified in social disorganization theory. The first social characteristic is residential mobility. Residential mobility can be described as the frequency by which people move in and out of communities (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Similar races residing in those same areas are ethnic heterogeneity, the second social characteristic (Sampson & Groves, 1989). The third and final social characteristic is economic disadvantage. Economic disadvantages include ecological factors such as poverty, divorce, and unemployment rates (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020).

Variables within this study are child maltreatment, social emotional development, rural areas, and AN+AI populations. These variables can be linked indirectly or directly

to the three tenets of social disorganization theory. Child maltreatment may be related to ethnic heterogeneity and economic disadvantage. Social emotional development may correlate with residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, and economic disadvantage. Rural areas can be directly linked to residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, and economic disadvantage (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020). Alaska Native and American Indian populations can be directly linked to all three tenets of the theory as well. Social Disorganization Theory may be used to explain relationships between the four variables.

There have not been any studies where all components were explored. There was one study where child maltreatment and social disorganization were explored within urban and rural communities (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Existing knowledge on rural child maltreatment was explored according to geographic regions (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). There were two questions explored during the review. A conversation regarding child abuse statistics and maltreatment within the United States occurred. Differences were shared between urban and rural populations relating to race and child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Results from this review served to provide evidence that rural areas were more impacted by child maltreatment than others.

Relationships between AN+AI individuals specifically and child maltreatment were not explored. Social emotional development according to AN+AI populations was also not explored. Social Disorganization Theory was used to explain the relationship between delinquency in rural and urban areas regarding child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Intentions for this study were to review existing knowledge of child maltreatment within geographical locations in United States. Some geographic regions

are considered urban or rural areas, which aligns with the three tenets of Social Disorganization Theory. Rural and urban areas have increased social disorganization reflecting elevated crime rates (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Included in elevated crime is increased child maltreatment amongst misrepresented populations (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Research is needed to explore the relationships between child maltreatment, social emotional development, AN+AI individuals, and rural areas occupied by AN+AI people (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al, 2023; Newins et al., 2019). All four variables are mentioned separately and in conjunction with another of the four variables. This research review is organized on linkage of all four variables. Current research on how child maltreatment impacts AN+AI individuals is presented (Burnette et al., 2019; Garcia, 2020). Social emotional development and child maltreatment research is also presented (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Yahaya et al., 2013). Descriptions of rural areas and geographical locations are provided (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Connections are made between all variables and potential impacts of social emotional development (Humphreys et al., 2020; Wurster et al., 2020).

Rationale for why each variable was selected will be presented throughout the research review. The selected special population is presented along with reasons for further study (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023; Sequist, 2021). Population access proves difficult with further complications when residency is rural and remote (Garcia, 2020; Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Various types of child maltreatment will be

operationally defined and further explored (Humphreys et al., 2020; Lacey et al., 2021). There are also operational definitions for social emotional development (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). The goal for this research review is to provide an exhaustive review of current research regarding child maltreatment, social emotional development, AN+AI cultures, and rural areas. Critical evaluation of these variables is necessary to rationalize the need for this study.

Phenomenology is the qualitative methodology selected. Hermeneutic phenomenology specifically will be used to explore individual AN+AI maltreatment experiences when they resided in rural areas. Participant history, social, cultural, and political aspects of their environments are viewed objectively using Hermeneutic Phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions will be conducted to solicit information regarding lived experiences of the target population. Qualitative research methods were used in several studies throughout this research review. There was a specific study where researchers used checklists and interview methods to obtain information regarding child maltreatment (Newins et al., 2019). Qualitative research methods are appropriate because participants can use aspects of their history to answer interview questions.

Forms of Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment can present itself in various forms. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment (abuse), neglect, or exploitation of children (Smith et al., 2021). Neglect can be both physical and emotional (Humphreys et al., 2020). Child maltreatment also includes witnessing violence in childhood and child abuse

(Lacey et al., 2021). This ongoing social problem has impacted individuals for many years, specifically in underprivileged communities (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021). Individuals who are victims of child maltreatment are at risk for long term consequences. Consequences are mental health disorders including depression, which is a leading cause of disability throughout the world (Humphreys et al., 2020).

Child Sexual Abuse

There are many forms of child maltreatment. Sexual and physical abuse are forms of physical maltreatment (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global problem that can be defined as any attempt from an adult to engage in sexual contact with a child (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Salloum et al., 2020). CSA is frequently underreported, if reported at all in low-income areas (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Salloum et al., 2020). Mental health disorders are directly related to CSA (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Papalia et al., 2020; Salloum et al., 2020). CSA victims may be revictimized later in life, which has been linked to risky behaviors, physical illness, education challenges, and crime (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Papalia et al., 2020). CSA prevention programs are lacking in underprivileged communities (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023; Papalia et al., 2020; Yahaya et al., 2013).

Violence amongst children occurs in abundance annually (Salloum et al., 2020). CSA has been difficult to define for many years. Some parents are unable to fully distinguish between punishment and CSA (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Salloum et al., 2020). More children have become CSA victims because of the inability to distinguish between other punishments (Salloum et al., 2020). Perceptions of reporting CSA are

limited causing deterrence in parental reporting even when there is suspicion (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Salloum et al., 2020). Cultural shame is associated with CSA. Shame has caused generational CSA to continue within certain cultures and communities (Attrash-Najjar et al., 2023; Salloum et al., 2020).

Child Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes biting, beating, hitting, shaking, choking, or burning (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021). Child physical abuse is when an adult intentionally uses force causing temporary or permanent injuries in children (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021). A study was conducted using forensic interview methods to explore child physical abuse (Katz & Tener, 2021). This qualitative study incorporated adults with siblings who were child physically abused by their parents (Katz & Tener, 2021). Data coding and analysis were used to identify themes resulting from forensic interviews. The main theme was child physical abuse being routine and kept within families. Results served to demonstrate physical abuse encounters as traumatic, painful, and normal (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021).

Child physical abuse is a challenging diagnosis to obtain (Antwi et al., 2021). Despite there being a formal child physical abuse definition, the ability to obtain proof of abuse remains a struggle. Semi-structured interviews were completed amongst 20 radiographers to gain insight with identifying child physical abuse experiences (Antwi et al., 2021). Four constructs were used to identify child physical abuse suspicions. Constructs were pre-radiographic observation, physical symptomology, imagery, and secrets of caregivers (Antwi et al., 2021). Constructs in conjunction with client history

alluded to where physical abuse could have occurred. Rationale for what caused physical abuse was provided during semi-structured interviews (Antwi et al., 2021). Qualitative interview methods were beneficial throughout this experiment. Radiographers spoke freely about their abuse suspicions. Children who were interviewed described emotions and physiological symptoms aligning with these four constructs (Antwi et al., 2020). Radiographers used imagery from x-rays to assist with confirming or disproving suspected abuse (Antwi et al., 2021). Some x-rays yielded fractures and broken bones of children. Results served to demonstrate pre-radiographic observation, physical symptomology, imagery, and caregiver secrets could be beneficial in proving suspected child physical abuse (Antwi et al., 2021). Preventative measures are still needed despite child abuse being proved using symptomology, imagery, and pre-radiographic observation (Antwi et al., 2021).

Emotional Abuse

Intentionally harmful repeated interactions with children that are not physical or sexual is emotional abuse (Bromfield et al., 2023; Reza et al., 2020). Emotional abuse occurs in all settings including schools, communities, and at home. The frequency of child emotional abuse committed by teachers in school settings was examined in Bangladesh (Bromfield et al., 2023; Reza et al., 2020). Emotional abuse instances and child responses were the focus. Emotional abuse has short and long-term effects on children (Bromfield et al., 2023; Reza et al., 2020). Poor social health, developmental concerns, and neurological problems are all consequences of child emotional abuse (Bromfield et al., 2023; Reza et al., 2020). Child emotional abuse is also associated with

PTSD, depression, dissociation, and personality disorders (Bromfield et al., 2023; Giano et al., 2021; Reza et al., 2023).

Child emotional abuse is a global problem that has many distinct forms (Bromfield et al., 2023; Reza et al., 2020). Some forms of emotional abuse are scolding, using curse words, verbal public humiliation, mocking, and being insulted (Bromfield et al., 2023; Reza et al., 2020). Forms are based on geographic location and culture. Participants were third, fourth, and fifth grade students from Bangladesh and their parents. The sample included students from public and private schools (Reza et al., 2020). Questionnaires and interview methods were used in this qualitative study. Responses were then labeled and coded as one or two.

A code of one (1) reflected punishment and emotional abuse as felt by the students. A code of two (2) reflected no punishment or emotional abuse (Reza et al., 2020). Scolding and threats from teachers were the two types of emotional abuse reported most frequently. Results served to demonstrate that 91% of children lived in poverty (Reza et al., 2020). Students in the 91% were identified as being emotionally abused by teachers at school (Reza et al., 2020). Seventy-two percent of student participants reported teacher fear following emotional abuse instances (Reza et al., 2020). Sadness also resulted from teacher emotional abuse.

Physical Neglect

Physical neglect can include caregivers failing to provide basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021). Emotional neglect is when caregivers fail to provide supervision, education, protection from community

crimes and hazards, or healthcare (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021). Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment. Neglect may be suspected by adults when a child often has poor hygiene, untreated skin problems, is malnourished, or fails to show physical growth signs (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021). Mental and behavioral health professionals are mandated reporters. Children are overlooked causing continued neglect (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021). Ongoing child neglect has resulted in lifelong health problems (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Katz & Tener, 2021).

A systematic review of 97 research studies regarding child maltreatment was completed (Greene et al., 2020). Parental neglect was the focus of four articles. Those four articles served to explore associations between parents who experienced child abuse and then neglected their own children (Greene et al., 2020). Neglectful parents were often found to be victims of child maltreatment including neglect, sexual abuse, and physical abuse. Mothers specifically who were considered neglectful towards their children also reported being rape victims and involved in prostitution (Green et al., 2020). The sample of mothers used in this review served to demonstrate that those abused as children would neglect their own children almost three times more (Greene et al., 2020). Parental experiences in childhood continue to cause intergenerational child maltreatment (Greene et al., 2020; Riley et al., 2023)

Child Emotional Neglect

Child emotional neglect is associated with memory functioning in adulthood (Terock et al., 2020). The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) was used in a sample of adult participants (N=5574) who were self-reported child maltreatment victims

(Terock et al., 2020). During the study researchers noted how child maltreatment in general was not associated with declined memory functioning. Emotional neglect was the variable producing results aligning with detrimental memory and recollection in adulthood (Terock et al., 2020). Alexithymia was also strongly associated with child emotional neglect (Terock et al., 2020). Alexithymia was defined by researchers as a personality trait where individuals have difficulty describing and identifying their emotions (Terock et al., 2020). Strong associations with child emotional neglect and memory performance were discovered. The CTQ was used to assess trauma reported by participants. A five-point Likert scale measured the level and type of trauma suffered by victims (Terock et al., 2020). Individuals were considered positive for emotional neglect if they had a score greater than two. Individuals who did not at least obtain a score greater than two were not considered emotional neglect victims. Results from served to demonstrate a significant association with emotional neglect scores greater than two, and word recall (Terock et al., 2020). Emotional neglect typically begins early in childhood (Terock et al., 2020). Early emotional neglect in childhood equates to a lack of mental stimulation and attention, yielding negative cognitive development (Terock et al., 2020).

A study using the CTQ served to demonstrate if depression was associated with child maltreatment. Included were 192 samples totaling 68,830 participants (Humphreys et al., 2020). A mixed methods approach combining statistical analyses and self-report measures was used (Humphreys et al., 2020). Child maltreatment included physical neglect. Physical neglect was associated with depression according to results. Physical neglect was not strongly associated with depression as emotional neglect and abuse

(Humphreys et al., 2020). There were no moderating factors for culture or age. Participants did not only experience one type of maltreatment. Participants who experienced physical neglect experienced another form of maltreatment in conjunction (Humphreys et al., 2020). Overlap with various forms of maltreatment were not heavily documented (Humphreys et al., 2020). The CTQ assessment tool was unable to provide information regarding maltreatment timing. The CTQ assesses child maltreatment using a multidimensional approach (Humphreys et al., 2020). Physical neglect has been identified as having low reliability when the CTQ is used (Humphreys et al., 2020). Low reliability on the physical neglect subscale has caused greater variations amongst other subscales (Humphreys et al., 2020).

Child Exploitation

Child exploitation is a child maltreatment form impacting children world-wide (Song, 2021). Child exploitation includes children being forced to perform sexual or labor acts for financial gain (Song, 2021). This type of maltreatment is also called child trafficking. Child trafficking is extremely lucrative for criminals (Song, 2021). There are many protective factors put in place to mitigate exploiting children. Shelters, foster homes, and juvenile justice centers are some social services protective factors put in place to protect children (Song, 2021). Risk factor identification, signs, and symptoms are goals of social service agencies to mitigate child exploitation (Song, 2021).

Child Sexual Exploitation

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is an ongoing global issue (Hurst, 2021). There was a qualitative study completed exploring CSEC prevention

(Hurst, 2021). Participants in this study were adult survivors. Forty participants were selected. A subsample of 17 participants were finalized and included. This subsample was selected from insights and perspectives regarding CSEC prevention (Hurst, 2021). Participants spoke directly about recruitment vulnerability, mistrust in law enforcement, mistrust in medical personnel, and protecting family members (Hurst, 2021). Mistrusting law enforcement and medical professionals are barriers to preventing child sexual exploitation. Victims reported mental health concerns and the need to protect family members (Hurst, 2021). These themes are considered preventative CSEC barriers identified by the subsample. The 17-person subsample was comprised of only women survivors. There were interviews conducted with the identified subsample using 25 open-ended questions (Hurst, 2021). Included in the interview questions was information about participant neighborhoods, caregivers, child experiences, and family members (Hurst, 2021). Participant responses to the topics yielded rationale for preventive programs. Rationale for preventive programs came from six themes that emerged resulting from participant interviews. Six themes from participant interviews were inability to trust medical professionals, mental health professionals, law enforcement, family protection, self-destructive behaviors, trafficking awareness with teachers, and trafficking awareness with at-risk youth (Hurst, 2021). Participants reported seeing medical or mental health professionals once per week was not sufficient for building trusting relationships (Hurst, 2021). Some participants mentioned law enforcement officials were supposed to provide protection and instead victimized them at a young age (Hurst, 2021). Parental neglect from single parents working long hours was also reported. Participants reported engaging

in self-destructive behaviors including eating disorders and drug use because of home dysfunction (Hurst, 2021). Lack of education to parents and youth about CSEC was also identified because participants felt teachers should have asked them how they were doing (Hurst, 2021). Research served to conclude participant themes should be included in creating CSEC prevention programs. Knowledge from survivors could prove beneficial to mitigating CSEC (Hurst, 2021). Survivors can help identify at-risk youth. Survivors are also able to help various professionals by using their awareness of the global problem. Law enforcement has contributed to survivor exploitation (Hurst, 2021). CSEC prevention programs should incorporate survivor positions into their curriculum (Hurst, 2021). Survivor incorporation may provide CSEC insight and prevent at-risk youth from entering sexually exploitive relationships with predators (Hurst, 2021).

