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# Native American Women Parenting Off Reservations: A Phenomenological Study

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Xan Creighton

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

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A Phenomenological Study

by

Xan B. Creighton

MA, Walden University, 2009

BS, Colorado Christian University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

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## Abstract

For each parent, raising a child is a daunting task and it is even a harder undertaking for parents belonging to minority communities due to discrimination, and limited occupational and educational opportunities. Prior studies have shown high dropout rates from high school among Native American (NA) women, resulting in a lack of basic knowledge about raising children. The purpose of this research study was to synthesize, analyze, and better understand the lived experiences of NA mothers who are raising their children outside the reservation. This qualitative study relied on 4 theories: historical trauma theory, systems theory, acculturation theory, and strengths perspective theory. The researcher interviewed 9 NA mothers from the federally recognized Crow Tribe of Montana who grew up on Indian reservations. The interviews were analyzed to develop emerging themes in NVivo 11 software, using the four-step method of inductive analysis described by Moustakas (2004). Using a phenomenological approach, the results revealed a subtheme that entailed personal, structural, and societal struggles of NA women living today. Exposure to their culture, feelings of being sheltered, and family relationships are critical for NA women. In a different environment, NA women experience acculturation stress; they feel disconnected and are challenged to maintain their relationships with relatives in the reservation. It is important to understand their challenges and lived experiences and to identify the root causes of these problems for positive social change. The results of the study demonstrated the need to further improve current policies, systems, and interventions focused on the cultural and environmental contexts of NA families living in more contemporary times.

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## Dedication

To all the women whom have raised me, both off and on the reservation. Nola for teaching me to stand up straight (literally and figuratively), Barbara for seeing what was special in me, Leslie who gave me the love of music (and for giving birth to me), Joy who always believed me and believed in me, Annette who was always there for me even when I did not know how much I needed her, Amber who taught me “ don’t sweat the small stuff”, Lona who taught me “you cannot please all of the people all of the time”, Florence who taught me the teacher still has much to learn, Tiffany for being my Soul Sister, Tanya for teaching me that life is worth fighting for, and Brenda for teaching me “it is what it is” and for so, so much more than I could ever put in writing.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Problem Statement .....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions.....	8
Theoretical Framework for the Study.....	8
Historical Trauma Theory.....	9
Systems Theory.....	9
Acculturation Theory .....	10
Strengths Perspective Theory .....	11
Nature of the Study.....	12
Definitions of Terms .....	13
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations.....	15
Assumptions.....	15
Scope and Delimitations .....	15
Limitations .....	15
Significance.....	16
Summary and Transition.....	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	20
Historical Background .....	21



Historical Trauma .....	21
Systems Theory.....	23
Acculturation Theory .....	24
Strengths Perspective .....	26
Native American Families .....	27
Native American Children .....	28
Native American Women .....	32
Native American Culture in Child Rearing .....	35
The Reservation .....	38
Native American Parenting.....	40
Parenting Interventions .....	43
The Crow Indians of Montana .....	47
Summary.....	48
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Qualitative Research .....	51
Role of the Researcher .....	53
Data Collection Methods .....	54
Research Design and Rationale .....	55
Participants of the Study .....	55
Setting .....	57
Procedure .....	57

Data Collection Instruments .....	58
Validity of the Data.....	58
Analysis of the Data.....	60
Ethical Considerations .....	61
Limitations of the Research .....	62
Use of Research Data Results .....	63
Summary.....	63
Chapter 4: Results.....	59
Introduction.....	59
Settings.....	60
Demographics .....	60
Textural Descriptions.....	61
Participant 1 .....	62
Participant 2 .....	63
Participant 3 .....	64
Participant 4 .....	65
Participant 5 .....	65
Participant 6 .....	66
Participant 7 .....	67
Participant 8 .....	68
Participant 9 .....	68
Data Collection .....	69

Data Analysis .....	69
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	70
Credibility .....	70
Transferability.....	71
Dependability .....	24
Confirmability.....	26
Results .....	38
Research Question 1 .....	72
Varying Degrees of Cultural Exposure.....	43
Family Relationships .....	79
Research Question 2 .....	85
Social Conditions .....	86
Personal Trauma .....	88
Oppurtunities Elsewhere.....	89
Reasearch Question 3.....	90
Reasearch Question 4.....	93
Summary.....	95
Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations .....	98
Introduction.....	98
Experiences of Native American Women on Reservations.....	100
Life on the Reservation as a Native American Woman.....	100
Opportunities Elsewhere.....	89

Life on the Reservation as a Trauma Experience .....	103
Challenges in Living off the Reservation .....	106
Limitations of the Study.....	108
Recommendations.....	110
Implications.....	110
Conclusion .....	111
Appendix A: Themes, Codes Contributing to Themes, and Representative Quotations	113
Appendix B Consent Form .....	114
References.....	117

## List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics .....	60
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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

For most parents, raising children is a difficult feat. To parents belonging to a cultural minority, parenting is more challenging because they must deal with issues such as discrimination and limited opportunities such as housing, employment and education (Jacobs, 2013). Limited opportunities for accessing quality education and skilled employment limit their ability to provide the best for their children. Families do not live in an isolated environment where they can create their own rules and abide by them. Because they belong to a larger society, families need to adapt to its norms and dominant culture (Ross, 2014). One external rule is that the family has to adjust to the prevailing culture they live and yet retain some valuable remnants of their original culture. Another rule is the family management of negative stereotypes like discrimination. These negative environmental forces affect their ability to achieve the socioeconomic success that would make them capable parents (Goodkind, 2012).

The minorities are just as important to the American society as other major communities. Their cultures are not inferior to the dominant cultures; retaining their culture is a way of protecting diversity in this country. For these reasons, it is necessary to have a group of minority parents where they can care for their children without the fear of stereotyping or discrimination (Ross, 2014). According to Ross (2014), it is necessary for NA (NA) parents to reside on the reservations so that they can retain their identity and promote their self-esteem. Their children will grow up knowing that there is nothing wrong with their unique identity and cultural practices (Palacios & Kennedy, 2010).

For NA women not living on American Indian reservations, life is full of uncertainty. According to research by Jacobs (2013), only 22% of American Indians and Alaska Natives live on a reservation. The number has been declining, but the change is gradual, and society still treats minorities stereotypically, and they may not be offered opportunities to explore their potentials. NA women have to contend with gender inequality in society because women are still considered inferior to men (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). It is easier for men to obtain opportunities for success in life than it is for women. Women also must deal with the dominant culture in which they live. They must accept a minor role to men as their cultural practices demand (Brodie, 2012). There is bound to be more equality if this NA woman is raising children; she has the common issues of raising children and instilling in them the values needed to be responsible adults. She may be doing so without guidance if she does not have easy access to the wisdom of her tribal elders from the reservations (Palacios & Kennedy, 2010).

Considering the long history of struggles and social alienation of the NA people, the plight of a NA mother raising her children outside the reservation is worth exploring. She and the marginalized population of women in the same predicament are in dire need of support. This study aims to provide this support by studying their situation to identify needs through the expression of NA mothers lived experiences.

### **Background of the Study**

Most studies on NA women have yielded dreary findings. One example is the high dropout rates among these women. In one study the dropout rate was higher than that of other women in the United States (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). Examining the

causes of dropout was even more enlightening. NA high school girls who leave school before they graduate were troubled by poverty, alcoholism, drug use or teenage pregnancy. Their attitude towards education differs from that of non-Native peers. NA girls did not seem to value it as much as their peers did. Those who live off the reservations live with greater risks to their safety and well-being because they live separate from their families who have chosen to stay with the tribe.

Young girls who come from troubled households have emotional bruises. Being exposed at home to parental domestic violence, drug, and alcohol use, and unemployment may force these young girls to resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms to numb the pain. Examples include drug and alcohol use, being sexually active before they are ready, and being delinquent in their schooling (McMahon, Kenyon, and Carter, 2013). If these girls end up with an unwanted pregnancy and decide to raise the baby themselves, the vicious cycle of bad parenting continues as they do not have a good role model to emulate.