Child Labor Exploitation

Child labor exploitation is any work form preventing children from attending school, negatively impacts development, and detrimental to childhood (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Child labor exploitation includes work that is mentally, physically, socially, and morally dangerous or harmful (Kaur & Byard, 2021). This type of maltreatment mostly occurs in countries that are underdeveloped with minimal socioeconomic resources (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Child labor exploitation also occurs in developed countries and is referred to as forced labor (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Child labor is a global issue. This issue impacts 152 million children worldwide (Kaur & Byard, 2021). A report indicates that most child labor is agricultural or raw material extraction (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Research was conducted exploring the impact of COVID-19 on child labor. Causes and

forms of child labor were noted. One main cause of child labor is children supporting their families due to living in poverty (Kaur & Byard, 2021). This type of maltreatment often occurs when parents are uneducated about child labor laws (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Another cause of child labor is from in-home abuse (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Extended family members or stepparents are typically involved in these cases (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Children seek reasons not to be home resulting in them being child labor victims by predators (Kaur & Byard, 2021). The most common form of child labor in developing countries is agricultural (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Agricultural work can range from bead making to various manufacturing processes (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Other forms of child labor are mining, construction, hotel work, restaurant work, and working in a market (Kaur & Byard, 2021). These child labor forms occur in hazardous conditions having harmful effects on children (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Maltreatment in these forms has led to children being killed, hurt, or plagued with ailments (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Children are susceptible to various chemicals and pesticides, treacherous weather conditions, and no safety equipment (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Child labor victims suffer from mental health problems and developmental issues (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Approximately 64 million girls and 88 million boys are child labor victims worldwide (Kaur & Byard, 2021). There are many legislative developments and laws that have been put in place to prevent child labor. These developments and laws are not always successful, especially in underdeveloped countries (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Children continue to be exploited because of socio-cultural acceptance within all countries (Kaur & Byard, 2021). COVID-19 has increased child labor victimization from businesses failing and families needing

income for survival (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Children have been impacted the most during the COVID-19 pandemic according to researchers (Kaur & Byard, 2021). There are still many children that remain child exploitation victims despite policies, legislative developments, and laws (Kaur & Byard, 2021).

Social Emotional Development

Social emotional development includes social skills, learning approaches, behavioral problems, temperament development, relationships with others, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). Social emotional development is a child's ability to form adult relationships, peer relationships, regulate emotions, ultimately expressing those emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways (Im et al., 2019). Children should also be able to learn about their own environment across familial and community settings (Im et al., 2019). Language competence is also an important part of social emotional development. Children use their language skills to interact in social settings with teachers and peers (Meng, 2020). Language skills are beneficial to academics and conflict resolution within social settings (Meng, 2020). Social emotional development begins in childhood and continues through adolescence (Im et al., 2019).

Objectives from a study completed aimed to explore relationships between ACEs and children's social emotional development (Treat et al., 2020). Social emotional development and ACEs are directly related (Treat et al., 2020). A 52-participant (N=52) sample was used in this longitudinal study. The sample included mothers with infants residing in poverty within an urban Midwest city (Treat et al., 2020). Child development

between ages one and three was the focus as reported by their mothers (Treat et al., 2020). Appropriateness was determined based on Women, Infants, and Children Food and Nutrition Service (WIC) eligibility, proving receipt of welfare (Treat et al., 2020). Only women who spoke English were included.

The ACEs tool used consisted of ten questions. Questions measured childhood exposure to physical abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, and dysfunction within the home (Treat et al., 2020). The ACEs questionnaire was completed by participant self-report. A secondary tool used was the Brief infant-toddler social and emotional assessment (BITSEA). This tool served to examine social and emotional problems in children ages one through three (Treat et al., 2020). The BITSEA was a self-report tool which has high reliability and validity according to multiple studies (Treat et al., 2020). This tool was adapted to only include 31 questions for the current study (Treat et al., 2020).

Bivariate correlation and regression analysis to test how strong associations were between variables was included (Treat et al., 2020). Results served to demonstrate strong associations between ACEs and mothers experiencing depression (Treat et al., 2020). There was also a strong correlation between social emotional issues in children and parent self-esteem (Treat et al., 2020). Results were congruent with previous research. Results were indicative of ACEs in poverty-stricken mothers directly correlating with child social emotional development (Treat et al., 2020). Social support within poverty-stricken communities for mothers could prove beneficial for addressing social emotional problems amongst young children (Treat et al., 2020). Lack of support, household

dysfunction, child abuse, and witnessing domestic violence leads to social emotional problems (Treat et al., 2020).

Relationships between parental ACE scores, mental distress in parents, child social emotional functioning, and parental emotional availability within AN+AI individuals were examined (Wurster et al., 2020). The goal was to explore if parental ACEs accounted for mental distress. The impact of child social emotional functioning by parental ACEs and stress was explored (Wurster et al., 2020). ACEs included childhood abuse, childhood neglect, family hardships, and substance abuse (Wurster et al., 2020). Emotional availability was described as parental ability to connect emotionally with their children (Wurster et al., 2020). ACEs were measured through self-report using a ten-item questionnaire. Emotional availability was assessed using Emotional Availability Scales and the Emotional Attachment Zones Evaluation (Wurster et al., 2020).

Emotional Availability Scales (EA) and the Emotional Attachment Zones Evaluation (EA-Z) assess sensitivity, structuring, non-intrusiveness, non-hostility, responsiveness, and involvement (Wurster et al., 2020). Participants included 100 parent-child dyads residing in an AI community whose children were enrolled in early head start programs (Wurster et al., 2020). Participants were given the EA, EA-Z and ACEs surveys to complete. Children were observed engaging in systematic play with their parents (Wurster et al., 2020). Play sessions were recorded by researchers not exceeding 30-minutes (Wurster et al., 2020). Each play session consisted of playtime, separation, reunion, and clean up (Wurster et al., 2020). Recordings were then coded by researchers assessing for themes relating to emotional availability (Wurster et al., 2020).

Child social emotional functioning was impacted when parental neglect occurred (Wurster et al., 2020). High parental ACE scores directly impacted social emotional functioning in their children (Wurster et al., 2020). Child social emotional functioning was considered poor when parents had high ACE scores and increased mental distress (Wurster et al., 2020). Child social emotional functioning is impacted by parental ACEs regardless of race (Wurster et al., 2020). Long term effects of high ACEs and social emotional problems include many mental health problems (Wurster et al., 2020). Depression, anxiety, and parental distress are ongoing intergenerational problems occurring from ACEs within all cultures (Riley et al., 2023; Wurster et al., 2020). Preventive programs are needed to address intergenerational issues which could mitigate social emotional problems in children (Riley et al., 2023; Wurster et al., 2020).

AN+AI

AN+AI populations make up two percent of the United States population (Sequist, 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian people have over 500 tribes combined (Sequist, 2021). These cultures are known for their variety of languages, art, dance, traditions, and storytelling (Sequist, 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian populations unfortunately experience a life expectancy of five years less than other cultures (Sequist, 2021). These populations also have higher death rates caused by alcoholism, physical violence, and mental health conditions (Sequist, 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian peoples are more likely to reside in poverty than other cultures. Alaska Native and American Indian communities have limited healthcare options and are more susceptible to social disparities (Sequist, 2021).

Alaska Native and American Indian individuals have been underrepresented and misrepresented for many generations (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). These cultures often experience intergenerational trauma and abuse, making them highly resilient (Burnette et al., 2019; Connolly et al, 2019). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are victims of systematic oppression, economic, and social health dilemmas (Wurster et al., 2020). Preventive programs addressing systematic oppression and ongoing abuse are lacking within AN+AI communities (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Lack of preventive problems has resulted in continued abuse and trauma within AN+AI populations (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Mental health issues have been a result of historical and intergenerational trauma (Janczewski et al., 2023; Riley et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are vulnerable populations impacted by many factors (Connolly et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2023).

Mental health and delinquency are well-researched areas within AN+AI cultures (Garcia, 2020). Substance use in AN+AI youth compared to other cultures has been studied (Garcia, 2020). Indigenous youth have reported significantly higher drug use including the use of heroin, alcohol, and marijuana (Garcia, 2020). Substance use was also directly associated with suicidality and other mental health problems (Garcia, 2020). PTSD was one of the main diagnoses reported during research. PTSD in AN+AI youth was 20% higher than in non-AN+AI cultures (Garcia, 2020). Trauma causing PTSD included child abuse and neglect (Garcia, 2020).

Alaska Native and American Indian cultures have higher child abuse and neglect rates than any other culture (Burnette et al., 2019). Increased child abuse and neglect

rates directly correlate with caregiver rejection, lack of parental attachment, depression, and suicide (Garcia, 2020). Cultural expectations and beliefs factor into AN+AI generational trauma (Garcia, 2020). Familial, peer, and cultural beliefs for AN+AI tribes are causes for ongoing maltreatment, in addition to being identified protective factors (Garcia, 2020). Other protective factors are limited due to cultural beliefs (Garcia, 2020). Traveling distances and cultural expectations have resulted in few AN+AI adolescent studies being completed (Garcia, 2020). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures remain vulnerable populations due to these barriers (Gonzalez et al., 2022).

AN

Alaska Native people are members of Alaska's tribes (Connolly et al., 2019). Those tribes include Aleuts from the Aleutian Islands and Eskimos (Connolly et al., 2019). Yupik and Inuit people are considered Eskimos (Connolly et al., 2019). Exploration of adolescent cultural and emotional well-being occurred during a research review (Sahota, 2019). A sample of 400 Yupik and Inupiaq (N=400) AN adolescents were participants in this qualitative study (Sahota, 2019). Adolescents were asked to provide details regarding their cultural identity (Sahota, 2019). Cultural identity included coping with stress, religious practices, and awareness of connectedness (Sahota, 2019).

Cultural identity was measured using a scale created in conjunction with community cultural experts (Sahota, 2019). The scale included subscales with domains measuring individual, family, community, and natural environment (Sahota, 2019). Each subscale served to represent aspects of cultural awareness and connectedness. Participants then used self-report measures to rate awareness of connectedness (Sahota,

2019). Alaska Native adolescents with higher scores also had increased reasons for living according to results (Sahota, 2019). This is important as AN+AI individuals are at increased risk for mental health issues including suicide (Newins et al., 2019). The ability to understand causes for mental health problems with AN adolescents, could provide useful information with creating preventive programs (Sahota, 2019).

Alaska Native individuals are more likely to experience certain forms of abuse than any other culture (Giano et al., 2021; Hopkins et al., 2023). A study was conducted where crime rates against AN people were provided. A conversation about how European culture has impacted AN culture over many years occurred. Alaska Natives have been silent about sexual abuse forms that occur to themselves or within their families for many generations (Hopkins et al., 2023; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Intergenerational trauma prevails within AN populations, from expected silence (Sahota, 2019). Some AN individuals described intergenerational trauma as cultural oppression (Sahota, 2019). Alaska Native cultural insight helps explain certain aspects of future studies pertaining to trauma (Sahota, 2019).

AI

American Indians are considered descendants of the first people in North and South America (Edwards et al., 2023; Liebler, 2018). These individuals maintain tribal affiliations and attachments to their communities (Edwards et al., 2023; Walters et al., 2023). Tribal affiliations can be protective factors to maintain traditions that have been established for generations (Edwards et al., 2023; Walters et al., 2023). Despite some protective factors AI populations are still subjected to a variety of problems (Edwards et

al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). American Indian youth are more likely to experience mental health disparities, are perpetrators and victims of criminality, and are trauma victims (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). Disparities can be linked back to oppression and suppression brought upon by Europeans when they invaded tribal lands (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). Historical trauma continues to impact AI individuals' centuries after their lands were invaded resulting in mental health problems (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020; Riley et al., 2023).

American Indian individuals are resilient people (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). They have survived genocide, slavery, and being forced European lifestyles (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). American Indian individuals were forced to change their hair, names, and could not speak in their native tongues (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). These changes caused AI susceptibility to violence, crime, and lifelong behavioral health problems (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020). Lifelong consequences of this trauma also include AI populations lacking trust in outsiders (Hiratsuka et al., 2020). This population is guarded and secretive (Garcia, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2023). Professionals working with AI cultures must build rapport (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023) and understand centuries of systematic oppression they have endured (Edwards et al., 2023; Garcia, 2020).

Rural Areas

Rural areas are territories, populations, or housing units outside of urban areas and urban clusters (Bennett et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2023). A place is rural, remote, or a frontier if it is fifteen minutes away from a city or town with 2,500 to 9,999 people

(Bennett et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2023). Rural areas must also be an hour or more away from a city or town with 50,000 people or more (Bennett et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2023). Rural areas have limited access. They are usually limited to tribal inhabitants, with the government having some access depending on activities in those lands (Bennett et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2023). Rural lands have been known to impede research with certain tribes because of location (Garcia, 2020). Research is limited because of travelling distances and required permissions in some cases (Garcia, 2020).

A review of research was completed examining barriers to providing trauma informed care in rural lands (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). There were 2,157 articles published between 2008 and 2020 identified for this study (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Articles used were from 13 different countries across the world utilizing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods modalities (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Distance, good accessibility, and limited social interactions are rationale preventing trauma care (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Additional barriers included limited cellular service, unpaved roads, and climate (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Rural areas are associated with perverse living conditions (Garcia, 2020). Limited understanding and access to services highly impacts rural communities (Garcia, 2020; Walters et al., 2023).

Mortality rates and trauma are significantly higher in rural lands (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Individuals residing rurally experience delays in responses during emergency situations due to distance (Morgan & Calleja, 2020; Walters et al., 2023). Delays in emergency situations to health care, physicians, and resources causes more untreated injuries (Morgan & Calleja, 2020; Walters et al., 2023). Rural lands were

identified as having higher mortality rates when compared to other areas (Morgan & Calleja, 2020; Walters et al., 2023). Factors having the greatest impact on individuals residing in rural areas are unclear (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Preventive measures may help address health care, trauma concerns, and some unavoidable conditions (Morgan & Calleja, 2020; Walters et al., 2023). Trauma training may prove beneficial to residents in rural lands by decreasing mortality rates (Morgan & Calleja, 2020).

Individuals raised in rural communities have challenges and supports unique from others (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Familial discord, mental, and physical health issues are negative outcomes associated with rural communities (Lile & MacTavish, 2020; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). These communities are directly linked with social supports to include interconnectedness, nature, and spirituality (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). There are benefits and deficits to being raised rurally (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Experiences of youth raised in low-income rural communities were explored. Participants were 39 individuals (N=39) raised in a rural Oregon community (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). The sample was comprised of 15 adult community leaders (N=15), 16 adolescents (N=16), and 8 non-familial adults (N=8).

Qualitative methodology was used. After obtaining Internal Review Board (IRB) approval, researchers conducted participant interviews (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Interviews were transcribed and several themes emerged. Mental health problems, homelessness, school disruption, and coping strategies to manage those challenges were reported by participants (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Mental health diagnoses included PTSD, anxiety, anger, stress, and depression (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Participants also

reported getting poor grades in school, not finishing school, and working at a young age in attempts to prevent homelessness (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Interview successes were participants escaping poverty and being close-knit with their families (Lile & MacTavish, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Rural upbringings are linked to resilient individuals (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Successful adaptability in circumstances threatening one's ability to function is resilience (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Participant interviews reflected on communal, interdependence, and familial support (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). These variables had positive impacts on adolescence despite perverse living conditions (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Adolescents shifted their viewpoints from being a victim, to being resilient and successful (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). This study served to demonstrate that individuals raised in rural areas could overcome challenging circumstances. The need for trauma-informed programs in rural areas was highlighted by participant interviews (Lile & MacTavish, 2020).