Gray, Shafer, Limb, and Busby (2013) analyzed the differences between children reared by NA Indian and Caucasian families, concluding that NA Indian children would benefit from the traditional values and practices inherited from their ancestors. These include strong respect for elders, the sanctity of marriage, and the importance of community. NA mothers, especially those who are single parents, need equipping with the parenting skills necessary to keep their native values instilled in their children. Researchers such as Giles-Sims and Lockhart have acknowledged that ‘culturally shaped parenting strategies’ exist and NA mothers would be aware of these (Brodie, 2012).



It is critical to focus a set of challenges that face NA women. There is evidence to support examining how these women raise their children off the reservations is worth the effort (Frank, 2013). During my research of the related literature, I found that there was a dearth of studies investigating first-hand experiences of NA women living outside the reservations, as well as their parenting concerns. This research intends to fill that gap. Studies such as that of Frank (2013) and Brodie (2012) have focused on this topic, but there are issues that they do not cover adequately. This study enabled the targeted NA women to share the experiences that they have gone through living both on and off the reservation as well as their issues and concerns in parenting (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). The sub-groups involved in this study are NA mothers with enrollment in the federally recognized Tribe of the Crow Tribe of Montana, and their children. One can argue that these mothers and their children are currently being marginalized by the state (Frank, 2013). In their study, Brodie (2012) recommends that more research should be done to determine factors that are driving NAs out of the reservations.

### **Problem Statement**

Compared to other ethnic minority groups, NAs have the highest birth rate and are thrice more likely to live in poverty compared to their white counterparts. Life on the NA reservation carries a description as hard and impoverished. Frank (2013) says that NAs experience multiple times the national rate for infant deaths, alcoholism, and malnutrition. The life expectancy of NA residing on a reservation is decades less than that of the national average. NA women are part of a marginalized population who endured a painful history of relocation from their homeland. This relocation affects both

the people's collective and personal identity formation and relationship patterns in successive generations (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). Thus, traditional culture and values have not been kept intact, resulting in the people most at a loss of how to effectively manage themselves, their relationships with their families and others.

In leaving the reservations, people become uprooted from their native culture and need to adapt to a new one. Sometimes, they get confused about their cultural identity and be caught in between two cultures. NA women may undergo such acculturation phase. Their cultural confusion will be passed on to their children, especially if they continue to live outside the reservations. Most NA women struggle in their lives off the reservation. They find it difficult to find jobs because of discrimination in the workplace. If they do succeed in gaining employment, they are usually paid very little because they do not possess the skills and education for higher paying jobs (Miller, 2014). Their pay is miserable in comparison to their efforts. Life off the reservation is very hard for them. This difficulty will multiply once they become mothers, as the issue of raising their offspring becomes an extra burden especially if they are doing it singlehandedly. Brodie (2012) reports that younger NA mothers are not equipped to handle the mature demands of motherhood. Especially if they have exposure to inappropriate parenting skills from their parents, it is likely that they repeat the cycle of poor parenting with their children.

My study shall explore the insights of NA mothers who have chosen to live outside the reservations. Their way of living, their parenting methods, their challenges and achievements shall be investigated through personal interviews. My study has

increased the current body of research for NA mothers and their children residing off of the reservation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of NA women living off the reservation regarding their current living conditions, their quality of life, and their parenting experiences in raising their children. Interviews with a selected group of NA women who are members of the federally recognized Tribe of the Crow Tribe of Montana, ask what it means for them to grow up on the reservation as well as their experiences there that led them to choose to raise their children off the reservations. My study looked at what challenges they are facing as women and as mothers now that they live apart from their tribal community. If their accounts are consistent with literature reports of not having enough opportunities to better themselves and that their children suffer from dilemmas about their cultural identity, then this study submits itself to government and non-government organizations to consider how to help them achieve a better quality of life and establish programs targeted to identify issues.

The justification of this research lies in the fact that the selected subject is understudied as they are possible sources of sufficient information about contemporary NA culture and the coping styles of women who are surviving their lives outside their comfort zones (Brodie, 2012). The research is also an ambitious attempt to consider the sociological lens of NA parenting in a more modern American culture. Taking a holistic perspective, the researcher considers the history of the NA people and the effects of the various events that transpired in the past on their current value system, lifestyle, and

shared perspectives. Analyzing the consequences of the population's historical trauma from being ousted from their native lands and its effects on their family system shall be helpful in further following women who decide to live independent from the tribe outside the reservations. Their adjustment to another culture, perhaps vastly different from their own, will have new challenges that may either frustrate them or push them to be stronger survivors. Transitioning to motherhood is again another developmental chapter they confront in their lives. With all the events concurrently happening in their lives, the strength of character and personality of NA mothers are a reliable test. It is worth evaluating how they manage their lives, draw from their innate strengths to help them get through it and to stand proud as a NA woman and mother.

Beyond the awareness that the participants of this study can provide is the call for understanding they deserve for what their struggles. Society can be hasty in judging such women based on the common cases of inappropriate parenting, heightened drug and alcohol use, tolerance for domestic abuse and other dire truths suffered by some NA women. It is fair first to understand where they are coming from and instead of criticizing them, provide the necessary assistance to help them rise from their situations and assist them to live better and more productive lives. If not, it is their children who will carry the brunt of the vicious cycle left to them as their legacy.

There are several reasons why it is important to examine the topic. Gaining first-hand information from NA mothers with regards to their current life conditions, child rearing and the challenges they encounter in their everyday life is an essential step in identifying their needs. The findings of this study may be suggested to legislators,

politicians, and public administrators to understand the challenges faced by NA women living off reservations. This study is useful for policy development and decision-making for the welfare of the women and their children. Non-governmental organizations concerned with improving the living standards on NA reservations will also find this study relevant to their mission.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the investigation:

RQ1. What does it mean for a NA woman to grow up on the NA Indian reservation?

RQ2. What experiences have led NA women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservations?

RQ3. What challenges do women who grew up on the reservations face when they try to raise their children off the reservations?

RQ4. What are the reasons for NA women who grew up on the reservations chose to stay with their children off the reservation?

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

To understand NA women more clearly and their present situation, I used a theoretical framework composed of four theories: historical trauma theory, systems theory, acculturation theory, and strengths perspectives theory. These theories have widely been used to explain the structures of the societies and how people relate (Ross, 2014). The researcher has looked at the relevance of each theory to this study. Beginning

with historical trauma theory, I have shown how previous research can build a foundation for understanding the strengths and struggles of the NA mother.

### **Historical Trauma Theory**

NAs have been historically traumatized from their negative experiences being ousted and relocated from their homeland throughout history. Unlike personal injury, their people's historical trauma focuses on their collective trauma as families, and this trauma will pass and even amplified from one generation to the next (Campbell & Evans-Campbell, 2011). Historical trauma affects both the people's collective and personal identity formation and relationship patterns in successive generations (Brodie, 2012).

### **Systems Theory**

Another theory that can explain NA historical trauma is the Systems Theory. Systems Theory explores human experiences and behavior patterns. The theory states that people seek homeostasis. About this study, it theorizes that each member of the NA family system plays a role that contributes to the synchronized functioning of the system (Gray et al., 2013). Each member keeps his or her role so children who have formed the part in a relationship pattern will likewise build similar relationships with others who can work within the same family system (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). Hence, if the traumatic experience has altered family relationship roles, then it may also negatively influence succeeding relationship patterns. If a child grows up accustomed to their parents being often intoxicated resulting in leaving them in the care of their grandparents, they may follow the same modeled pattern when they grow up. Alcoholism is acceptable as a way of life, and grandparents have the parenting responsibilities. Studies of Campbell and

Evans-Campbell (2011), Frank (2013) and Yoshida and Busby (2011) found that an individual's view of their parents' marital quality and the impact of their family of origin can predict their marital stability and satisfaction in life.

### **Acculturation Theory**

When people are being uprooted from their native culture and transported into a new one, they undergo acculturation or adaptation to the new culture. Goodkind (2012) theorized that immigrants assimilate the language- and behaviors of the people in the host culture first followed by structural assimilation. Assimilation involves the social and economic integration into the new culture. Finally, some immigrants get to the last stage of assimilation, where they identify with the new culture and abandon their identification with their culture of origin. Gordon suggested that assimilation may affect more first-generation adult immigrants than their children who are born into the new culture. He also enumerated the components of language, behavior, and identity as indices of acculturation.

Over time, an acculturation gap grows between children and parents of immigrant families, with the parents holding on to their traditional culture and the children acculturating to the new culture (Frank, 2013). Children have less difficulty picking up the new language and learning the traditions and cultural behaviors of the people in the new culture. Consequently, their culture of origin, being less exposed to them, diminishes regarding the effect on their growth and development unless their parents consistently push it to them (Jacobs, 2013). To apply to NA families, the context of those who are relocating from their places of origin and how they adjust to their new homes outside the

reservation is the consideration. An example is a NA child's interaction with new adults in his new school may not reinforce the customs and traditions that his parents have shown him leading to a cultural discontinuity between the home and school.

In extreme cases, NA children are asked to choose between their native heritage and school success and such dilemma leads to disastrous effects (Frank, 2013). Problems like drug and alcohol abuse ensue due to unresolved internal conflicts coming from teachers pressuring students to give up their Native Culture, or at the least, not acknowledging it. Brodie (2012) suggests teaching methods and school curriculum appropriately adjusted to the NA youth to cut school dropout rates and to lessen cultural conflicts between their home and their school. Culturally appropriate curriculum helps the NA mothers keep some of the values, customs, and traditions they hold and pass these on to their children even if they are already living outside the reservation.

### **Strengths Perspective Theory**

To overcome the negative experiences in life and create positive developmental outcomes, people need to emphasize their competencies, resilience, resources and protective factors (Jacobs, 2013). The strengths perspective theory purports that to help people identifying securing and sustaining their internal and external resources to help them meet their goals and set up meaningful relationships with the community (Frank, 2013). These relationships are achieved by strengthening existing assets and facilitating the development of new resources to carry out pre-established goals (McMahon, Kenyon, & Carter, 2013). With regards to NA people who have suffered negative experiences, the Strengths Perspective Theory can become a tool to lift them up and help them to be still



productive.

### **Nature of the Study**

The qualitative approach is suitable in those cases when it is necessary to understand the opinions and attitudes of respondents and find specific concerns of people (Creswell, 2013). By approaching the participants this way, it helps the participants delve deeper into various issues that are currently unknown. This participation is why the qualitative interview is elect as the method of research. This researcher has conducted semi-structured interviews with about 10 NA women who were raised on NA reservations but have decided to leave and live outside the external boundaries of the reservation. As Goodkind (2012) says, it is always important to sample some respondents that can be used to make a generalization. The number used is adequate. The participants are raising their children either single-handedly, with a spouse/partner, or another family member.

My study's research design is unique to the research topic because it actively engaged the affected population to understand why they are embracing a new trend. Brodie (2012) says that comprehensive studies are yet to be conducted to explain why NAs now prefer to raise their children off reservations. Using an in-depth qualitative method of interview, it specifically focused on an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach which probes deep into an interviewee's thoughts and feelings to gain a clearer perspective of what she goes through in various situations (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). The study relied more on the information provided by the interviewees and the quality of that information, and not their number. Only a few

credible participants were selected. Although a smaller sample size has an association with a limitation of a survey because of the supposed lack of contribution of the limited number of participants, a study like this current one shall concentrate on the reduced participant number's richer and deeper information. The researcher has the luxury of spending more time with each interviewee and drawing out more personal and reflective responses to the questions that may be inhibited with a larger sample (Frank, 2013). This approach to focus on "an interest in the nature of human experience and the meaning that people attach to their experiences, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be," (Brodie, 2012, p. 78). In this case, NA mothers are expected to disclose their experiences fully as related to the interests of this study. The researcher ensured that participants give their views freely and without feeling intimidated or forced in any way to participate in this study because as Goodkind (2012) states, this is an ethical requirement when collecting data from human subjects.

Transcription of the interviews in verbatim and the transcripts shall be qualitatively analyzed using Bowen's method that identifies patterns in the data using thematic codes (Creswell, 2013). The patterns that may emerge are studied making consistent associations with the interview questions with the information from the literature review as a backdrop. I shall confirm if the theories of Historical Trauma, Systems Theory, Acculturation Theory, and Strengths Perspective apply to the lives of the participants.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions gave guide the investigation:

*Native Americans:* refers to the aboriginals of North and South America. Native American is a term most often used by scholars. They often refer to themselves as Indians or Natives (Frank, 2013).

*Federally Recognized Tribe:* refers to Alaska or Indian Native tribe or community which the Federal government acknowledges its existence as an Indian tribe (Jacobs, 2013).

*Native American Reservations:* refers to a legally designated land that is managed by the Federally Recognized Tribe under the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs (Brodie, 2012).

*Western Culture:* refers to the traditional norms, social norms, belief systems, ethical values, and political systems that are believed to have originated from or associated with Europe (Campbell & Evans-Campbell, 2011).

*Child rearing:* is the act of parenting or the bringing up children from a tender age to maturity (Goodkind, 2012).

*Mother:* refers to a woman who bears a child or children, or raising a child in place of the child's birth mother (Ross, 2014).

*Extended Family System:* is a larger family unit that includes other relatives past the nuclear family members such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins (Frank, 2013).

## **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

### **Assumptions**

The first assumption I made is that the parenting of NA women differs from their non-Native counterparts due to cultural influences. Secondly, the assumption is that the questions posed in the interviews will sufficiently garner appropriate information. I also will assume that the female participants will be forthcoming and honest to the best of their abilities during the interview process. I will preserve confidentiality and anonymity, and tell participants they can, at any time, withdraw from the study with no ramifications.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The chosen participant were only those NA women who are themselves raised on the reservation but elect to raise their children off the reservation. The study's use of only one specific tribe did further limit the scope. The study did not examine women who had moved off the reservation but had returned before the start of the study. The study also did not consider women who were hoping to leave the reservation but have not made the move before the beginning of the survey.

### **Limitations**

Findings of this research only applied to the small population group identified by the study and does not apply to other cultural groups. Any person reading the study should consider this limitation. The study did not consider age, socioeconomic status, or education level of the participants; thus, this information was not be gathered. Regarding the researcher's role, my limitation is only to unearth valuable information about the lived experiences of NA mothers who have decided to raise their children off the

reservations. There is no expectation to implement action plans to alleviate their circumstances, although the option exists to inform concerned parties to extend assistance in the rehabilitation of these women if need be without compromising the confidentiality of my research participants.

### **Significance**

The justification of this study lies in the fact that the selected subject is understudied as they are possible sources of rich information about contemporary NA culture and the coping styles of women who are surviving their lives outside their comfort zones. It is also an ambitious attempt to look into the sociological lens of NA parenting in a more modern American culture (Frank, 2013). This study may influence policy makers by enabling them understand challenges faced by NA women living off reservations. They may develop policies that can help overcome these difficulties to the benefit of this population.