Studies Related to the Research Questions

Child maltreatment is associated with negative outcomes, mental health concerns, and lifelong trauma (Hopkins et al., 2023; Newins et al., 2019). Child maltreatment impacts all cultures (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are vulnerable cultures (Burnette et al., 2019) who are more likely to endure forms of maltreatment than any other population (Garcia, 2020). Alaska Native and American Indian populations may reside in rural communities where there is limited access to resources (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023; Sequist,

2019). Child maltreatment is prevalent in rural AN+AI communities due to lack of resources (Garcia, 2020), intergenerational trauma and secrecy (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023), and minimal preventive programs (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). These underrepresented cultures lack trust in researchers and outside sources (Hiratsuka et al., 2020; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023) causing child maltreatment to be an ongoing social issue (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021).

Child maltreatment is associated with negative outcomes (Antwi et al., 2020). Outcomes include but are not limited to mental health problems, behavioral health concerns, poverty, and unemployment (Garcia, 2020; Newins et al., 2019). Depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicide, and alcoholism are directly related to child maltreatment (Antwi et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2021). These disorders begin in childhood and continue into adulthood if not properly addressed (Terock et al., 2020). Adult child maltreatment victims have described their experiences as traumatic but normal in their upbringing (Terock et al., 2020). Traumatic experiences have caused child maltreatment victims to be at risk for revictimization (Terock et al., 2020). Revictimization can occur in many forms including being victims of different maltreatment types (Terock et al., 2020).

Child maltreatment impacts behaviors and development (Im et al., 2019). Social emotional development could be linked to child maltreatment (Im et al., 2019). Social interactions with peers, family, friends, and institutional learning are included (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). Social emotional development begins in childhood and grows into adolescence and adulthood (Meng, 2020). Emotional health in children is pivotal for the ability to deal with distress and adverse experiences

across environments (Malti, 2020). Children's social emotional skills are protective factors when managing violence stemming from assaults (Malti, 2020). There is a direct relationship between social emotional problems, trauma, and aggressive behavior (Treat et al., 2020).

Problematic and delinquent behaviors in juveniles is prevalent within AN+AI communities (Garcia, 2020; Sahota, 2019). Some behaviors stem from child maltreatment, perverse living conditions, and social emotional problems (Garcia, 2020; Sahota, 2019, Sequist, 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian communities experience higher crime rates than other cultures due to location (Macguire-Jack et al., 2020). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals have reported childhood experiences as traumatic, poverty stricken, and challenging (Garcia, 2020; Sahota, 2019). These experiences have shaped AN+AI individuals for many generations. Generational trauma (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023) and challenging living conditions (Garcia, 2020; Sequist, 2019) continue to be problematic within these communities. Preventive programs addressing trauma could be useful for examining relationships between AN+AI populations and trauma (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023).

Alaska Native and American Indian cultures historically have resided on tribal lands (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023; Sequist, 2019). Tribal lands are considered rural areas (Sequist, 2019). Child maltreatment is more prevalent in rural areas when compared to other areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Child maltreatment prevalence amongst AN+AI populations in rural areas is due to minimal resources (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). There is research examining child maltreatment amongst many

cultures. There is still a gap in the literature regarding AN+AI individuals and rural child maltreatment specifically. Literature gaps also remain regarding AN+AI cultures exploring how social emotional development could have been impacted (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021).

Child maltreatment across all cultures has been a primary focus (Smith et al., 2021). Research using phenomenology has been limited when attempting to explore AN+AI populations (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). This is because of limited resources (Morgan & Calleja, 2020), mistrust in researchers (Hiratsuka et al., 2020; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023), varying research goals, and cultural barriers (Garcia, 2020; Hiratsuka et al., 2020). One specific cultural barrier is silence. Silence is an expectation from community elders (Garcia, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2023). This expectation has caused populations and lands to be inaccessible for outsiders (Garcia, 2020; Sequist, 2019).

Research is still needed to investigate relationships between AN+AI cultures, child maltreatment, social emotional development, and rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Child maltreatment and rural areas are associated with poverty (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Sahota, 2019; Sequist, 2019) and mental health problems (Garcia, 2020; Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Whether AN+AI social emotional development is impacted by rural child maltreatment still needs clarification. Clarification of factors could provide needed insight for AN+AI preventive programs (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Preventive programs could mitigate AN+AI generational trauma (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Research question one is used to examine how AN+AI adult survivors of child maltreatment describe their abuse in rural areas. Research question two

is used to examine how AN+AI adult survivors of child maltreatment describe impacts on their social and emotional development.

Summary and Conclusions

Child maltreatment is associated with mental health problems and long-term consequences across all cultures (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Social emotional development starts in infancy and continues across the lifespan (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Im et al., 2019). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are vulnerable populations who are one and a half times as likely to experience forms of child maltreatment (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). These populations often reside in rural areas which are impacted by trauma, maltreatment, and limited resources (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Preventive measures within AN+AI cultures are lacking (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023), which has caused generational maltreatment to occur (Hopkins et al., 2023; Riley et al., 2023). Behavioral health professionals can use research on AN+AI individuals residing in rural areas to implement trauma preventive programs (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Research findings may be used to mitigate child maltreatment within AN+AI communities and decrease social emotional development disruption.

Social emotional development is associated with peer interactions, adult interactions, education, behavioral problems, temperament development, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020). Social emotional development also includes the ability to regulate emotions and learn about one's own community (Im et al., 2019). ACEs are directly related to social emotional development

(Giano et al., 2021). Family disruption and lack of social support within one's community leads to social emotional problems (Treat et al., 2020). These problems directly correlate with poverty and child abuse (Treat et al., 2020). Parental emotional attachment is also impacted (Wurster et al., 2020). Parental distress increases when children have social emotional problems due to lack of emotional availability (Wurster et al., 2020).

Cultures outside of AN+AI have been primarily focused on by researchers (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). This is due to lack of resources, secrecy, cultural expectations, and inaccessibility (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Research is needed to explicitly examine relationships between AN+AI cultures (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023), rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021), child maltreatment, and social emotional development. These factors have not yet been combined and explored. Child maltreatment and rural areas (Garcia, 2020; Giano et al., 2021) are important factors related to social emotional development and criminality. Rural juvenile delinquency and criminality are factors of Social Disorganization Theory (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Social Disorganization Theory is associated with criminality and social factors predicting rural child maltreatment (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021).

Social Disorganization Theory has three structural characteristics. First is residential mobility (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Residential mobility is the frequency by which individuals move in and out of a community (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Second is ethnic heterogeneity. Ethnic homogeneity is having similar races living in proximity (Sampson & Groves, 1989). The third characteristic is economic disadvantage, which can be described as poverty, divorce, and inability to maintain employment (Sampson &

Groves, 1989). Child maltreatment, social emotional development, AN+AI cultures, and rural areas all directly or indirectly correspond with at least one of the Social Disorganization Theory characteristics.

Social emotional development is important in child development (Im et al., 2019). Professionals must understand the importance of how AN+AI social emotional development is impacted by trauma and rural child maltreatment (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Each social emotional development factor should be fully explored. This could aid in preventive programs relating to trauma and child maltreatment programs for AN+AI populations (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Individuals raised rurally are more likely to engage in child maltreatment criminal activity (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). These same individuals are likely to suffer from mental health problems (Hopkins et al., 2023; Newins et al., 2019). Mental health problems develop in childhood and have long-term effects (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Long-term psychological effects of child maltreatment have been explored across cultures. Child maltreatment is a form of trauma experienced by many populations (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Trauma and associated risk factors should be explored regarding AN+AI individuals (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Previous research has used the CTQ-SF to assess trauma and determine participant inclusion criteria (Bernstein et al., 2003). The CTQ-SF was used to confirm participant eligibility. The research design was qualitative using hermeneutic phenomenology (Neubauer et al., 2019). The goal of Hermeneutic phenomenology is to view layers of human experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The research design examining associations is phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology serves to explore individual rural AN+AI maltreatment experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to consider participant history, viewing social, cultural, and political aspects of their environments objectively (Neubauer et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were conducted to solicit information regarding AN+AI lived experiences. This qualitative approach is used by researchers in the behavioral health field (Garcia, 2020; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Previous researchers have successfully identified themes when using qualitative research methods (Sahota, 2019). A full description of the research design, participant selection details, tools, and coded themes are provided in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative study was designed to explore relationships between social emotional development, child maltreatment, rural areas, and AN+AI populations. Child maltreatment and AN+AI cultures are directly related (Burnette et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Rural areas and juvenile criminal activity are also directly related (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Research has been completed confirming a relationship between child maltreatment and behavioral concerns (Giano et al., 2021; Newins et al., 2019). There has been no research specifically exploring relationships between social emotional development, child maltreatment, rural areas, and AN+AI populations collectively. Intentions of the study were to determine if social emotional development is impacted by child maltreatment in rural areas amongst AN+AI cultures. A qualitative research approach was used to explore variables.

Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the research design. A detailed description of AN+AI participants, social emotional development, rural areas, child maltreatment, and selection strategies is provided. The CTQ-SF and demographic surveys used to determine inclusion criteria are explained. Codes and themes resulting from assessment tools and interview questions are noted. Preparation procedures including location, time, and interview dates are explained. Threats to internal and external validity are provided. Ethical considerations including informed consent and privacy concerns are described throughout this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

Variables are AN+AI individuals, child maltreatment, social emotional

development, and rural areas. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals were defined separately since they are two different populations. Alaska Natives are members of Alaska's tribes (Connolly et al., 2019), while American Indians are descendants of the first people in North and South America (Walters et al., 2023). Child maltreatment is physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment, neglect, or exploitation of children (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021). Social emotional development is categorized by social skills, learning approaches, behavioral problems, temperament development, relationships with others, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). Rural areas are territories, populations, and housing units outside of urban areas and urban clusters (Bennett et al., 2019). Variables were explored using data from the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD), data from The Office of Children's Services (OCS, and the CTQ-SF (Bernstein et al., 2003).

A qualitative non-experimental approach was used to explore associations between AN+AI cultures, child maltreatment, social emotional development, and rural areas. This approach was appropriate because of the qualitative nature. This approach was also appropriate because participants were not randomly assigned to groups, and there was no manipulation. Participants voluntarily engaged in self-report surveys and semi structured interviews. Research questions were created to explore AN+AI recollections of child maltreatment. Research questions were also created to examine if social emotional development was impacted by rural AN+AI child maltreatment: Research Question 1: How do AN+AI adult survivors of child maltreatment describe their abuse in rural areas?

Research Question 2: How do AN+AI adult survivors of child maltreatment describe the impacts on their social and emotional development?

A qualitative methodology using semi structured interviews with codes and themes was used to explore relationships of all variables. Archival data were used. Archival data are public records through Alaska State agencies. Ethnicity was confirmed through archival data. Rural location at the time of maltreatment was also confirmed by Alaska State agencies archival data. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are private populations with limited outsider access (Burnett et al., 2019). Data were requested from the Alaska PFD Division and OCS websites. Some data requested were public records, while others were confidential due to privacy and cultural concerns. Confidential records were requested in advance through Alaska State agencies using residential status. Qualitative study designs have been used to explore relationships between criminality and social disorganization theory in rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al. 2021). Qualitative studies may involve using interview methods to obtain desired information from participants. Participants were selected based on their residential status at the time of child maltreatment occurrences. These participants were victims of child maltreatment. Selected participants were of AN+AI descent as confirmed by records from OCS and the Alaska PFD Division. Participants were also selected based on CTQ-SF results (Bernstein et al., 2003). Non-experimental research designs were used in many studies involving AN+AI participants (Sahota, 2019), child maltreatment (Garcia, 2020), and rural areas (Goodson & Bouffard, 2020; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021).

Qualitative Design and Phenomenology

The phenomenon of interest is child maltreatment and social emotional development among AN+AI cultures in rural areas. Child maltreatment is an ongoing phenomenon exacerbated by cultural factors in underprivileged communities (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are more likely to experience some form of child maltreatment (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Indigenous cultures often reside in rural areas aligning with their tribal affiliations (Garcia, 2020). The concept of interest is how rural AN+AI child maltreatment impacts social emotional development. Alaska Native and American Indian social emotional development is a topic rarely explored in conjunction with rural child maltreatment (Garcia, 2020; Morgan & Calleja, 2020; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Exploration and understanding of AN+AI child maltreatment (Santaella-Tenorio & Tarantola, 2021) and social emotional development in rural areas (Morgan & Calleja, 2020) could be key indicators to implementing preventive programs (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023).

A qualitative approach was necessary due to topic sensitivity. Human experiences are important to understand certain social constructs (Neubauer et al., 2019). Use of human experiences to further understand social phenomena could yield phenomenon mitigation (Neubauer et al., 2019). Exploration of lived experiences through protected cultures is a complex process (Burnette et al., 2019; Garcia, 2020). Qualitative methods are used to explore assorted topics in natural settings (Neubauer et al., 2019). Natural settings are meaningful for viewing social, cultural, and political aspects of their environments objectively (Neubauer et al., 2019). Environmental aspects could yield a

more in-depth perspective of the identified phenomenon.

Qualitative research has paradigms, ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Urcia, 2021). Guidelines informing actions for research align with ontological or epistemological perspectives (Urcia, 2021). These perspectives should align with researcher worldviews (Urcia, 2021). Ontology is the researcher's worldview on nature and existence of truth and reality (Urcia, 2021). Qualitative approaches can influence how data are collected and analyzed (Bazen et al., 2021). Data collection includes coding and revising. Analysis occurs when using the main qualitative research approaches (Bazen et al., 2021).

The most common forms of qualitative research methodologies are grounded theory and phenomenology (Urcia, 2021). Alignment between the problem statement and purpose is why phenomenological methodology was selected. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research focusing on individual's lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Hermeneutic phenomenology was used to explore individual AN+AI maltreatment experiences when they resided in rural areas. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a specific type of qualitative methodology (Neubauer et al., 2019). Congruence between AN+AI cultures and the researcher's worldview is why this specific type was selected (Urcia, 2021). Research contributions from these viewpoints may significantly impact phenomenon interpretation.

Lived experiences using understanding and interpretation is hermeneutic phenomenology (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). This selected qualitative methodology provides a certain set of guidelines for practicing phenomenological research (Alsaigh &

Coyne, 2021). Descriptive language is used to produce detailed textual discussions of the experienced phenomenon (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Hermeneutic phenomenology is an approach used by interpretivists. Interpretivists seek cultural interpretations of social phenomena (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Interpretivists who use hermeneutic phenomenology can clarify the phenomena meaning (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Conditions where understanding, perception, experience, and knowledge of self occurs when hermeneutics is used in research (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021).

Role of the Researcher

Objectivity and neutrality should be the goal of any researcher (Hamilton, 2020). Qualitative research is subjective in nature (Hamilton, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Subjectivity means that remaining impartial while conducting research is not always feasible (Hamilton, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Special populations such as AN+AI communities may yield challenges and barriers (Garcia, 2020). These challenges and barriers impact researcher's accessibility to land and participants (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Participant interviews were used to gain knowledge and insight into this population (Burnette et al., 2019). Other important elements in the proposed study included understanding cultural differences (Garcia, 2020; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023) and participant safety.

A participant-observer role was used. Participant-observing and understanding cultural differences is crucial (Holmes, 2020). As a participant-observer, it is important to remain impartial (Holmes, 2020). The role of a participant-observer is necessary due to topic sensitivity. Observation from an unbiased perspective and conducting valid

participant interviews is critical (Holmes, 2020). Validity and reliability of the researcher and participants will yield effective themes useful for future research (Johnson et al., 2020). Verbatim findings associated with participant interviews were reported (Johnson et al., 2020).

Participant observation was planned to occur in a community-based setting, but this was not approved by the IRB. Community-based qualitative research design (CBQR) is a collaborative approach where researchers build community relationships (Johnson et al., 2019). Transformation and collaboration occur when using CBQR (Johnson et al., 2019). Collaboration with participants has the potential to transform their thinking patterns regarding child maltreatment. Research projects investigating community concerns and issues are grounded in participatory paradigms using CBQR (Johnson et al., 2019). Communities and their members are intellectual spaces and rich sources of knowledge (Johnson et al., 2019). Engaged learning and praxis occur in this participatory environment (Johnson et al., 2019). Engaged learning is the concept of participants being given real-life contexts to address relevant community issues (Johnson et al., 2019). Praxis is the notion of world transformation by reflection and action (Johnson et al., 2019).

Potential exists in the proposed study to produce rural child maltreatment preventative programs. An observer-participant role was taken during sampling procedures. This role was also used during the interview process. Reflexivity was used to ensure the researcher's own background, characteristics, and experiences did not influence data interpretation (Johnson et al., 2019). Alignment with an observer-

participant role used self-reflexivity specifically (Johnson et al., 2019).

Researcher Bias, Relationships, and Ethical Issues

The ability for researchers to be aware of how they are insiders and outsiders in research settings is self-reflexivity (Johnson et al., 2019). Self-reflexivity aids researchers in viewing similarities between participants and their own backgrounds (Johnson et al., 2019). Participants that have similar backgrounds to me were used. Alaska Native and American Indian participants and the researcher were both reared in Alaska, although in different sections. Participants may view the researcher as an outsider, as I am not AN+AI and do not reside on their lands (Garcia, 2020). Self-reflexivity was used to ensure neutrality when surrounded by participants who have endured trauma and pain (Johnson et al., 2019).

The proposed study utilized a licensed professional counselor (LPC). This counselor had an active license in Alaska. The LPC can conduct semi-structured interviews and lead debrief sessions for participants. Debrief sessions are important due to topic sensitivity. Participants must feel that the LPC will cultivate a psychologically safe environment (Galligan et al., 2021). Plans for improvement (Galligan et al., 2021) and child maltreatment mitigation processes occurred during debrief sessions. Prior relationships between participants and the LPC did not exist.

Participants and the researcher did not have personal or professional relationships. Lack of prior relationships could aid in addressing ethical concerns (Johnson et al., 2020). Ethical conduct refers to morals and values of the researcher (Johnson et al., 2020). Participant perception of the researcher's ethical conduct was vital to building trusting

relationships (Johnson et al., 2020). Trustworthiness is essential because of topic sensitivity (Johnson et al., 2020). High quality data came from participant interviews when ethical conduct was present (Johnson et al., 2020). Participant safety assurance and confidentiality directly impacted interview procedural responses (Johnson et al., 2020).

Bias can occur at any time during the study (Hamilton, 2020). Biases from researchers may not always be evident (Hamilton, 2020). Peer review and debriefing strategies were used to manage researcher bias (Hamilton, 2020). These strategies are also used to manage interviewer bias in qualitative research (Hamilton, 2020). Interviewer and researcher bias occur when a neutral stance is not taken or overlooked (Hamilton, 2020). Rural populations have strong spiritual beliefs and cultural differences (Hamilton, 2020). These differences and beliefs have caused non-neutral stances subconsciously resulting in researcher bias (Hamilton, 2020).

Close connection with Alaska and AN+AI populations could also yield potential bias. Current and past relationships with Alaska's child services divisions are associations that were considered for power differentials. Awareness of power differentials was necessary to maintain trustworthiness and minimize bias (Hamilton, 2020). Participant trust is important to avoid negative judgements against LPCs. Alaska Native and American Indian populations historically mistrust researchers (Hiratsuka et al., 2020; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023). Negative researcher bias was considered because of labeled mistrust. Positive researcher bias may exist toward AN+AI populations because of current associations with Alaskans.

The proposed study occurred in rural St. George, Alaska. The researcher did not

previously reside in St. George and does not currently reside there. Participants having previous therapeutic services with the researcher were excluded to avoid bias and conflicts of interest. Descriptions of each stage were documented using a journal. The journal noted behaviors of willing participants, transference, triangulation, and researcher bias. All prospective participants were qualified to participate. Participants received a $10 Amazon gift card for volunteering.

Methodology

Population

The target population were AN+AI individuals ages 18 and older. The population were survivors of child maltreatment. Participants resided in a rural area at the time of child maltreatment. There were ten AN+AI participants. The total number of participants confirmed saturation. Participant age during maltreatment occurrences was under 18 years old. Those who participated in the study currently reside within the United States.

Participants within the study have experienced forms of maltreatment prior to becoming an adult. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals in Alaska were selected because of their unfortunate familiarity with child maltreatment in rural areas. Participant diversity was factored into the selection process. There are various AN+AI tribes. Researchers attempted to gain participants from each of the major tribes in Alaska. Not all tribes were able to participate. Inclusion criteria was not limited to a specific number of male or female participants.

Ethnic backgrounds included in the sample were AN+AI individuals. Participants resided St. George, Alaska. St. George is a small rural section of Alaska (Wortman &

Lewis, 2021) containing approximately one hundred residents. This rural area is in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska (Wortman & Lewis, 2021). All participants resided in a rural Alaskan area at the time of child maltreatment. All participants were interviewed through Zoom after obtaining informed consent. St. George, Alaska contains Aleut tribes, Eskimos, and American Indians (Wortman & Lewis, 2021).

Sampling Strategy

Purposive, convenience, and theoretical are sampling techniques used in qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2020). Purposive sampling can include critical case sampling, key informant sampling, and snowball sampling (Johnson et al., 2020). Intentionally selecting participants based on their ability to answer research questions is critical case sampling (Johnson et al., 2020). Participants selected for their expertise on a certain matter by researchers is key informant sampling (Johnson et al., 2020). Snowball sampling occurs when current participants refer new individuals to the study (Johnson et al., 2020). Purposive sampling techniques were used. Convenience sampling was not used due to low credibility and lack of result transferability (Johnson et al., 2020).

Qualitative research designs frequently use concurrent data analysis and collection (Johnson et al., 2020). There may be difficulty predetermining sample size. Sample size was determined when no new information was found. No new information discovered during the interview process is when saturation occurs (Johnson et al., 2020). The number of participants included in the sample size may change when using qualitative research designs. Qualitative research designs typically have smaller numbers because of data saturation (Johnson et al., 2020). There were enough participants

recruited for saturation to occur.

Participant selection was based on past child maltreatment occurrences. Rural residential status and ethnicity was part of the inclusion criteria. The sample included only AN+AI individuals ages 18 and older. Full demographic profiles were needed for inclusion purposes. These profiles were confirmed by AN+AI ethnicity. Data from OCS and the Alaska PFD Division served as secondary confirmation of demographics. Participants self-reported trauma using the CTQ-SF (Bernstein et al., 2003).

Study participants had a trauma history. Child maltreatment occurred prior to the participant's 18th birthday. Study participants resided rurally at the time of maltreatment occurrences. Rural areas are not limited to only Alaskan areas. Participants complied with research procedures. Procedures included signing an informed consent form, following COVID-19 protocols, and answering each semi-structured interview question. Study participants agreed to debrief with an LPC due to topic sensitivity.

Inclusion criteria were determined by the researcher using multiple sources. Sources included OCS, the Alaska PFD Division, demographic surveys, and the CTQ-SF (Bernstein et al., 2003). These sources are all valid and reliable tools used for research purposes only. Data from these sources were obtained through participant written and verbal consent. Informed consent was obtained on an individual basis. Consent was obtained a second time verbally prior to interviews beginning. Interview response confidentiality was confirmed by the LPC verbally before interviews began.

Safe environments for interviews to take place were the LPC's responsibility. Debrief procedures occurred as part of ensuring a safe psychological environment

(Galligan et al., 2021). Consent and confidentiality were also the LPC's responsibility. Study participants were AN or AI. Participants experienced child maltreatment when residing in rural areas. Alaska Native and American Indian participants were not excluded for having experienced multiple child maltreatment forms. Exclusions did not occur based on experiencing only one child maltreatment form.

Completion of ten semi-structured interviews with AN+AI survivors was the goal. This number was based on a recent qualitative study conducted in an AI urban community (Pham et al., 2022). Nine AI participants were part of qualitative research where semi-structured interviews occurred (Pham et al., 2022). Cultural misappropriation of traditional therapies for AI was the study goal (Pham et al., 2022). Spiritual practices instead of traditional therapy have been suggested (Pham et al., 2022). Several themes emerged from this phenomenological study and researchers then coded responses appropriately. Participants reported benefits from participating in spiritual practice as opposed to traditional therapy based on mental health concerns (Pham et al., 2022).

Fifty-six AN+AI women were interviewed in a secondary study. Connections among sexual and reproductive health were explored (Giacci et al., 2022). Recovery and healing from sexual trauma were also researched (Giacci et al., 2022). A large sample size was feasible with multiple researchers. The study used ten participants which was a reasonable goal with one researcher. Ten semi-structured interviews would be feasible for one researcher considering time and effort. Thorough exploration of the identified phenomenon would ensure saturation (Pham et al., 2022).

Participants were contacted during a routine visit to St. George by an LPC. An

explanation of the study to potential participants occurred. Nature and rationale for the study was explained in detail. Contact information was provided to potential participants with instructions for emailing their volunteer interest. Detailed information for remaining anonymous and confidentiality was communicated to all potential volunteers. Emphasis on physical and psychological safety was explained. Commitment to respecting AN+AI participants and their environments was established by the LPC.

Data Collection Instrumentation

Data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews, observations, self-created demographic surveys, CTQ-SF (Bernstein et al., 2003), OCS records, and data from the Alaska PFD Division. Demographics were confirmed through the Alaska PFD Division records. Residency confirmation came from both the Alaska PFD Division and OCS. Childhood trauma was determined using the CTQ-SF (Bernstein et al., 2003). Indicators of child maltreatment types and age of occurrence were expressed through self-created surveys. Child maltreatment types were listed on those self-created surveys. This confirmed how many forms of maltreatment occurred during childhood.

Information from Alaska PFD division and OCS were the most valid data sources. Data from these sources detailed open investigation information and child abuse allegations. These sources also have detailed demographics and locations of child maltreatment occurrences. Permission to obtain records was asked of all included participants. Surveys exploring child maltreatment types (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021) and age occurrences were created by the researcher. These surveys included an open space for participants to report their rural locations during maltreated times. All information was

kept confidential with no identifying indicators.

Direct field observation is a strategy that some researchers use in qualitative studies (Johnson et al., 2020). There are pros and cons to using observation in research (Johnson et al., 2020). Pros and cons should be assessed by the researcher based on topic selection (Johnson et al., 2020). Observation type should also be strongly considered in qualitative research. Persistent observation is crucial to qualitative research aiding in data saturation achievement (Johnson et al., 2020). Persistent observation should be accompanied by researcher notes. Notes should be detailed and recorded immediately following observations (Johnson et al., 2020).

Detailed notes are needed for accuracy (Johnson et al., 2020). Accurate notes described researcher observations of AN+AI participants. Persistent and structured observation techniques were recorded in detail. Detailed observation accounts for AN+AI participants is critical. Perception of their land, nature, and environment were fundamental to include during observations (Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022). Benefits to using observation during initial research include familiarity with community processes (Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022). Alaska Native and American Indian identities are understood through researcher observations where data is recorded accurately (Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022).

Observations occurred over a three-day span. Interviews were scheduled following the brief observation period. Information obtained during the observation period was used to prompt additional interview questions. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used throughout all interviews. Participant interviews ranged from 60 to

90 minutes depending on participant responses. All interviews were audio recorded using VoiceMemos on an iPad and secured in The Cloud. All participant interviews were transcribed and coded (Pham et al., 2022).

Once interviews were transcribed and coded (Pham et al., 2022) debriefing sessions occurred. Interview responses were validated during debriefing sessions. Participants had opportunities to express emotions about their interview experiences. Participants confirmed their individual voices on interview recordings. Transcriptions were available for participant review ensuring accuracy. Participants confirmed receipt of the incentive agreed upon during debriefing sessions. Participants were thanked for their time at the end of debriefing sessions.

Data Analysis Plan

Demographic data was collected and used to confirm inclusion criteria. Participants had to be AN or AI to participate in the proposed study. Demographic data were used to convey in depth understandings of proposed interview questions. This data also confirmed rural residencies during child maltreatment periods. Observational data served to educate the researcher on AN+AI participant environments. Data received from interviews will serve to address proposed research questions regarding AN+AI rural child maltreatment and social emotional development. Research questions are regarding AN+AI child maltreatment in rural areas and social emotional development.

The best source for information regarding lived experiences of AN+AI participants was captured through interview data. This data highlighted child maltreatment experiences while residing rurally and social emotional development.

Observational data will be used for research purposes only to emphasize AN+AI rural living conditions. Detail enriched interview responses can come from observational data used in interview questions (Pham et al., 2022). Observational and interview data can yield themes that will then be coded (Pham et al., 2022). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analytic strategy, capturing patterns in interviews (Pham et al., 2022). These patterns are turned into codes and themes using six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pham et al., 2022).

Six phases of thematic analysis were used (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pham et al., 2022). These phases include data familiarization, initial code generation, theme searches, reviewing themes, naming themes, and report production (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pham et al., 2022). Thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative analytic method stemming from epistemological or thematical stances (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Acknowledgment of the researcher's perspectives in qualitative studies must be examined when using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some patterns may be noticed more than others depending on the researcher's perspective. These patterns within data are viewed inductively or theoretically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive analysis occurs when researchers do not use preconceptions, while theoretical analysis is the opposite (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pham et al., 2022).

An inductive approach for analysis was used in the proposed study to ensure no preconceptions impact data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo is a qualitative software program that will be used in the coding process (Pham et al., 2022). Interviews were transcribed verbatim in written format (Giacci et al., 2022). Transcripts were coded and

compared (Giacci et al., 2022). Defined codes and themes were based on existing scholarly articles. Axial coding may occur if codes are combined into broader categories (Giacci et al., 2022). Broader categories may define more patterns, themes, and capture experience heterogeneity (Giacci et al., 2022).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Creditability was established through multiple data sources and methods achieving triangulation. Participant observations within AN+AI environments will occur for 72-hours prior to interviews beginning, supporting reflexivity (Johnson et al., 2020). Participant interviews were led by the researcher for a period of 60-90 minutes. Participant interviews were conducted until data saturation occurs. Participant debrief sessions occurred after interviews were transcribed and coded. Interview responses were reviewed with participants ensuring response accuracy. Demographic survey information was compared to OCS and Alaska PFD records.