Taking a holistic perspective, the researcher considers the history of the NA people and the effects of the various events that transpired in the past on their current value system, lifestyle and shared perspectives. Analyzing the consequences of the population's historical trauma from being ousted from their native lands and its effects on their family system shall be helpful in further following women who decide to live independent from the tribe outside the reservations. Their adjustment to another culture, perhaps vastly different from their own will have new challenges that may either frustrate them or push them to be stronger survivors. Transitioning to motherhood is again another chapter they confront in their lives. With all the events concurrently happening in their

lives, the strength of character and personality of NA mothers is consistently tested. It was worth evaluating how they manage their lives, draw from their innate strengths to help them get through it and to stand proud as a NA woman and mother (Ross, 2014). The scholar notes that most of these NA women are now forced to embrace the popular culture in the United States when raising their children to make them fit in the social system.

Beyond the awareness that the participants of this study did provide is the call for understanding they deserve for what are their struggles. Society can be hasty in judging such women based on the common cases of inappropriate parenting, heightened drug and alcohol use, tolerance for domestic abuse and other dire truths suffered by some NA women. It is fair first to have an understanding of where they are coming from and instead of criticizing them, provide the necessary assistance to help them rise from their sad situations and assist them to live better and more productive lives. If not, it is their children who will carry the brunt of the vicious cycle left to them as their legacy.

There are several reasons why it was important to examine the topic. Gaining first-hand information from NA mothers with regards to their current life conditions, child rearing and the challenges they encounter in their everyday life was an essential step in identifying their needs. The findings of this study can be suggested to legislators, politicians, and public administrators to understand the challenges faced by NA women living off reservations. This study is useful for policy development and decision-making for the welfare of the women and their children. Non-governmental organizations concerned with improving the living standards on NA reservations will also find this

study relevant to their mission. The social impact of the study is significant. The study can bring a positive change to the target population because it will make American society- precisely the policy makers- understand their challenges and how to address these challenges. The study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge of the relationship between NA mothers and their decisions to raise their children off the reservation. Furthermore, this study's findings may help launch essential and crucial changes in the programs available to NA women who are parenting off the reservation and thereby contributing to positive social change. Undoubtedly all mothers hope that their children will be successful in the world society that is developing. They will try to help their children achieve success. Since they are the socializers of young children their beliefs about their efficacy and the techniques of socialization they adopt are important determinants of the course of social change.

This study has contributed to the general knowledge of the relationship between NA mothers and their decisions to raise their children off the reservation.

### **Summary and Transition**

In summary, the research has highlighted the life and prospects for NA girls and women, and how these reasons have lead them to leave the cultural security of the reservation. A questionnaire has been developed based the literature review exploration of NA culture, the struggles of NA women and if these contribute to the mother's decision to leave the reservation. The findings of this study helped bridge the gap in the research concerning the parenting of NA women. Chapter 2 is a literature based review of

historical trauma, systems theory, acculturation theory, and the strengths perspective. The chapter also details peer-reviewed journals and scholarly articles on related topics.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Parenting styles vary all over the world. There are culturally divergent philosophies on child-rearing, and all of them are influenced by tradition as well as the current factors that prevail in the external environment. In this chapter I explore the background of NA women and factors that may be influential in their child-rearing practices. The chapter addressed the research on a conceptual framework based on the theories of historical trauma, systems theory, acculturation theory, and other relevant concepts. This review of literature provided give a chronicle of the lives of the NA families to explain how the contemporary NA woman has evolved with regards to raising her children.

This chapter also addresses some issues of NA women and the challenges they encounter as they raise their children outside the boundaries of the NA reservation and in the mainstream society. The literature review was conducted using several sources of information. The literature search strategy included EBSCO databases in the Walden Library and Google Scholar. Original search terms were *NA women and minority parenting*. Secondary search terms included; but are not limited to, *NAs, culture, parenting, minorities, education, Crow Reservation of Montana, NAs living both on and off a Reservation, phenomenological research*. Some advanced searches were done with combinations of some of the primary terms (e.g., *NA parenting* and history *Crow reservation*). The literature review revealed that there are few studies addressing the parenting styles of NA women residing off the Reservation.

## **Historical Background**

NA culture includes positive values and traditions such as strong respect for elders and community beliefs regarding the sacredness of the conjugal relationship. Such values have made NA society stable through their history (Wilcox & Kline, 2013). When such values are strengthened, the people remain resilient against threats to the dissolution of their dignity as an ethnic group such as high violence rates, suicide, and substance abuse (Alden, Lowdermilk, Cashion, & Perry, 2014). NA cultural bonds have been severed by the forced institutionalization of thousands of NA children into boarding schools and indoctrination into the Caucasian culture (Turansky & Miller, 2012). Consequently, the NA people lost their resilience, resulting in higher rates of substance abuse, violent victimization, and teenage pregnancies (Frank, 2013). There was, likewise, a high rate of suicide, depression, and anxiety among the Native America (Wilcox & Kline, 2013).

## **Historical Trauma**

NAs have been traumatized due to their negative experiences of being ousted from their homeland and relocated throughout history. Unlike personal trauma, their people's historical trauma is focused on their collective trauma as families, and this trauma has been passed on and amplified from one generation to the next (Turansky & Miller, 2012). Collective trauma affects both the people's collective and personal identity formation and relationship patterns in successive generations (Wilcox & Kline, 2013). For example, Frank (2013) claimed that child-rearing practices in NA families have not evolved much. There is still prevalent neglect of children and dysfunctional families that

may create a strong impact in the growth of children. These children may interpret their parents' noninterference in their developing adolescent problems as apathy, but parents may just be perpetuating the child-rearing strategies they have been exposed to when they were much younger. Experiencing the trauma of their people is a justification for some parents in the development of dysfunction in their families (Badinter & Hunter, 2011).

NA descendants are usually born into circumstances that are not favorable to their ideal growth and development (Druckerman, 2012). Historically, their fate has been seized by the government that required their removal from their families, with the goal of sending them off to better conditions. The 1900s marked the mass migration of NA children to boarding schools where they were to adopt mainstream American behaviors. These children were subjected to torturous punishments, isolation, abuse, and neglect (Stange, Oyster, & Sloan, 2011). Most of them were transferred to foster care and were adopted by Caucasian families, forcing them to lose their adaptive NA heritage and embrace a culture that was hostile to their race (Badinter & Hunter, 2011).

Turansky and Miller (2012) chronicled the saga of NA children from the time of forced removal from their families due to the belief that the home environments on the NA reservations were unfit for child-rearing. NA parents and elders were deemed as negligent, abusive, and unable to provide for the basic needs of their children because they were destitute themselves. NA mothers were declared to have poor mothering and domestic skills, and the fact that there were a significant number of young, unmarried NA mothers exacerbated the situation, validated the policy of having NA children reared in proper boarding schools or by their adoptive Caucasian families.

The relocation of NAs, as mandated by the government, had a great impact on their self-sustainability. The industrialization of the United States caused the concentration of wealth in cities, leaving the reservations in great poverty. Turansky and Miller (2012) concluded that the cumulative degenerative conditions of the NA families, their culture, economy, and social networks represent the generations of collective, traumatic experiences of their people, leaving residual effects on the present generations. These dire experiences suffered jointly by these people have created a historical trauma that has significantly affected the NAs for many generations (Druckerman, 2012).

### **Systems Theory**

Another theory that can be used to explain the NA historical trauma is the systems theory. According to systems theory, each member in the NA family system plays a role that contributes to the synchronized functioning of the system (Badinter & Hunter, 2011). Each member keeps his or her role, so children who have imbibed the part in a relationship pattern will likewise form similar relationships with others who can operate within the same family system (Druckerman, 2012). If traumatic experiences alter family relationship roles, then they may also negatively influence the succeeding relationship patterns. For example, if children grow up being accustomed to their parents being intoxicated most of the time, and they are being left in the care of their grandparents, then they may follow the same modeled pattern when they grow up. Alcoholism is being accepted as a way of life, and parenting responsibilities are being left to the grandparents. Studies of Yoshida and Busby (2011) found that children's view of their parents' marital

quality, their relationship quality with each parent, and impact of their family of origin can predict their marital stability and satisfaction in life.