Member checking is a qualitative strategy enhancing rigor (Hamilton, 2020). Transcript verification by going back to participants confirms accuracy of interviews and recollection consistency (Hamilton, 2020). Member checking and triangulation enhance validity in qualitative research (Hamilton, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Transferability could be challenging because although participants currently reside in St. George, not all child maltreatment occurred there. Transferability may be addressed by providing rich and robust descriptions from a neutral stance (Johnson et al., 2020). Objectivity is critical in determining credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Johnson et al., 2020). Opinion-based language was always avoided.

Interviewer and researcher bias (Johnson et al., 2020) were managed by using a self-reflection journal. Descriptions of researcher emotions and observations began during the 72-hour observation period. Journaling ended following participant debrief sessions. CTQ-SF screenings, demographic forms, verbatim transcripts, and interview audio recordings will all be described in the researcher journal. Gained insights and information were also part of the journaling process. Intercoder reliability will evaluate consistency in coding (Hamilton, 2020). Intercoder reliability occurred by using the NVivo Software (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pham et al., 2020) and using open ended interview questions (Hamilton, 2020).

Ethical Procedures

Access to participant data and human treatment are ethical concerns in the proposed study. Completion of yearly ethics trainings area required to keep active LPC licensure. Ethics trainings to remain current with Alaska's ethical procedures were completed by the LPC in the proposed study. Included in the IRB application was a partner site application and data use agreement for completing research in Alaska. Permission to conduct research including interviews and observations was obtained from each participant. Permission to recruit participants was not needed. All forms for IRB approval were completed by the researcher.

Psychological and physical participant safety are of utmost importance. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are private populations (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian participants did not feel unsafe or coerced into research participation. Coercion was avoided by communicating with

participants individually once they have expressed interest. Self-disclosure of the researcher's previous Alaska residency occurred demonstrating positive ethical conduct (Johnson et al., 2020). Participants were educated on the study's purpose. Potential participants had ample time to consider participating.

Participants confirmed agreement through a written informed consent form on Walden's website. Confidentiality and privacy were explained in detail to all participants. Participants were informed that their audio-recorded interviews, demographic data sheets, transcriptions, and CTQ-SF responses would be kept completely confidential. All names and identifying descriptors were not included in any reports and were only given to the researcher. Results were clear, concise, and accurate (Johnson et al., 2020) utilizing a thorough debrief session with each participant. Power differentials were managed by using effective presentation (Johnson et al., 2020). Psychological risk was minimal and managed by LPC's during interviews.

All participants in the proposed study belong to a special population (Burnette et al., 2019). Participant reactions and distress indicators were monitored. Interviews yielded a safe space for participants to share their experiences through story telling (Burnette et al., 2019; Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures have engaged in storytelling for decades as a means of education and expression (Burnette et al., 2019; Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022). Support was offered to applicable participants during and after their interviews. Participants were able to take a break when emotions arose during interviews. Comfort and psychological safety during participant interviews were sourced by LPCs.

Alaska Native and American Indian child maltreatment and social emotional development are sensitive topics. All information obtained through various data sources was completely confidential. Digital and physical copies of all pertinent information were kept. Digital copies were kept in Win Zip file and saved in a secure server with password or facial recognition identity. Physical copies of pertinent information were kept in a safe with a key code, only accessible to the researcher and LPC. Participants received a $10 Amazon gift card for volunteering and coded activation receipts. All data will be destroyed at the five-year mark ensuring full confidentiality and participant safety.

Summary

A qualitative non-experimental approach was used to explore the associations between AN+AI cultures, child maltreatment, social emotional development, and rural areas. Qualitative research was appropriate for this study because participants were not randomly assigned to groups. Manipulation of variables or participants did not occur. Participants voluntarily engaged in self-report surveys and semi-structured interviews. Archival data through Alaska state agencies was used. These data confirmed AN+AI ethnicity and residency at the time of maltreatment occurrences. Data was requested from the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend Division and OCS websites.

Special populations such as AN+AI communities may yield challenges and barriers (Garcia, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2023). Participant interviews were used to gain knowledge and insight into this population (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). The role of a participant-observer was used due to topic sensitivity. Observation from an unbiased perspective and conducting valid participant interviews was critical (Holmes,

2020). Verbatim findings associated with participant interviews were reported (Johnson et al., 2020). Coding and thematic analysis detected themes resulting from interview responses. Completion of ten semi-structured interviews with AN+AI survivors was completed. Demographic surveys and the CTQ-SF were also used.

Chapter 3 contained a thorough summary of qualitative methodologies and rationale for the proposed study. Detailed descriptions of researcher role, participant selection, study rationale, and instrumentation are described. Hermeneutic phenomenology was used to explore participant experiences through semi-structured open-ended interviews. Researcher observations were used to explore participant environment prior to interviews occurring. Coding and thematic analysis were described to explain patterns and themes in interviews. Ethical and privacy concerns were explored. Proposed study results will be presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The qualitative study was designed to explore social emotional development on rural AN+AI maltreated children. Participants have never shared their experiences with researchers. Data gathered from participants are transferable. Participant stories will help shed light on this ongoing social phenomenon. Data will also help mitigate rural AN+AI child maltreatment. Participants were provoked to contemplate impacts of social emotional development using five interview questions. The outcome of this study will include recommendations for mitigating rural AN+AI child maltreatment and increasing knowledge on social emotional development.

The data collection process and exploration of transferability are considered in Chapter 4. This study includes AN+AI participants who were raised in rural St. George, Alaska. The study was conducted using a flyer for recruitment, and participants could engage voluntarily. Demographics are described using only sex, age, and AN+AI identifiers to maintain anonymity. The environment is described in this chapter. Data analysis processes used to process interview responses are explained in detail. Chapter 4 also includes evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

An institutional review board (IRB) application was completed and submitted through Walden University asking for permission to begin research. The Walden University IRB provided approval number 02-09-23-0984766 with authorization to commence research. Participant recruitment was completed according to Walden's IRB guidelines. Recruitment and research were conducted through email communications

with me as the direct point of contact. The partner site, an LLC, provided a safe environment for zoom interviews to be completed. Zoom interviews were scheduled by participants. A Listening Ear, LLC signed a letter of cooperation, which was emailed directly to Walden University's IRB and me.

Interview responses were recorded using a secured recording device. All interviews were completed through Zoom. All participants came to the partner site after scheduling their preferred interview time. Study participants were free to speak openly with me prior to beginning the interview. Participants answered interview questions thoroughly and detailed responses were recorded freely. The Zoom link provided to participants for interview purposes was secured through a purchased account. Final interview data were not disseminated back to participants upon completion.

Demographics

The participants were 10 AN+AI adults who resided in St. George, Alaska during childhood. Proof of residency was not required, but confirmation of AN+AI ethnicity was mandatory. All participants had successfully completed therapy prior to being interviewed. Minors and other vulnerable populations were not included in the recruitment process. Participant names or other identifying information was not solicited or disclosed. Participants are identified as P1 through P10 corresponding with when each interview occurred (see Table 1). Demographic details regarding age, gender, and ethnicity are identified separately (see Figure 1).

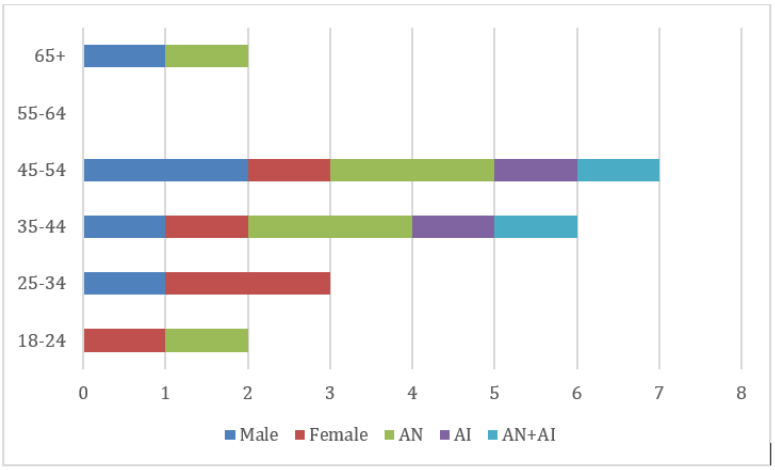
Table 1

Participant Interviews

Code	Date of scheduled interview	Interview completed
P1	3/16/23	Fully complete 3/17/23
P2	3/16/23	Fully complete 3/21/23
P3	3/28/23	Fully complete 3/30/23
P4	3/30/23	Fully complete 3/30/23
P5	3/30/23	Fully complete 3/31/23
P6	4/5/23	Fully complete 4/5/23
P7	4/9/23	Fully complete 4/10/23
P8	4/18/23	Fully complete 4/18/23
P9	4/29/23	Fully complete 4/29/23
P10	5/1/23	Fully complete 5/1/23

Figure 1

Demographic Details



Data Collection

Initially the proposal to interview participants who had not successfully completed therapy was rejected by the IRB. Interview questions were revised in compliance with IRB requirements and to stay on target with the research question. The informed consent form was revised to remove a required signature and replace it with "I

consent." This was done to maintain anonymity. Participants engaged on a voluntary basis with the understanding that responses would remain anonymous. Data collection occurred between March 16, 2023, and May 1, 2023. The recruitment process was completed within four and-a-half weeks of IRB approval.

Sample Selection

Ten AN+AI individuals participated in the interviews. Participant selection included ethnicity confirmation, residency, age, and CTQ-SF results. The partner site did not participate in candidate selection processes. The partner site did provide a HIPAA compliant environment for Zoom interviews to commence. Full responsibility was assumed for guiding each interview by reading questions aloud and recording responses. Anonymous interview data were collected and stored on an IRB approved storage computer with a passcode known only to the researcher. Privacy was confirmed by interview anonymity throughout collection and data dissemination processes.

CTQ-SF

Participants completed the CTQ-SF (Bernstein et al., 2003) after consenting to participate. Participant anonymity occurred through the completion of the CTQ-SF. Gathering procedures included sending an electronic version of the CTQ-SF 24 hours before each interview occurred. Participants were instructed to complete the CTQ-SF and email it back to me. Each CTQ-SF was reviewed confirming inclusion criteria was met. The CTQ-SF was comprised of 28 questions where participants rated their experiences on a Likert scale (Bernstein et al., 2003). Participants were not allowed to skip any questions ensuring the questionnaire was completed in full.

OCS

The OCS is public data. Information regarding participant resident areas during maltreatment times was obtained. Confirmation of participants or their families being reported to OCS for child maltreatment was easily obtained. Based on this information, the researcher was able to confirm demographic material and inclusion criteria. Participants then confirmed their lived experiences during semi structured interviews and the CTQ-SF. Participants confirmed physical and ethnological demographic inclusion criteria. OCS kept detailed records of participant data, and information of those that did not elect to participate.

Data Recording Method

There were key recurring themes expressed by participants and captured by the researcher. These themes were initially recorded, transcribed verbatim, and color coded in Excel for organizational purposes. Tables and figures were developed to express data sets using recurring themes. Responses from open-ended interview questions were reviewed and grouped together based on similarities. Responses outside of similar response patterns were documented and explored. Statements were placed in Excel and color coded based on categorical markers. Four categories were developed from data.

Subcategories were identified by following categorical definitions. Qualitative data derived from the CTQ-SF and interview questions were utilized in alignment with thematic analysis (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Clear indicators of social emotional development impacts were apparent in responses provided by participants. Evidence was further supported by the clearly identified rural area of St. George (Macguire-Jack et al.,

2021) and social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Subcategories were congruent with findings from past studies using social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Lack of support, awareness, and expected silence further demonstrated an understanding of sub categorical developments. Focus specifically on participant responses verbalizing subcategories can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Open-Ended Response Samples

Question		Response
1	How would you describe your childhood as an Alaska Native/American Indian individual?	I thought my childhood was good until it wasn't.
2	Please describe your experiences residing in rural areas.	I didn't know I was in a rural area. This was all I knew, and all my family knew.
3	In your own words, what is child maltreatment?	Kids getting treated bad. We didn't get treated the best growing up, but we tried to have fun.
4	Are you familiar with social emotional development?	Yes. My emotions and how and handle them inside and outside, right?
5	Please describe how being a survivor of rural child maltreatment has impacted your social emotional development.	I refuse to let my children grow up in the village I did. It was cruel now that I look back on it. I wouldn't wish that on myself, my siblings, or my children. That's why I left.

Data Variation

There were minor data variation processes from the original proposal in Chapter 3. The original plan included an observation period prior to conducting semi structured interviews. The IRB denied this process as they did not agree with observing participants in this manner. Secondary observation methods were not necessary for this study. The necessity to observe specific interview rooms and conditions was not required. Observation of popular public spaces was also not required by the IRB. The process of gathering secondary data was not required to accomplish saturation. Study participants did have to engage in therapy prior to being selected for interviews.

Data Analysis

Participant interviews were documented using the qualitative research process. Data analysis was conducted to determine if the social emotional development of participants was impacted by rural child maltreatment. Qualitative data from the CTQ-SF was reviewed individually confirming maltreatment types. Semi structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using excel and NVivo processes. Demographic inclusion criteria were confirmed using OCS and PFD archival data. Demographic data were used to convey in depth understanding of interview responses. Interview data were validated during debrief sessions.

There was one data outlier. Participants were familiar with social emotional development and child maltreatment definitions. Positive implications of social emotional development effects on rural child maltreatment were addressed by one participant. Study participants demonstrated readiness to disclose lived experiences during interviews. Readiness could likely be attributed to demographic inclusion criteria. Additional readiness could be attributed to anonymous participation while having their voices heard. Confidentiality with this special population was of utmost importance due to silent expectations, secrecy, and researcher distrust.

Witnessing domestic violence, physical abuse, and sexual abuse was explicitly mentioned by all participants. Study participants also verbalized alcohol being a contributing factor to ongoing child maltreatment experiences. Participant interview responses directly correlated with multiple categories in the CTQ-SF. The qualitative study was restricted to AN+AI participants who survived rural child maltreatment.

Themes resulted from study participants resulted in helpful, consistent, and congruent information (see Table 3). Qualitative data gained through this study directly contributes to future mitigation of AN+AI rural child maltreatment. Additional qualitative data gained could contribute to understanding implications of social emotional development in underrepresented cultures.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

Main Themes	Subthemes
1. Embarrassment	1. Mental health problems 2. Lack of resources
2. Alcoholism	1. Victim or perpetrator
3. Special education	1. Poor social skills
4. Behavioral problems	1. Emotional regulation 2. Relationships/Romantic partners 3. Unemployment/Job instability
5. Social emotional development implications	

Themes emerging from raw data coincide with the problem statement identified in Chapter 1. Some themes were predictable based on previous child maltreatment research. The theme of alcoholism is identifiable among study participant responses regarding physical abuse. The theme of witnessing domestic violence was also prevalent among respondents. Negative impacts on social emotional development were consistent among study participants except for one outlier. Subthemes from thematic coding processes can be confirmed when reviewing the problem statement. The ongoing social phenomenon of child maltreatment was specifically explored and identified as a barrier by participants.