Systems theory, which supports the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma, likewise suggests that an individual's perceived impact of his or her family of origin moderates the quality of his or her later relationship patterns (Seshadri & Rao, 2012). Weak parent-child relationships due to parental silence on their traumatic histories arrests bonding between parents and children and make them feel ashamed of their heritage. (Becker & Shell, 2011). It is near impossible for the parents to do anything different because that is example their parents showed to them. Grounded in Attachment theory, Attachment parenting states mothers who had a disrupted family of origin, spent more time out of sight of their children. Additionally, these mothers spent a reduced amount of time holding or talking to their babies (Becker & Shell, 2011).

The children's sense of identity, in turn, becomes negatively impacted, which consequently affects how they relate to others. Without intervention, the cycle will continue for generations.

### **Acculturation Theory**

When people are uprooted from their native culture and transported into a new one, they undergo acculturation or adaptation to the new culture. Sax (2015) theorized that immigrants first assimilate the language and behaviors of the people in the host culture, and this is followed by structural assimilation. Structural assimilation involves the social and economic integration into the new culture. Finally, some immigrants get to the last stage of assimilation that makes them identify with the new culture and abandon

their identification with their culture of origin. Gordon (2012) suggested that assimilation may negatively impact more first-generation adult immigrants than their children who are born into the new culture. He also enumerated the components of language, behavior, and identity as indices of acculturation. The cultural identity of individuals caught between two cultures is measured in some ways by acculturation and ethnic identity experts (Thomas, Goff, Trevathan, & Thomas, 2013). Two components of cultural identity are self-designation as a group member of one culture and positive feelings for such identity as a group member (Feinstein, 2012).

Over time, it is likely that an acculturation gap grows between children and parents of immigrant families, with the parents holding onto their traditional culture and the children acculturating to the new culture (Seshadri & Rao, 2012). Children have less difficulty picking up the new language and learning the traditions and cultural behaviors of the people in the new culture. Consequently, their culture of origin, being less exposed to them, diminishes in terms of the effect on their growth and development, unless their parents consistently push it on them (Bond, 2012). For acculturation theory to apply to NA families it must be taken in the context of those who were relocated from their places of origin or from the reservation they had come from and how they adjust to their new homes outside the reservation. An example is a NA child's interaction with adults in his or her new school who may not reinforce the customs and traditions that his parents have shown him or her.

The acculturation gap can lead to the cultural discontinuity when at home and in school. In extreme cases, NA children are asked to choose between their native heritage

and school success, and such dilemmas lead to disastrous effects (Feinstein, 2012). Problems like drug and alcohol abuse ensue, due to unresolved internal conflicts coming from teachers pressuring students to give up their native culture or at the least, not acknowledge it. In an attempt to reduce high dropout rates of NA youths, it is important that teaching methods and school curricula be adjusted to mitigate cultural conflicts between home and school (Sax, 2015). This helps even the NA mothers, who may still retain some of the values, customs, and traditions they were born into and planned to pass on to their children, even if they are already living outside the reservation, in order to preserve their cultural heritage.

### **Strengths Perspective**

Mileviciute, Trujillo, Gray, and Scott, (2013) found that the way people explain their state of life reflects their outlook and disposition. Mileviciute et al. concluded that the relationship between one's negative life experiences and manifested depressive symptoms depends strongly on one's explanatory style. Mileviciute et al. found more positive youths were resilient to depressive effects of their previous experiences. To overcome the negative experiences people have withstood in life, their competencies, resilience, resources, and protective factors that lead to positive developmental outcomes need stressing (Sax, 2015). The strengths perspective is a theory that purports to assist people identifying, securing, and sustaining their internal and external resources to help them achieve their goals and establish mutually enriching relationships with the community (Seshadri & Rao, 2012). Enriching relationships are achieved by strengthening the existing assets and facilitating the development of new resources to

accomplish preestablished goals (McMahon, Kenyon, & Carter, 2013). With regard to NA individuals who have suffered enough negative experiences in the past, the strengths perspective can become a tool to lift them up from their state and help them to be productive.

### **Native American Families**

Frank (2013) claimed that NA families are more likely to live in poverty and their children are more likely to drop out of school, have involvement in drug and alcohol abuse, have teenage pregnancies, and experience violence as compared to other cultural groups. Several of these children are supported by only one parent or are raised by their grandparents. Due to the prevalence of teenage pregnancies, the NA families are younger, with about 34% of the population being under 18, and the median age of NAs is 28.7 years old. The White population's average age is 10 years older (Druckerman, 2012). High relationship quality, measured by how stable and satisfying a couple's relationship is, has become a protective factor for psychological well-being not only of the couple but also their children (Seshadri & Rao, 2012). On the other hand, low relationship quality may lead to negative outcomes such as high rates of substance abuse, suicide, and violence both in the general population and among the NAs.

NA families value the significance of the extended family system, especially in supporting children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relations or clan members normally take part in the upbringing of the NA children in the reservation (Badinter & Hunter, 2011). Thus, children raised in the reservation grow accustomed to such care and guardianship wherever they go. However, once family units relocate



outside the reservation, they miss out on the extended family support systems of their home communities. When they encounter problems due to lack of education, training, and employment, they are forced to turn to social services agencies that may not provide the same personal care and assistance that they need.

Grandparents have been increasingly relied upon to be caregivers for their grandchildren while their adult children go away to work, or as custodial caregivers if the parents have lost their custody due to neglect or substance abuse (Bond, 2012). In NA culture, grandparents are regarded as conduits of tribal cultural values and present knowledge to the younger generation (Feinstein, 2012). Apache grandmothers, in particular, actively preserve their customs, beliefs, and traditions in their cultural history and pass it on to their grandchildren. They enjoy an elevated status as agents of cultural transmission and socialization (Bond, 2012). However, the influences of media have undermined Apache grandmothers' passing of the torch to the younger generations. Time spent educating the young ones on NA traditions has been replaced by watching television, listening to popular music, or being involved in social networks (Sax, 2015).

### **Native American Children**

Russell, Crockett, and Chao (2011) recounted that in most of the NA tribes and cultures studied child-rearing methods promote the culture's survival. Infants and toddlers are being exposed to several cultural activities in NA life. These cultural activities are carried on by older children and adults who model the same to younger children assumed to take over these roles in the future. The continuation of the cycle greatly depends on the effective transfer of traditional heritage from the older to the

younger generations, as well as the skills required to keep the tribe surviving despite the life's challenges.

The deterioration of NA cultures resulting from the cultural challenges brought on by Western influence has affected the child-rearing practices of parents. Dealing with the actual physical displacement from their homes on the reservations and the emerging Anglo-cultural values and clamor for material comforts, NA parents have been caught between traditional child-rearing practices believed to have developmental purposes for the children and the new lifestyle changes necessitating the satisfaction of daily needs that often conflict with the tradition (Edgerley, 2011). In some tribes, traditional tribal ways have been successfully retained, despite some severe economic changes, and child-rearing has remained relatively smooth. However, in most other tribes, changes brought about by relocation have drastically transformed the usually peaceful child-rearing ways. The few adolescents who remained on the reservation are being abandoned by parents who seek employments off the reservation. Parents come back as failures, turn to alcohol, and become indifferent to their previous roles as caregivers to their children. In such cases, adolescent development becomes adversely affected (Bond, 2012).

The rate of enrollment of NA children has significantly increased at present with around 92% attending school (O'Gorman and Oliver, 2012). However, it does not necessarily follow that all these children graduate from high school. Although graduation rates have also improved from the past, it still does not measure up to the numbers of graduates of other race to include; White Americans, African American, Hispanic American and Asians. Dropout rates remain high (about 3 out of every 10) for NAs,

whether in urban areas or some reservations. O’Gorman and Oliver (2012) encouraged teachers to get to know and interact with their students and customize their curriculum to meet all the students’ needs. Teachers need to understand where each of their students come from and make the effort to study their cultural attitudes and beliefs so they can incorporate these into their curriculum. That way, the children feel that they are being valued regardless of their cultural background and become proud of their cultural heritage instead of represses it (Golding & Hughes, 2012). When cultural understanding and positive school environment is being achieved, student resiliency and achievement follows (Turansky & Miller, 2012). This implies that opportunities to participate in activities and programs encouraging one’s own cultural practices, native language, and cultural arts, to name a few, should abound in schools (O’Gorman & Oliver, 2012).

According to Chua (2011), the inconsistencies of teachers and school authorities in addressing the cultural expectations in the curriculum are worrying. Children are placed in ambivalent positions when they are asked to choose between their NA heritage and schooling. They realize the great dilemma when they choose to propagate the practices of their heritage because this causes them to fall behind in school and eventually drop out. On the other hand, if they abandon their heritage and choose to adopt the culture of their new environment, they suffer from guilt and psychological problems because their people become offended. Being shunned by their families and tribesmen makes these people turn to drugs and alcohol abuse. Bailey (2012) also noted the same thing with NA children adopted by white families. Their prolonged separation from their people, even with brief intermittent visits, makes them feel different and alone in their

situation. They cannot claim to be either White or NA, which translates to not belonging to any specific culture completely. They are more likely to develop psychotic depression, serious mental illness, and suicidal tendencies than their counterparts who never left the reservation (Chua, 2011).

Tribal community members were open enough to discuss the challenges and problems encountered by the NA youths in their reservation community. One problem identified was depression, which brought about academic underachievement, substance abuse, and conduct/oppositional behavior. Another was hopelessness manifested by sadness, apathy, suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, and low initiative (Mileviciute et al., 2013). In another study, the NA youth in the Northern Plains reservation generally reflected a positive disposition about their personal lives and identified more strength despite the challenges they face in their communities (McMahon et al., 2013). The positive disposition was quite surprising, considering their lives of adverse circumstances. Findings of the study showed that these youths were embedded with a variety of adaptive developmental assets to cope with their dire situation and helped them develop resiliency (McMahon et al., 2013).

The concern of tribal leaders of NA communities with child development being a key to tribal survival has moved them to action. They advocate parents to be more active in their children's education. One tribe has started the tradition of giving recognition rewards for academic success as well as the provision of travel experiences to motivate the children to study better. In tribes where arts and crafts are specializations, programs to engage younger children in NA arts and craft are offered to nurture their artistic talents.

Providing such opportunities to small children somehow cushions them from the difficulties of adolescent growth and development (Turansky & Miller, 2012).

### **Native American Women**

Flake (2015) argue that traditionally, NA women's identity and role as caretakers and culture bearers were all based on the principles of spirituality, extended family, and tribe. Because of their association with food and its supply, the women gained power and status, and it increased with age and wisdom. Native women are revered for their views on sacred matters, herbal medicines, and tribal history. However, in contemporary times, such heightened reverence for women has immensely decreased. The NA woman has earned the reputation of being an inadequate mother (Brave Heart, 1999). The unmarried Indian mother was often convinced to give up her child for adoption. In a context of being given a choice, and the consideration of the possibility that the baby will have a better life with another family, the mother agrees. The child will be with parents who have the resources to provide for him or her (Huston & Howard, 2011). The Indian Adoption Project (IAP) was considered successful in recruiting unmarried Indian mothers to relinquish their unborn babies for adoption. The maternity homes provided increased social services, such as allowing them to live in maternity homes while awaiting the birth of the children, instead of staying on in the reservation (Turansky & Miller, 2012).

NA women are more likely to suffer violent crimes, as domestic violence and abuse are very rampant in their culture. In a study by O'Gorman and Oliver (2012), the NA women participants all reported to being exposed to several social problems while growing up in the reservation. It is because of such exposure that they become

desensitized to a variety of attitudes, situations, and issues that would be considered by non-Native girls in mainstream society to be insurmountable issues. Their early exposure to alcohol abuse, child abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse, legal disputes of parents and relatives, and teenage pregnancies made them immune and desensitized so that these are not considered deviant behaviors anymore. It is not different in schools. There, they enter a world of people whose values may be different from theirs. They encounter uncaring teachers, low expectations of their skills and knowledge, insensitivity, and abuse. The low expectations of their skills conflicts with high expectations of handling adult responsibilities inappropriate for them because they are far beyond their chronological years (Flake, 2015).

NA minority groups in the country have the highest birth rate compared to other ethnic groups. Most of them live in poverty at a much higher rate than their Caucasian counterparts. It is worse for women because they are being discriminated against in the workplaces. NA women get jobs, if at all, that pay very low because the majority of them do not possess the skills and education for higher paying jobs. To illustrate, for each 59 cents the average Caucasian women earn NA women earn 17 cents for the same job. Findings show that NA women had the lowest percentage of employment in the workforce with only 35% of them employed. Add to that, 25% of NA families have single mothers as heads of households (Chua, 2011).

A pilot programs spearheaded by mental health consultants have been developed to support the NA teen mothers. Pregnant adolescents remain in school during their pregnancies and earn credits when they take courses in child and personality development

associated with practicum experience in a specified preschool or day care center (Bailey, 2012). There, they learn to care for infants and young children hands-on and avoid the adverse effects of inadequate nurturance such as infants suffering from developmental problems. They also learn to relate to babies and children and gain experiences in caring for them. They learn how to stimulate them by holding, playing, entertaining, talking to them, and observing their behaviors in various settings. Even after these adolescents give birth, they continue with their education with their babies. Lessons available for them include dealing with motherhood, relationships, and relating to adults. Sometimes, their boyfriends, often their children's fathers, attend sessions with them to bond and learn more about parenting (Golding & Hughes, 2012).

In recognition of the pathetic state of NA women, President Bush in January 2006 mandated the Violence against Women Act with special provisions for such indigenous women. Under this act, NA women are protected from assault by prosecution of anyone who commits such violence against them in the federal court. Serial sex offenders in tribal nations shall be tracked and entered in Indian Country sex offender registries. The act aims to prevent domestic abuse against women and create victim support with new grant programs. The Act also calls for funding for a baseline study of domestic abuse to get to the core of the problem and address it, so domestic abuse shows significant, reduction if not eradication (Ritzer, 2011).

Being people of color, NAs are usually subject to racial discrimination. Their racial reputation precedes them, and they are being adjudged accordingly, and it follows they are treated based on such reputation (Banados, 2011). Some stereotypical labels

given to NAs are drunken Indians, the Squaw, and the Indian princess (Schiffer, 2014).

The drunken NA stereotype stems from the time when Native communities traded with colonists, but due to their inexperience with alcohol, they easily got inebriated to the point that they couldn't function normally. This stereotype portrayed NAs as naturally inferior, lacking self-respect, dignity, self-control, and morality (Schiffer, 2014). A drunken NA Indian woman, on the other hand, is seen as dirty and negligent of her family in favor of alcohol. Another stereotype of a NA woman is the squaw, which means she is primitive, ugly, and lacks grace. She is an unattractive and haggard, subservient and abused tribal female who is considered the tribe's prostitute or a harlot, perceived to be of very low moral character (Bond, 2012). She is the opposite of the NA Indian princess, another stereotype of NA women, drawn from the character of Pocahontas, made popular by the Disney movie of the same title. This stereotype is portraying her as the noble savage, who collaborates with White men to subdue her people (Lajimodiere, 2013). Although it seems that the stereotype for the Indian princess is positive, it is a euphemism to demean the successes of NA women. These stereotypes spring from a white colonist viewpoint rather than from the first-hand experiences of NA women.