Effects of AN+AI rural child maltreatment on social emotional development were profound. Participant responses to interview question number five regarding impacts of

child maltreatment on social emotional development confirmed the phenomenon. There were notable limitations in participant ability to vocalize abuse suffered rurally until they were adults. The additional expectations of silence exacerbated negative impacts on social emotional development and mental health problems. Limitations on accessibility to obtain mental health services were mentioned by more than half of the study participants. Fear, embarrassment, and disappointment were emotions that emerged as subthemes having negative impacts on mental health resulting from child maltreatment. Participant responses to Question 2 regarding experiences residing in rural areas consistently noted a subtheme of minimal support and care.

Limitations to mental health accessibility were not the only concern according to participants. Twenty percent of participants reporting having "a little" accessibility followed their statement with mistrust in therapists and mental health professionals (See Figure 2) This distrust stemmed from participants believing their confidential sessions would be shared with others. Distrust has been a known factor within AN+AI communities because of generational trauma (Smith et al., 2021; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023). Accessibility and child maltreatment emotions are fully aligned. These emotions negatively impacted rural AN+AI social emotional development. Fear (n = 8), embarrassment (n = 10), and disappointment (n = 3) align with AN+AI general distrust in mental health professionals previously explored by other researchers.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility was achieved through multiple data sources and methods through

which triangulation occurred. Multiple participant perspectives were managed through triangulation between responses and applicable research. Consistent evaluation methods using qualitative rigor confirmed credibility. Member checking was part of the qualitative process used to ensure study credibility (Hamilton, 2020). Transcript verification occurred by going back to participants, ensuring accuracy. Removal of bias occurred by having no prior communication with participants and by anonymous email and flyer recruiting. Qualitative data was not synthesized using observation due to the study's nature and IRB's disagreement with observation protocols.

Transferability

Phenomenological data extraction occurred from the ten anonymous study participants resulting in transferability. Subjective survey responses from participants about child maltreatment impacting social emotional development was transferrable. Data sets using past research were not necessary. Rural setting and study context was used to gain insight into AN+AI routines and functionality. Study context and setting information were used to gain logical transferability. Transferability of information obtained is beneficial for future studies. Qualitative methodological techniques enhanced transferability positively impacting the study.

Dependability

Implementation of screening protocols led to enhanced coding dependability. This qualitative design used concurrent data analysis and collection which was consistent in maintaining dependability. The consistent application of proven demographic tactics for capturing qualitative data has confirmed dependability. Data is more uniform due to the

simplistic coding methods, which have established stability (Johnson et al., 2020). Dependability was discovered through compiling and application of survey data. Rich qualitative data gathered through participant responses greatly improved dependability. Objective survey data extrication has been consistently conducted and considered.

Confirmability

Study findings were based on raw survey data and excluded assumptions made by participants and the researcher. Participant were unknown to the researcher and had no personal relationship. The vast details of participants were only based on provided demographic information and basic confirmation of rural residency along with child maltreatment history. Lack of familiarity with study participants aided in mitigating researcher bias. Subjective results and bias were thoroughly documented. The qualitative analysis process was useful when considering patterns, themes, and in depth meaning found within raw data transcripts. Direct participant quotes were incorporated to provide valid and reliable patterns and themes lending confirmability.

Results

The evaluation of AN+AI rural child maltreatment on social emotional development is what was addressed in this study. A total of ten participants provided consent, completed the CTQ-SF, demographic survey, and semi-structured interviews. The demographic survey was created specifically for gathering information for this study. Participants answered questions directly and did not impart unsolicited information during the survey. Study participants did include additional unsolicited information when responding to semi-structured interview questions. Research questions were answered

specifically when study participants responded to questions one, two, and five. One outlier response came from a participant who viewed their child maltreatment and social emotional development experiences in manners that were opposite from others.

Consistency between participant responses regarding AN+AI rural child maltreatment negatively impacting social emotional development were identifiable. An objective participant response coding system was devised and generalizable. The single outlier response was examined using a negative case analysis revealing uncommon participant subjectivity. The outlier response was useful in comprehending a skewed view of rural child maltreatment within the same culture. Thematic coding was used to capture participant emotional responses from interview questions. Responses were evaluated and matched with theme codes, achieving saturation. Saturation still occurred as outlier codes were not identified in this study.

A review of raw data from the CTQ-SF completed by participants exposed immediate themes. Additional themes and subthemes became apparent when reviewing transcribed interviews. These notable themes provided enough information to answer the research questions. Key elements were categorized using thematic coding. Research questions were translated using a hermeneutic phenomenological thematic coding process. Themes associated with rural living conditions were not surprising. Child maltreatment and social emotional development themes were congruent with previous research completed by others.

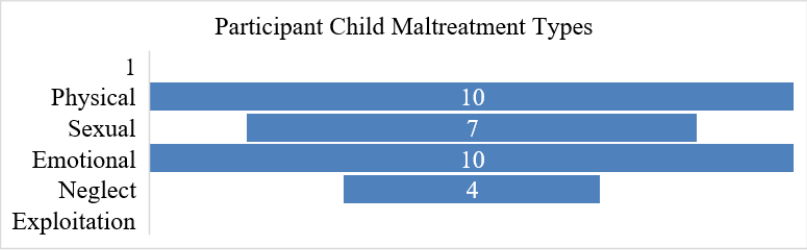
Theme 1: Embarrassment

The emotion of embarrassment is of utmost importance for research considering

child maltreatment. Research question one regarding descriptions of AN+AI rural child maltreatment is linked to negative emotions and mental health problems. All participants agreed that experiencing various forms of abuse caused embarrassment. Study participants expressed familiarity with multiple forms of child maltreatment and associated those experiences with feeling embarrassed (see Figure 2). Research question two asked AN+AI participants to describe how child maltreatment impacted their social emotional development. These responses were congruent and consistent amongst P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, and P10. Inconsistency with the response from P7 was the only outlier regarding research question two.

Figure 2

Participant Maltreatment Types



A unique response came from P6 regarding their description of residing in a rural area during childhood. Respondent P6 described embarrassment when meeting others when their family would travel. The response included embarrassment for known living conditions, abuse, and lack of resources. Respondent P6 vividly described how being reared rurally showed how naïve they were as children to what was socially appropriate or inappropriate. The embarrassment not only from abuse, but from being unaware that child maltreatment is illegal greatly impacted P6. Participant stances on child

maltreatment were all consistent in stating that it was normalized. Each participant reported embarrassment associated with ongoing maltreatment in childhood and being silenced. Participants reported embarrassment subsiding as they became adults.

Subtheme 1.1: Mental Health Problems

Mental health problems as a theme have been prevalent throughout this study. Prior research indicates that mental health problems often are associated with forms of child abuse (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Lacey et al., 2021; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). A clear connection between AN+AI rural child maltreatment and mental health problems is evident. Respondents emphasized ongoing mental health problems from childhood into adulthood. Study participants also communicated receiving therapy due to their experiences in childhood. The most prominent responses associated with mental health problems derived from phenomenological reactions to interview question five. Participant lived experiences were research basis for each interview question.

Subtheme 1.2: Lack of Resources

Several study participants expressed embarrassment also stemmed from lack of resources. Respondents reported therapy sources being unavailable to them in childhood. Therapeutic modalities in childhood were unknown to half of the participants. Respondent P3 expressed feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and hopelessness in childhood due to sexual abuse occurring as a child. Respondent P1 expressed engaging in self-harm techniques because there were no trusted adults. Respondents P1, P2, and P3 spent most of their lives in therapy after leaving their rural upbringing. All respondents verbalized the lack of resources available to them when residing rurally.

Participants were able to identify various treatment modalities that could have aided mental health problems. Respondents were also able to identify therapy options in the larger major cities across the United States, including Anchorage, Alaska. Mental health issues and lack of accessibility for access to resources were suggested negative factors presented in Chapter 2. The confirmation of resources lacking indicates that AN+AI individuals are suffering from a vast majority of problems. Respondents P1, P2, and P3 identified programs outside of their rural living areas that are only accessible by plane into the larger cities. Specific terminology, *"white people,"* was used by P9 indicating that help is only available to non-AN+AI individuals. Respondents did not specifically address other cultures or populations outside of *white people*.

Theme 2: Alcoholism

Question one requested that participants describe their childhood as an AN+AI individual. Question three pertained to participants explaining their comprehension of child maltreatment. P2, P7, P8, P9, and P10 described their childhood as an AN+AI individual as fun, happy, and scary at times but explicitly used the word *"adventurous."* Those respondents described their interpretation of adventurous. All participant descriptions were synonymous and included their caretakers being intoxicated. Alcoholism was an adventure to these participants because of events occurring during the intoxication phase. The most remarkable response to questions one and three were participants having to shield their younger siblings from child maltreatment.

Respondents P7 and P9 believed that they were responsible for protecting their younger siblings. These same respondents also described unhealthy patterns witnessed

due to alcoholism in their home. There were several crucial responses regarding physical abuse and domestic violence when alcohol was involved. The most notable response came from respondent P10. This respondent reported that in addition to witnessing domestic violence, they went on to mimic this behavior in adolescence. Respondent P10 further disclosed going to an alcohol rehabilitation program and being diagnosed with PTSD. Respondents explained internal conflicts following patterns of abuse in adolescence and overcoming those areas in adulthood.

Subtheme 2.1: Victim or Perpetrator

The concept of victims becoming perpetrators was apparent. Respondents P2 and P10 confirmed they repeated patterns of abuse witnessed in childhood as adolescents and adults. Only two out of ten participants interviewed reported mimicking behaviors witnessed in childhood for a brief period. There was an overall concern between these two participants that children would imitate behaviors witnessed in childhood. There is evidence of authoritarianism with respondents P2 and P10 amongst their children. This stems from the desire not to have their children repeat child maltreatment within their own AN+AI families as adults. P10 also verbalized being successful in alcohol rehabilitation and how that impacted his social emotional development.

Eight remaining participants identified themselves child maltreatment victims not turning into perpetrators. Study participants focused primarily on leaving the rural area in which they were reared. Study participant P1 primarily focused on having the voices of AN+AI individuals heard. Respondents P3, P4, and P5 expressed sincerity in not allowing their children to experience child maltreatment. All respondents expressed

concern that AN+AI child maltreatment in rural areas was overlooked. Alaska Native and American Indian rural areas being overlooked was attributed to lack of knowledge and accessibility. Participants verbalized child maltreatment not being mitigated.

Theme 3: Special Education

Social emotional development includes social skills, learning approaches, behavioral problems, temperament development, relationships with others, and healthy attachment (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). Respondents reported confusion and poor education as children. All respondents confirmed being in "special education" classes, having an individual education plan (IEP), or a behavior modification agreement. These special condition agreements began in elementary school and continued through high school for seven participants. Three of seven participants were informed of what special education classes were, while the remaining four were not. Six of seven participants verbalized impacts to their social emotional development. These impacts were noted as negative since they were mandated to use alternative learning methods, secluded from other classmates, and were unable to form healthy social attachments.

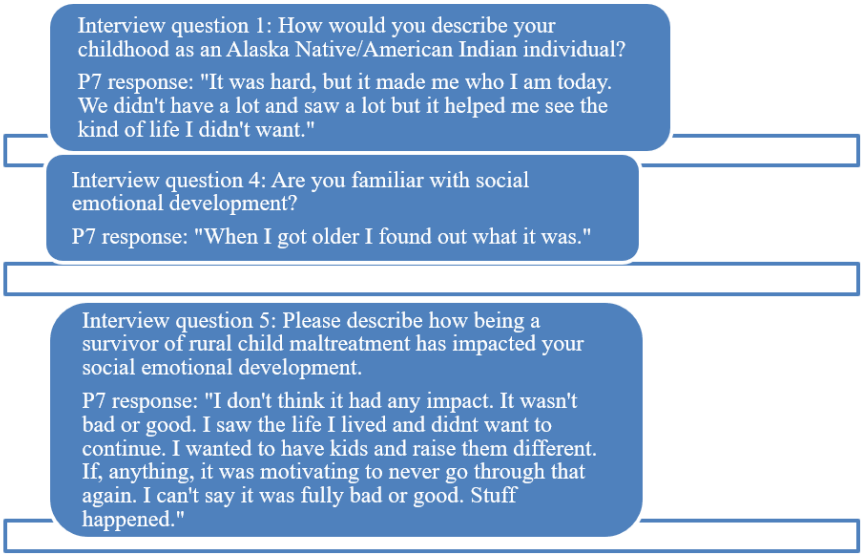
Subtheme 3.1: Poor Social Skills

Poor social skills were prevalent amongst respondents. Respondents identified lack of friendships and inability to effectively communicate with others. Respondent P7 had an outlier response. Lack of friendships and inability to effectively communicate with others was noted as positive during the interview. Respondent P7 had a remarkable explanation stating that poor social skills helped them focus on quickly moving out of

town. Nine other participants indicated that they struggled to trust peers, teachers, or engage in sports programs offered by their schools. There were notable differences in effects of poor social skills and interactions from respondent P7 to the other nine respondents interviewed for this study (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

P7 Outlier Responses



Ninety percent of respondents reported poor social skills. Poor social skills were described by respondents as inability to start conversations, trouble making friends, lack of verbal engagement with others, and nervousness when in crowds. Respondents P1-P6 and P8-P10 verbalized internal conflict and struggles. These struggles occurred when respondents were outside of their homes, in school, or other public settings. Those participants stated they had hard times in adulthood engaging with same aged colleagues. Respondent P7 indicated similar internal feelings motivating them to leave their homeland. Social disparities for P7 challenged this participant to explore different job

opportunities and residencies, which they deemed positive for their future.

Theme 4: Behavioral Problems

Behavioral problems are notable concerns when considering maltreatment (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Social emotional development includes the ability to regulate emotions appropriately. Question five required an explanation of how child maltreatment impacted AN+AI social emotional development. Nine respondents explained that rural child maltreatment negatively impacted their social emotional development. Respondent P7 reported the opposite, which was the outlier response. Respondents P2 and P4 provided simplistic responses with no explanation. All other respondents provided in depth explanations for how their social emotional development was negatively impacted by rural child maltreatment.

Subtheme 4.1: Emotional Regulation

The weight of emotional dysregulation against social emotional development could prove beneficial for future research. Rural AN+AI individuals having the ability to respond appropriately in various circumstances is concerning (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Giano et al., 2021). Alaska Native and American Indian rural child maltreatment impacts to temperament and emotional expression has caused significant problems (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Respondent P5 indicated being unable to express emotions regarding a person of interest. This same respondent reported getting into a physical altercation when being teased in elementary school. Respondents P9 and P3 expressed inability to complete a job interview. Respondents attributed their struggles to poor social emotional regulation skills.

Subtheme 4.2: Relationships/Romantic Partners

Part of social emotional development is the ability to form meaningful relationships (Ashori & Aghaziarati, 2023; Malik & Marwaha, 2020; Meng, 2020). A common factor amongst participants was their poor choice of partners or lack thereof. Respondent P1 indicated that poor choices were made with long term relationships causing relived trauma. Respondent P4, P5, and P9 explicitly mentioned their inability to emotionally connect with others. This inability to connect decreased social interactions, friendships, and romantic relationships. All participants expressed frustration and feelings of inadequacy. Respondent P10 verbalized a deep disdain for their upbringing as they have not been romantically involved in 12 years.

Subtheme 4.3: Unemployment/Job Instability

Making meaningful connections can lead to employment. Inability to complete job interviews and being unable to communicate effectively impacts employment opportunities. Participants expressed sorrow in having to rely on state and government assistance due to being unemployed. Participants P1, P2, P3, P4, and P6 confirmed time periods of unemployment and job instability. Respondent P4 specifically noted lack of confidence and mood stability when attending job interviews. Respondents P2, P3, and P6 expressed inability to attend or complete a job interview. Lack of financial stability with participants was a precursor to poor relationship choices, reliving childhood maltreatment in adulthood.

Theme 5: Social Emotional Development Implications

Participants were provided with the CTQ-SF and demographic surveys to confirm

inclusion criteria. Respondents all met criteria and volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were to determine lived experiences of rural AN+AI child maltreatment survivors and social emotional development impacts. Research questions were geared towards allowing participants to tell their stories using hermeneutic phenomenology. Nine participants expressed negative implications on social emotional development. One participant did not confirm negative or positive implications on social emotional development with rural child maltreatment as a factor. Social emotional development impacts on rural AN+AI maltreatment does not require further assessment based on 90% of participant responses (see Table 4).

Table 4

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Responses According to Theme

Theme	Responses	Participant Identifiers	Sample Excerpt
Embarrassment (Q1, Q2, Q3)	10	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10	The embarrassment associated with rural child maltreatment and social emotional development was because we didn't know any better. There was so much help, and we didn't have access to it.
Alcoholism (Q1, Q2, Q3)	10	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10	It was normal to see parents and caregivers drinking. Sometimes other kids would drink too. Often drinking meant they would hurt us. It was the same adventurous nightmare. We never could escape.
Special education (Q2, Q4, Q5)	7	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10	I was in special classes, but I didn't know that at the time. We were all there together. I don't remember learning much. In the back of my head, I wondered why we were split up, but I never asked.
Behavioral problems (Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5)	10	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10	I was always in trouble. I didn't understand. I couldn't make friendships or have effective relationships. Now, it's hard to keep or get a job.
Social emotional development implications (Q4, Q5)	9	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10	So much help is needed in our communities. We are looked over. There are so many problems and generational curses that should be broken by now. We are decades behind.

Summary

Participants demonstrated adequate knowledge of rural AN+AI experiences, child maltreatment, and social emotional development. Lack of resources remains critical with understanding ongoing AN+AI rural child maltreatment. The inability to access specific resources has caused child maltreatment and social emotional development to go underreported in AN+AI communities. Social emotional development remains impacted due to minimal resources in rural areas. The concept of allowing AN+AI participants to take part in unauthorized behavioral activities is a consistent example of rural *Social Disorganization Theory*. Social disorganization due to rural child maltreatment and social emotional development had major impacts on AN+AI participants. Relationships between deviant behavior, familial disruption, and abuse in rural communities were explained by Social Disorganization Theory (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Sampson & Groves, 1989). Alaska Native and American Indian participants were able to confirm maximum impact on social emotional development because of rural child maltreatment regarding Social Disorganization Theory.

The speculation that AN+AI rural child maltreatment impacts social emotional development can be summarized by reviewing participant interview responses. Participants fully engaged in semi-structured interviews while alluding to ongoing issues with AN+AI cultures. There was no contrast between participant opinions regarding AN+AI rural maltreatment. Only one contrasting view occurred from respondent P7 regarding negative impacts on social emotional development. This contrasting view was justified by P6 describing how they were motivated to leave the rural area in which they

were reared quickly. Negative impacts on social emotional development were prevalent in rural areas considering all forms of child maltreatment. Lack of resources, behavioral problems, and inconsistent healthy relationships are indicative of poor social emotional development. These poor social development skills have ongoing negative impacts on rural AN+AI individuals.

Limited accessibility to resources continues to be prevalent amongst AN+AI cultures. The inability to obtain resources for mental health to mitigate child maltreatment specifically impacts AN+AI individuals. Distrust and mistrust in mental health professionals also adds to the barriers for obtaining mental health resources. Mitigating child maltreatment could yield positive results within rural AN+AI areas. Social emotional development is negatively impacted by rural AN+AI child maltreatment. Chapter five includes evidentiary conclusions regarding information gathered. Comparisons to existing research and future research will be explored. Future study recommendations will be provided. Barriers for mitigating AN+AI rural maltreatment and its impacts on social emotional development will also be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study was created to explore how rural AN+AI child maltreatment impacts social emotional development. Participants deserved an opportunity to share their lived experiences residing in rural areas. Alaska Native and American Indian participant phenomenological experiences are transferable. Data could be used to mitigate rural AN+AI child maltreatment, increase awareness of rural AI+AI areas, and decrease negative impacts to social emotional development. Shared experiences from AN+AI participants could shed light on this underrepresented and misrepresented population (Hopkins et al., 2023). The shared experiences could aid in mitigating future child maltreatment and address generational trauma (Hopkins et al., 2023 Newins et al., 2019). The concept of social emotional development is constantly being studied by researchers.

Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory was applied to AN+AI participants in rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Sampson & Groves, 1989). Hermeneutic phenomenological instances addressing rural AN+AI child maltreatment was understudied (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Lacey et al., 2021). Underrepresented AN+AI cultures were not previously considered regarding rural child maltreatment on social emotional development. Themes, subthemes, and key findings indicate a need for resources in AN+AI rural areas. Dilemmas with accessibility could be resolved with the assistance of OCS and tribal leaders. Researchers are encouraged to broaden social awareness of AN+AI rural child maltreatment and negative impacts on social emotional development. Findings in Chapter 5 include conclusions and recommendations for further research to mitigate this ongoing phenomenon.

Alaska Native and American Indian individuals are misrepresented and overlooked (Hopkins et al., 2023). These underrepresented cultures do not have adequate resources or support (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Intergenerational trauma is ongoing due to lack of resources and accessibility (Newins et al., 2019). There is a significant inconsistency with support to AN+AI individuals residing in rural areas (Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). There is an ongoing negative relationship between AN+AI cultures, child maltreatment, and social emotional development. These special cultures should not be subject to additional maltreatment and negative social emotional development impacts due to secrecy (Burnette et al., 2019, Hopkins et al., 2023). Contrast between AN+AI individual rights and cultural expectations remains debatable amongst indigenous leaders (Garica, 2020; Lile & MacTavish, 2020; Sequist, 2019).

Ability for additional research regarding AN+AI rural child maltreatment and social emotional development can now occur. The need for mental health treatment, safety, and education is prevalent in rural AN+AI communities. Opportunities for resource improvement in rural areas have been considered (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). Scholarly insight into AN+AI social emotional development can be gained through lived experiences and observations. Lived experiences with the vulnerable AN+AI population is demanding in future research. Rural AN+AI child maltreatment and social emotional development can be mitigated. Interpretation of findings in Chapter 5 aids in expanding upon the need for additional support in rural AN+AI areas.

Interpretation of Findings

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was appropriate to address this ongoing social issue. Phenomenology allows participants to share their perspectives through lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). Data can be extracted through participant responses yielding codes and themes (Pham et al., 2022). Qualitative data were extracted from participant survey and interview responses. Data were organized according to participant identifiers and key words located in their responses. Codes and themes were developed from response similarities reported by study participants. Categories were culminated from the same responses aligning with codes and themes.

Alaska Native and American Indian participants confirmed that rural child maltreatment impacted their social emotional development. These participants also confirmed a significant lack of resources due to secrecy and access (Burnette et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022; Hopkins et al., 2023). Findings are applicable to key concepts identified. Key concepts anticipated were behavioral health problems in adulthood including PTSD, alcoholism, and lack of healthy attachments (Giano et al., 2021; Newins et al., 2019). Social disorganization theory was identified as the only conceptual foundation for this study. The concept that AN+AI participants would be more susceptible to child maltreatment and social emotional development problems because of location was confirmed. Participant responses were parallel with concepts from social disorganization theory (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021).

There is an ethical dilemma surrounding accessible AN+AI mental health care in rural areas (Newins et al., 2019; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). There are tribal laws

protecting AN+AI individuals and their lands (Garcia, 2020; Morgan & Calleja, 2020). Professionals and persons with known connections with AN+AI cultures can enter rural areas with no repercussions. Professionals must be cleared for entry with tribal leaders. These professionals can enter rural areas at approved time periods and offer community support (Garcia, 2020). The access of other cultures when compared to AN+AI individuals is significantly different. Other cultures that are not misrepresented or underrepresented (Burnette et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2021) have more resources readily available to address rural child maltreatment and social emotional development (Morgan & Calleja, 2020).

Research Question 1: How Do AN+AI Adult Survivors of Child Maltreatment Describe Their Abuse in Rural Areas?

Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are unfortunately exposed to ethical dilemmas regarding accessible resources for behavioral and mental health. These same resources could assist with ongoing social emotional development problems. Participant rural child maltreatment and social emotional development was presented with clear definitions, requiring verbal participant comprehension. All participants described intense childhood experiences with rural maltreatment. Alaska Native and American Indian participants experienced multiple forms of child maltreatment with no one experiencing only one type. Several participants used the word “adventurous” to describe maltreatment experiences. Two participants reported being perpetrators of maltreatment due to rural childhood experiences while the remaining eight participants did not.

Alaska has rural towns and villages which follow strict tribal rules (Edwards et

al., 2023). Those rules are enforced by elders in the towns and upheld by local law enforcement (Edwards et al., 2023). Child maltreatment and negative social emotional development goes unnoticed or ignored because of these expectations (Burnette et al., 2019). Alaska Native and American Indian individuals often have family in the larger cities of Alaska. When individuals leave their villages for family vacation or to get specialty medical care, psychiatric symptoms, child maltreatment, and lack of educational services are reported (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). OCS then opens cases against family members to protect the child resulting in children being removed from their known homes. Perpetrators in rural areas are investigated and exposed, but because tribal lands are protected prosecution is rare (Brown et al., 2023).

Social emotional development is overlooked in rural communities from lack of educational resources. A broader look into rural AN+AI social emotional development was considered when completing this study. Study development consideration included AN+AI mental health (Lile & MacTavish, 2020), storytelling as a means of communication (Burnette et al., 2019; Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022), and completion of therapy. Alaska Native and American Indian rural upbringing exacerbates child maltreatment, mental health issues, and social emotional development impacts. Alaska Native and American Indian survivors of child maltreatment may suffer from many psychological and physiological problems. These problems can be mitigated with proper support in place. Minimal support from outside sources was mentioned by all.

Concepts of rural AN+AI social emotional development being impacted by child

maltreatment presents ethical and legal dilemmas. Interview and survey responses elicited AN+AI discussions on mental health wellbeing in rural areas. These same responses elicited further communication about children's physical health. The inability for mental health professionals to provide adequate support to rural AN+AI families was evident (Bennett et al., 2019; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023). Lack of resources and support causes ethical dilemmas for mental health professionals. Legal problems occur when child maltreatment goes unreported. Investigations do not occur because of tribal laws and cultural norms (Bennett et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2023).

Lack of knowledge and cultural norms partially explains ongoing rural child maltreatment. Rural AN+AI child maltreatment negatively impacts social emotional development. This negative parity has been impacting misrepresented cultures for generations (Burnette et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Barriers for mitigating negative social emotional development in AN+AI cultures may hinge upon limited accessibility (Bennett et al., 2019). Participants verbalized full comprehension of negative practices associated with rural living conditions. Complexity of AN+AI tribal land laws illuminates the need for emergency supports. Protection of AN+AI children's physical and emotional well-being creates strong arguments for rural assistance (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023).

A comparison between other cultures and AN+AI cultures could prompt discussions focusing on rural social emotional development and child maltreatment. Knowledge from past residents and current mental health professionals may encourage new communications regarding AN+AI cultures. Poor accessibility preventing

appropriate education and mental health support should be considered in Alaska. These rural lands have maintained the same organizational structure, yielding intergenerational child maltreatment (Hopkins et al., 2023; Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). A parity argument can be found amongst responses provided by participants regarding historical trauma impacting social emotional development. Secrecy and silence expectations contradict ethical as well as legal demands (Burnette et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2022; Riley et al., 2023). Alaska Native and American Indian community elders may struggle with allowing outsiders into their lands as this disrupts cultural norms (Bennett et al., 2019; Rides At The Door & Shaw 2023).

Alaska Native and American Indian cultures have historically been ignored, misrepresented, and underrepresented across many facets (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Rural Alaska lands specifically lack proper resources to ensure ongoing safety and education of residents (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). ACEs are higher amongst this population when compared to other cultures (Austin et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2021). Tribal laws may be masking conditions that would have otherwise been discovered by law enforcement in larger areas. Increase mental health problems may reflect the ongoing challenges within AN+AI rural lands (Austin et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020). Research indicates that AN+AI cultures are subjected to harsher living conditions (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Additional research discovered social emotional development challenges among this population. Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are ranked the highest in terms of maltreatment occurrences. They are also the most underrepresented population (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Research

indicates that this special population is also challenging to access because of cultural norms and location (Bennett et al., 2019; Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). The lack of insight into cultural norms and barriers may reflect a substantial increase in AN+AI child maltreatment (Austin et al., 2019; Burnette et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020). Research indicates that AN+AI cultures are exceptionally private. The same research discovered privacy and accessibility contributed to neglect of this special population (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). Inaccessibility of rural lands from privacy, cultural norms, and tribal leadership resulting in poor social emotional development due to child maltreatment should be addressed in future studies.

Social disorganization theory has been substantiated during data consolidation (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). All participants mentioned embarrassment and alcoholism being congruent with rural child maltreatment. Negative impacts to social emotional development were also congruent with these two themes mentioned above. The violation of this special population's moral and legal rights over generations is directly attributed to social disorganization theory. The negative impact AN+AI rural child maltreatment has on social emotional development is confirmed within interview statements. Negative social emotional development can be attributed to the phenomenon of child maltreatment. Lack of accessible resources impedes adequate support, mental health treatment, and security deserved by AN+AI cultures (Bennett et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2021).

Alaska Native and American Indian cultural norms have been considered. Expectations within rural communities by tribal elders and leaders have also been explored. These norms and expectations have yielded ongoing generational trauma within

rural AN+AI communities. Trauma including witnessing domestic violence, experiencing child maltreatment, alcoholism, embarrassment, mental health problems, and special education classes are some barriers identified by research participants. These barriers were identified themes that emerged from interview responses. Participant P7 was the only outlier who did not indicate that all experiences had negative impacts on social emotional development. Participants P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, and P10 collectively expressed rural child maltreatment causing negative impacts to social emotional development. Themes that emerged from surveys and interview responses align with previous research on impacts of child maltreatment across cultures (Newins et al., 2019; Lile & MacTavish, 2020, Lacey et al., 2021).

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. Reliability of information obtained came into question because participants had various ideas of child maltreatment. Effective participant education using one definition to ensure full comprehension was completed (Lacey et al., 2021). Research introducing AN+AI phenomenological experiences with child maltreatment and social emotional development is nonexistent Clear participant education on child maltreatment and social emotional development was imperative to conducting research. There was evidence in speaking with research participants that some aspects of child maltreatment were missing. The foundational concepts needed to provide a clear concise definition were explained to participants before interviews began.

Positive rapport was established between the researcher and participants. Rapport

was necessary to ensure comfortability with participants responding honestly to interview questions. This rapport was also important to ensure comprehension of research questions and definitions relating to the study. The short nature caused some concern with fully establishing positive rapport. Participants confirmed comfortability prior to and during interviews. The respondents elaborated on child maltreatment experiences and impacts on social emotional development. Negative social emotional development impacts were linked to AN+AI rural child maltreatment as described by most participants.