### **Native American Culture in Child Rearing**

The comparison of value orientations of modern Anglo-American values and traditional NA values differ much on their relationship with nature, tradition and group practices, family relations, thinking, and communication inclinations. Huston and Howard (2011) recount how very personal as well as communal raising a NA child is within a tribal unit. When an Indigenous woman discovered she was carrying a child, she



would actively engage in song and conversation with the unborn child. This bonding ensured that the infant knew it was welcome and planted early seeds of respect and love. This new life was viewed as being eager to learn, a willing seeker of traits that would guide understanding of the self and others (Joe & Gachupin, 2012).

Each child is traditionally believed to have what it takes to grow into a worthwhile person. The whole tribe expects a child to manifest good behavior, and this becomes the child's motivation to be good and to feel connected to the tribe (Bailey, 2012). As suggested by the attachment and family systems theories, children's warm reception by their family and establishment of positive relationships are crucial to their development. Their identification with the tribe takes precedence over their individuality (Golding & Hughes, 2012). Raising the child with indigenous practices is a cooperative communal effort including the child's grandparents, great-aunts, and uncles, younger aunts and uncles, and even adopted relatives. Children have a very special place in the society, and they are considered gifts from the Creator. The parents and caregivers are tasked to nurture the children and implant in them seeds of honor and respect. Respect is reinforced by honoring them through ceremonies, giving them worthwhile and meaningful names, or recognizing them in special events such as in honorary dinners, dances, or giveaways (Gentry & Fugate, 2012). Giveaways entail giving children special items to honor them and their good deeds. Many times, a caregiver would remove personal items of clothing, jewelry, or other possessions to give to a child while commenting,

The way parents and relatives speak about the child, often within his hearing range, affects how they behave, so positive language is used to enhance their self-esteem. Seeds of desired traits a parent implants in the child should be nurtured well by repeatedly acknowledging such traits when they manifest. When the child grows into adulthood, the traits will stay on with him and guide him to live a peaceful life (Turansky & Miller, 2012). Appropriate behavior is encouraged when parents. Even very simple efforts of children to help out are honored by the people around them and partake in tending the good seed. It also serves as cues to behave accordingly (Gentry & Fugate, 2012).

Disciplining NA children is practiced in direct and indirect forms. One form of discipline believed to teach children of the consequences of their actions is noninterference or letting things happen the way they are meant to happen (Reiter, 2011). This concept does not imply inaction in the face of potential grave harm but allows a person to have a choice. For example, if a child refuses to eat, then the logical consequence is for him to be hungry. The parent allows it because the child has made a choice that leads to him eventually learning something. Ritzer (2011) differentiates noninterference from ignoring. When a child continues to misbehave, they is ignored or removed from the environment that used to enforce desirable responses from them, so they feel deprived of such positive conditions. When they continue with the inappropriate behavior, they become outcast by the community. Others consider a deliberate disobedience to the rules and expectations that were made clear from the beginning. His punishment matches the gravity of his misdemeanor. Often, chastisement becomes the

duty of an uncle or elder instead of the parent for the parent-child bond to be kept intact and avoid straining their relationship (Joe & Gachupin, 2012). Children are not considered bad because of their misdemeanors. Parents and community members prefer to see the minor discretions as a lack of understanding on the part of the child. They need to be given guidance according to what is right. They are made to understand that their actions affect the people around them whether they are positive or negative. Hence, more desirable behaviors are encouraged. Discipline, in indigenous beliefs, is associated more with the instilling of self-control and following rules rather than the imposition of punishment when a child strays from the righteous path (Hearst, 2012).

### **The Reservation**

Life on the reservation is typically hard and impoverished. Frank (2013) reports that NAs experience twelve times the U.S. national rate of malnutrition, nine times the rate of alcoholism, and seven times the rate of infant mortality; as of the early 1990s, the life expectancy of reservation-based men was just over forty-four years, with reservation-based women enjoying, on average, a life expectancy of just under forty-seven years. Such dire conditions are echoed in the literature, with Banados (2011) reporting that while the national poverty rate is about 10% for Caucasian families, poverty rate for NA families on the reservation is about thrice that rate. Unemployment rates have reached 50% or higher (Banados, 2011). The economic deprivation brought about by poverty results in low educational attainment, substance use, incarceration, child abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropout (Mileviciute et al., 2013). However, to counter such adverse effects, NA communities make use of their traditional cultural values and practices to

offer their youth the resources they need to develop optimally despite their dire circumstances (Hearst, 2012).

Reservation schools usually integrate culture-centric practices in their curriculum as opposed to dominant culture, while schools outside the reservation are less likely to include strong cultural contexts in their lessons (Gentry & Fugate, 2012). One example is the mandate given by the Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005 to its Navajo tribe schools. This mandate expects schools to incorporate its native language, culture, history, government, and character in the curriculum (Badinter & Hunter, 2011). The schools believe that, in doing so, they contribute to the preservation of the Navajo language and endurance of culture for the benefit of the future generations of the Navajo people (Navajo Nation Department of Education, 2011). Thus, people from the tribe should be welcome to offer their support and contribution to the school to enhance children's knowledge of their culture.

### **Life off the Reservation**

Relocating from the reservation into urban areas has overwhelmed NAs, as this is the first exposure to life outside the reservation. For most of those who relocate, they were not prepared for the urban trappings of technology and progress. However, some who preferred to stay on the reservation warned those who went out about the deterioration of their NA culture if they become too impressed with non-Native lifestyle. Miller (2013) explained that instead of dismissing their traditional Indian values as a hindrance to their success in modern America, some native relocates appealed to tradition being their source of strength. Former Bureau of Indian Affairs field agent and military

policeman, Benjamin Reifel encouraged his NA constituents to be hopeful and advocated for a change of attitude in creating the necessary cultural adaptation in order to function within the economic and social systems of the mainstream society (Miller, 2013). Still, the difficulty in finding a job, urban congestion, language barriers, and geographic isolation are strongly felt despite their enthusiasm for their new environment and the encouragement to be brave. Many returned to the reservation, but several also achieved varying degrees of success in their relocated homes (Miller, 2013).

### **Native American Parenting**

When analyzing parent-child relationships in NA families, especially the mothers raising their children single-handedly, it is worthy to look into attachment theories. Hearst (2012) explains that an individual's experiences and significant relationships in the earliest stages of life are responsible for their survival functions as they grow and develop throughout the lifespan. Frank (2013) identified four kinds of attachment styles, namely secure, avoidant, ambivalent/anxious, and disorganized. Those who have formed secure attachments have no difficulty establishing close relationships with others. They form healthy, happy, and trusting personal relationships without any fear of being too dependent on them or being abandoned. These positive relationships are due to having grownups nurturing the young ones, with early attachments having all three components of closeness, care, and commitment. In contrast, some people establish negative, avoidant behaviors towards the persons with whom they have relationships (Gentry & Fugate, 2012).

Their avoidant attachments, formed early in life, made them reluctant to open up emotionally because they feel uncomfortable getting close to other persons. For these individuals, their independence and self-sufficiency should be maintained because when they were younger, they had been exposed to cold, unattached caregivers who did not provide them with the love and security they craved. Hence, they learned to fend for themselves. People who have formed ambivalent attachments are inconsistent in relating to others as they had grown up in an environment where their caregiver had also been inconsistent in giving them love and affection and have developed insecurities due to this. The same goes for those who formed disorganized attachments. As young children, they were exposed to caregivers who were not organized and had passed this trait on to the children. They usually engage in unhealthy relationships and develop dysfunctional behaviors (Huston & Howard, 2011).