Interviewer bias was eliminated by ensuring standardized and limited participant interactions (Zvereva & Kozlov, 2021). The only direct contact with participants was during interview and debrief sessions. This limited interviewer bias. Bias may occur at any time during research due to systematic shifts with solicitation and interpretation (Zvereva & Kozlov, 2021). Absence of physical presence in St. George aided with minimizing bias. Participant discussions regarding the researcher's upbringing and background were not permitted. Interviews were transcribed verbatim interpreting data as it was recorded. Transcriptions were discussed with participants eliminating researcher judgement and confirming interview responses.

The final limitation of this study noted was failure to focus on a specific age group. Study participants ranged from ages 18 to 70 and were not limited to one sex. Previous research indicates age range and sex could impact memory recall (Handajani et al., 2023). Study participants did not appear to have problems remembering child maltreatment occurrences. These same participants were able to give detailed encounters of child maltreatment. Gender differences did not impact memory recall for this study.

The phenomenon of rural AN+AI child maltreatment was able to be fully described using storytelling during interviews. Alaska Native and American Indian participants ages 18 and older demonstrated the ability to effectively communicate impacts of rural child maltreatment on social emotional development without concern.

Respondent P7 specifically explained that their rural child maltreatment experiences did not negatively or positively impact social emotional development. This participant fell within the 25–34-year age range. Respondent P7 spoke about ambivalence toward their abusers. Their societal views presented as understanding instead of anger due to historical trauma and cultural expectations. The lack of emotion regarding negative impacts to social emotional development was drastic in comparison with other participants. Other participants within the same age range had opposing views of how child maltreatment impacted their social emotional development. Lack of emotion from respondent P7 within the 25–34-year age range was an outlier when compared to other participants who experienced similar child maltreatment types.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further qualitative research include AN+AI rural resources and accessibility for mental health professionals. Expansive survey implementation and interview questions could have generated greater responses regarding lived experiences. There is a clear struggle between cultural expectations, cultural norms, and moral values within AN+AI cultures (Burnette et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020; Giano et al., 2021). The observed struggle between these three paradigms is worth further exploration. Generational and historical trauma can be mitigated. Mitigation of AN+AI rural child

maltreatment may prevent upcoming generations from experiencing trauma. These new generations could produce a new AN+AI cultural norm within rural areas. Comparisons between older generations and new AN+AI individuals may be worthy of further exploration or research.

Alaska Native and American Indian assistance within rural areas has been overshadowed by societal complacency. Failure to consider attainable assistance for this underrepresented culture has resulted in prolonged suffering (Burnette et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2023). Cultural norms and expectations have resulted in negative life changing experiences for AN+AI individuals. Qualitative research into rural AN+AI lived experiences may increase awareness regarding negative practices within communities (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). Extensively looking at day to day interactions within AN+AI rural areas could identify appropriate provider necessities. Current complacency could be reversed through impactful discussions comparing resources available to other known cultures. Social interest studies between AN+AI individuals and other known cultures across the United States could be beneficial.

The academic community would benefit from expanding their knowledge of rural AN+AI communities. This community needs to expand their knowledge of child maltreatment impacts on social emotional development across cultures. Alaska Native and American Indian lived experiences through storytelling are not well documented. Reported experiences from AN+AI cultures are rare. The lack of resources in rural AN+AI communities is well known to professionals. Poor AN+AI treatment and living conditions have been exposed over many generations. The state of Alaska and mental

health professionals are challenged with helping AN+AI cultural groups due to tribal laws (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019; Rides At The Door & Shaw, 2023).

ACEs continue to negatively impact this underrepresented culture. ACEs are an ongoing measure of adverse childhood experiences used across cultures (Austin et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2021). These experiences negatively impact children all over the world (Austin et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2023). The state of Alaska houses the most vulnerable population in the world (Giano et al., 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2022). Alaska Native and American Indian cultures are also the population that suffers from abuse and neglect above all others (Burnette et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2020; Lacey et al., 2021). AN+AI participants clearly articulated how child maltreatment negatively impacted their social emotional development. Respondents deferred maltreatment and social emotional development blame to their caregivers.

The subject of historical trauma within caregivers was not adequately explored. Generational trauma has negatively impacted AN+AI cultures for many years (Lacey et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2023) Qualitative investigations into the potential parallel between caregiver historical trauma and current AN+AI maltreatment may be warranted. This stems from responses provided by participants during interviews. Participants recollected alcoholism, witnessing domestic violence, behavioral problems, mental issues, and poor romantic relationships. Initially participants reported this being considered normal. Participants explained that their view of normal was not equivalent to other cultures in larger cities in the United States.

Nine participants reported child maltreatment fully having a negative impact to

their social emotional development. This was based on experiences within their home environments. All participants reported behavioral, mental, and educational challenges from rural child maltreatment. One participant did not agree that their social emotional development was utterly impacted negatively. This participant described their negative experiences as motivating factors for moving to a larger city. Despite moving to a larger city at an early age, this participant still experienced various challenges. Challenges included struggles with partner selection and romantic relationships.

The apathy reported toward AN+AI social emotional developmental care could translate into stagnant mitigation of child maltreatment. Stagnation may have caused ongoing intergenerational child maltreatment within AN+AI cultures. Complacency with this social phenomenon has caused significant distress within rural AN+AI communities. These communities have not been afforded the proper resources to mitigate child maltreatment and its negative impacts to social emotional development. Ongoing challenges with accessibility have not been fully explored. Alaska Native and American Indian cultures continue to be one of the most underrepresented groups across the United States (Burnette et al., 2019, Hopkins et al., 2023). Social emotional development will continue to be negatively impacted if suitable backing is not supplied.

Implications

Long term effects of rural AN+AI child maltreatment impacts on social emotional development is significant. The cultural expectations and inaccessibility have been attributed to ongoing problems within AN+AI rural communities (Lile & MacTavish, 2020). Ongoing rural AI+AI child maltreatment has exacerbated poor social emotional

development. This social phenomenon has also destructively influenced mental and behavioral health conditions within their communities. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals experience maltreatment from family members. Community leaders condone enduring maltreatment in childhood. These cultures experiencing detrimental effects of child maltreatment on social emotional development could struggle to recover.

Mental health implementation for rural AN+AI individuals is a cultural shift. Historically maltreatment was not reported resulting in generational trauma that has occurred for decades (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019; Riley et al., 2023). Conversations amongst OCS, mental health providers, caregivers, and law enforcement have started as part of this shift. The ability to provide adequate mental health services to AN+AI children is a hopeful act. Other cultures across the United States in larger cities have adopted programs that support child welfare (Morgan & Calleja, 2020). These cultures have moral and legal obligations to ensure that children's social emotional development is not negatively impacted by any form of maltreatment. The lack of accessibility and resources in rural communities is a natural barrier for AN+AI children (Morgan & Calleja, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

Theoretical Implications

The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Social Disorganization Theory (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). The use of *social disorganization theory* helped confirm low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility including rural areas, and family disruption (Sampson & Groves, 1989). These are all problems that AN+AI cultures have endured for

generations (Burnette et al., 2019; Lacey et al., 2021). This theory further supported the need for immediate assistance in rural areas. Family disruption was a primary concept identified by AN+AI participants. Demographic survey results and interview AN+AI interview responses are directly applicable to *social disorganization theory*. Participants equated concepts from social disorganization theory to their maltreatment and social emotional development experiences.

Conceptual and theoretical implications were discovered while analyzing data. There are ethical dilemmas regarding accessibility of AN+AI rural areas. This predicament aligns with the concept of residential mobility in rural areas (Sampson & Groves, 1989). The dilemma of residential mobility causes problems with providing mental health services to AN+AI cultures (Lacey et al., 2021). Mental health professionals must receive permission (Garcia, 2020; Stewart & Gonzalez, 2023) and have a location to provide therapy for AN+AI individuals. Without support from AN+AI leadership, local law enforcement, and OCS mental health services are not provided. These stakeholders must also agree to provide transportation which often is by aircraft because of rural locations.

Another confirmed implication was family disruption. Alaska Native and American Indian family disruption was described in grave detail during participant interviews. Family disruption includes maltreatment, witnessing domestic violence, divorce, and housing (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Social disorganization theory directly aligns with family disruption occurrences in rural AN+AI areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). There is an assumption that all participant respondents

experienced various forms of family disruption in childhood. These disruptions impacted social emotional development. The confirmation of negative experiences from participants could be transferrable.

The concept of ethnic heterogeneity was explored during this study. Data gathering techniques allowed the researcher to review tribal conglomerations. The question regarding rural upbringing was asked of participants. Rural AN+AI upbringing and its challenges are systematically disregarded. There is evidence that state agencies and law enforcement disregard AN+AI's requests for assistance. All individuals have the right to feel safe within their communities. These same rights include protecting children from maltreatment perpetrators. There are legal and ethical codes that must be considered with respect to vulnerable populations.

The basis of *social disorganization theory* revolves around criminality in rural areas (Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). Study participants were not educated on *social disorganization theory*, prefacing questions regarding social emotional development or child maltreatment. Parallels between participant responses and social emotional development were drawn during data probing. Social Disorganization Theory and participant response resemblances were astounding. Introducing social disorganization theory within AN+AI cultures following participant interviews could inspire monumental discussions. Discussion topics could include assistance in rural areas, support for AN+AI cultures, child maltreatment mitigation, and positive social emotional development. Alaska Native and American Indian cultural shifts applying social disorganization theory may be critical to future research.

Potential Positive Social Change

Positive social change can arise in countless ways. There is a chance that *social disorganization theory* could become visible within rural AN+AI communities in the future. A deeper understanding of *social disorganization theory* could yield open discussions regarding rural AN+AI social emotional development impacts. Open forums regarding rural AN+AI child maltreatment impacts on social emotional development is essential. This may eliminate cultural expectations, barriers, and issues with accessibility for appropriate rural AN+AI treatment. Researchers may initiate further investigations into AN+AI rural maltreatment and social emotional development. Understanding the needs of this vulnerable population with regards to social disorganization theory should be strongly considered.

Alaska Native and American Indian community elders may still embrace cultural expectations and norms. There is research explaining AN+AI cultural norms and expectations within rural communities (Newins et al., 2019). Failure to permit continued norms condoning child maltreatment could reduce abuse and neglect within rural AN+AI communities. Continued rural AN+AI child maltreatment is inhumane. Failure to address poor social emotional development and the conditions in which it is established is unfair to this vulnerable population. Alaska Native and American Indian cultures directly influence the future of indigenous people across the United States. A reassuring care alternative to address social emotional development amongst rural AN+AI individuals may destroy this ongoing child maltreatment phenomenon.

Recommendations for Practice

There is a substantial amount of work needing to be completed before rural AN+AI child maltreatment mitigation can occur. Additional labor must be completed to ensure social emotional development concerns are fully addressed. Constant accessibility to rural AN+AI lands will be contingent on numerous factors. Implementation of privacy and security measures for AN+AI individuals must be completed. Alaska Native and American Indian individuals requesting confidential assistance must be regarded by all stakeholders. Mental health professionals must be educated on current mental health trends and proven treatment modalities. Professionals must also be well educated on the social phenomenon at hand.

Highly educated professionals must have significant experience with AN+AI populations. It is imperative that professionals are familiar with patient demographics and tribal laws. Understanding these various dynamics will influence social change implications. Stakeholders may require persuasion to consider infiltrating tribal lands on which AN+AI cultures have resided for generations. Laws across the United States that are fulfilled for other cultures must be considered as a compassionate resolution mitigating poor social emotional development and child maltreatment. Equivalent resources and groundbreaking techniques should be afforded to rural AN+AI cultures. Research across remaining cultures is mandated to ensure data transferability.

Constrained intelligence regarding the dark side of rural AN+AI child maltreatment was also discovered. Stakeholders and mental health professionals must explore education being provided to AN+AI children in school settings. Behavioral

health problems are displayed daily in school settings. Participants reported that these behaviors are not properly addressed for resolution. Interview responses place participants in special education classes or isolated settings. Open forums between tribal leaders, mental health professionals, teachers, and OCS need to occur, increasing practical awareness. Stakeholders may require additional assessment tools and training to fully understand described issues.

Conclusion

There are many benefits that can be drawn from this qualitative study. Phenomenological information that has been gathered from AN+AI participants is academically beneficial. Alaska Native and American Indian participants were also able to use storytelling as a means of expression. Storytelling has been used within this culture for decades (Sequist, 2021; Waddell-Henowitch et al., 2022). Alaska Native and American Indian consequential fears have prevented individuals from describing child maltreatment experiences in the past. The desire to prevent further child maltreatment and social emotional development impacts are of grave importance for participants. Inability to access AN+AI rural lands and its inhabitants' have prevented progress with addressing this social phenomenon.

The anonymous data collection has been a provocative experience. There are strong possibilities that interview, and survey results will be sought for examination by researchers. Further examination could unlock new ways of forming meaningful relationships across AN+AI cultures. These relationships can promote increased mental health resources for AN+AI rural areas. Current lack of agreement between AN+AI tribal

leaders, mental health professionals, OCS has led to continuous neglect of children in rural areas (Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). ACEs continue to be the highest when compared to other United States cultures (Austin et al., 2019; Giano et al., 2021; Newins et al., 2019). Introduction of innovative training techniques and modalities will improve rural AN+AI social emotional development.

The correlation between rural AN+AI child maltreatment and social emotional development should be studied further. Resolution using *social disorganization theory* as a theoretic framework should decrease criminality (Gilbert & Wright, 2023; Macguire-Jack et al., 2021). The development of treatment using this framework will improve mental health treatment, family disruption, and ethnic heterogeneity (Gilbert & Wright, 2023; Sampson & Groves, 1989). The development of proper assessment and educational tools is imperative. These assessment tools may improve provider's ability to make authoritative, productive, and meaningful decisions on behalf of vulnerable populations. Correct decisions made by stakeholders will positively impact rural AN+AI social emotional development. Rural child maltreatment can also be mitigated when applicable precautions are in place.

American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for mental health practitioners differ greatly from law enforcement and tribal leaders. All adults serving vulnerable populations should have identical standards to prevent further abuse and neglect across cultures. Mental health professionals are ethically bound to report suspected child maltreatment. Tribal leaders have no such ethical obligation. Law enforcement is only required to take the report and investigate. Division of clinical and

legal obligations need to align for the safety of vulnerable populations such as AN+AI. Establishment of professional obligations within rural AN+AI areas would enable opportunities for cultural improvement.

Alaska Native and American Indian perspectives on rural child maltreatment and social emotional development are provided from this research. These findings contribute to the existing knowledge of researchers, scholars, and practitioners. These results could significantly impact cultural improvement and social emotional development. Cultural expectation changes could positively affect mental health accessibility in AN+AI rural lands across the United States. These impacts may provide training and education opportunities for mental health professionals. Alaska Native and American Indian cultural shifts could yield greater understanding within rural areas. This would be part of the positive social change for rural AN+AI cultures, eliminating generations of trauma. Well-educated and mentally healthy generations could emerge from understanding the importance of child maltreatment impacts on social emotional development.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your childhood as an Alaska Native/American Indian individual?

2. Please describe your experiences residing in rural areas.

3. In your own words, what is child maltreatment?

4. Are you familiar with social emotional development?

5. Please describe how being a survivor of rural child maltreatment has impacted your social emotional development.