Reiter (2011) points out that distressed NA mothers, mostly still adolescents, may lash out at their babies because they are not ready to handle the demands of an infant. They become irrational, angry and hurt their children to stop them from crying or simply abandon and neglect these children (Badinter & Hunter, 2011). In turn, the infants and children are left poorly cared for, and healthy attachments are not formed. It makes it difficult for them to trust anyone or develop the confidence they need to ensure their well-being. The resulting developmental delays cause such a child to be deficient both in curiosity and in the physical ability necessary to explore and become an avid learner. The anger, hostility, depression, and isolation that may develop instead tend to destine the youngster never to learn to trust others or make sustaining relationships (Badinter &

Hunter, 2011). Other outcomes of poor or abusive parent-child relationships, coercive parenting, and caretaker rejection are suicidal, and inability of children to become good parents themselves as adults (Flake, 2015). On the other hand, strong parent-child relationships prevent adolescents' delinquent behaviors and its related problems among the NA families. Such impacts of parent-child relationship on a child's future relational well-being support the systems theory of intergenerational transmission of relational patterns.

In terms of academic performance, Gentry and Fugate (2012) contend that when parents and families have involvement in their children's schooling, children improve in their behavior, motivation, and academic achievement no matter what socioeconomic background they have (Joe & Gachupin, 2012). Successful parental involvement included: Parenting (assisting parents in creating supporting home environments that foster student success); Communicating (keeping open lines of communication between school and home); Volunteering (recruiting parents to become involved in school and classroom programs); Learning at home (informing parents of effective practices in helping students with homework and other curricular activities); Decision making (engaging parents as advocates for both student and school success); and Collaborating with the community (providing parents with access to community resources).

Tyers and Beach (2012) found from their focus group interviews that NA parents identified two types of school involvement, namely, school-oriented participation and home-oriented involvement. The school-oriented involvement included parents being active in communication with teachers and other school personnel, actively attending

school events, volunteering their time in school and advocating for their children. Home-oriented involvement, on the other hand, referred to helping their children with school work, showing interest in their children's educational concerns, encouraging their children to do their best in their studies, and enjoining other members of the family and community members in the educational processes of their children. Some parents complained about certain barriers in their involvement such as not feeling welcome in their children's school, their own negative experiences in their school history, observations of the school's nonchalance about their involvement, gaps in cultural sensitivity, and barriers in language and communication. Other parents identified their own limitations in being more involved in their children's school such as financial constraints, lack of child care for those left at home, lack of resources and facilities to do work for the school, and transportation problems in going to school (Frank, 2013). Joe and Gachupin (2012) emphasized the value of collaboration between the home, school, and the community, as it is bound to result in the best outcomes for children.

### **Parenting Interventions**

NA parenting has been mostly affected by historical trauma, and to prevent further effect on younger generation, some parenting interventions have been designed, taking into account the cultural and environmental context of NA families living in more contemporary times. Schatz and Klein (2015), for example, developed psycho-educational interventions for parents to manage the damage associated with historical trauma. The intervention exposed them to traumatic memories and cognitive integration in light of the tribe's culturally accepted parenting practices to make them aware of the



impacts of historical trauma on their parenting skills. The intervention provides opportunities for the parents to reconnect with their tribal culture and values, strengthens their kinship to their extended networks and empowers them as parents to know what to avoid with their children that they know will create much damage (Gentry & Fugate, 2012).

Tyers and Beach (2012) created an evidence-based parenting program called The Incredible Years specifically designed to incorporate traditional NA beliefs and values as well as discussion of historical trauma and current injustices experienced in contemporary society. Significant improvements in parenting and child behavior are manifested as compared to a control group, proving that parenting interventions that are developed against the backdrop of historical trauma and a healing framework are effective. Another parenting intervention is the Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) developed by Sheila Eyberg, Ph.D. She created this program for families with very young children who have disruptive behavior disorders. The program fused two prominent child therapy models at the time namely, traditional play therapy, which focused on the child's behavior and free expression of emotions in a safe environment, and child behavior therapy, which focused on the parent with the role of change agent based on social learning theories (Huston & Howard, 2011). This model aims to foster strong bonds between parents and their children and to build up parenting skills on setting limits and providing structures in reversing negative behavioral patterns.

Joe and Gachupin (2012) belief of the need to go back to consulting the old wisdom in the raising of children as the center of the circle is consistent with the PCIT's

principles of honoring children and the structure of making of relatives, which are NA values. Essential to the NA tribes is the circle theory which includes old wisdom about relationships, care for the environment, affirmations, identity, and inclusion. These principles have been applied to past generations, but were interrupted when the social composition of the indigenous people was threatened and almost shattered (Huston & Howard, 2011). PCIT has been found to be compatible with the traditional NA parenting practices. It incorporates approaches from social learning theory, family system theory, and play therapy techniques that are all acceptable theories that natives already practice. Both the Incredible Years and PCIT focus on behaviors and relationships, and acknowledge children's developmental levels with minimal cultural bias (Joe & Gachupin, 2012). PCIT teaches parents to be keen observers of their children as well as become good role models for them. This technique parallels the teachings of Albert Bandura, who claimed that people acquire behaviors through observation and, subsequently, imitation of what they have observed. The same principle was practiced by the NAs who taught children to watch and listen because it is by doing so that they get to learn new concepts (Reiter, 2011).

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, combined with motivational interventions, is well-suited for families devastated by substance abuse, which many NA families are. Parents who have substance abuse issues are usually guilty of child physical abuse and neglect, disrupting their family's peace, harmony, and stability (Gentry & Fugate, 2012). NA principle of honoring children is relevant to the foundations of PCIT, especially when it applies similar principles from the circle theory and old wisdom. The Parent Training

Manual of PCIT was incorporated with traditional NA cultural beliefs and concepts in parenting to create a program to enhance the intervention for NA families (Huston & Howard, 2011). Turansky and Miller (2012) reported the responses of parents to a community-based, culturally grounded mental health intervention for NA youths. The intervention, called Our Life, was run once a week for 6 months, and it promoted the mental health of young people and reduced violent tendencies by involving parents as well as youths aged 7-17 years. The youth participate in four kinds of activities: Recognizing and healing historical trauma; Reconnecting to traditional culture and language; Learning and sharing culturally appropriate parenting practices and social skills for youth; and Building relationships between parents and youths through equine-assisted and other experiential activities (Joe & Gachupin, 2012).

Most parents welcomed the idea of exposing their children to their traditional culture and expressed their desire to raise their children based on its values. Many admitted their lack of knowledge of some traditional parenting philosophy and practices, having embraced the modern culture and wanting to get re-acquainted with their roots. Parents reported better parenting habits as learned from the program. Some claimed they had increased their warmth and encouragement for their children, so they developed better self-esteem (Huston & Howard, 2011). Their discipline techniques have also become more positive instead of negative and rules are being better explained as well as the consequences of their actions are discussed to teach them life lessons. Less effective parenting practices were also reported to have decreased significantly such as the constant use of punishment, not involving the children in decision making, or being

overly permissive with them. They also shared that there is an increase of their knowledge of resources that support them in their parenting such as some government agencies, other parents who provide helpful information, and even articles read from the Internet that provide them with guidelines on better parenting (Huston & Howard, 2011).

Anger management is addressed in the intervention and parents reported an increased ability to manage their anger. Communication between parents and children has improved. After the intervention, the parents found themselves with increased contact with their children and more frequent shared dinners, family meetings, and bonding experiences occurred. Apart from the improvement of parent-child relationships, the parents observed overall positive outcomes for their children's behavior and well-being. School performance improved, and there was a significant reduction in delinquent behavior. The intervention resulted in commendable outcomes and was responsible in bringing the families involved in the program closer together (Gentry & Fugate, 2012). The interventions discussed recommend for environments that cater for troubled NA families especially those headed by women in single-parent households raising their children off the reservations.

### **The Crow Indians of Montana**

This study shall focus on the tribe of Crow Indians from the Northern Plains of Montana, as the women to be interviewed are from that tribe. This section now focuses on the history and lifestyle of the Crow Tribe in Montana. The Crow Indians of Montana accepted the cessation of their land in 1868. Although they were a peaceful people when they were ousted from their land at that time, within fifty years, they had representatives

lobbying in Congress to save their last remaining property (Bond, 2012). The Crows persisted to keep their culture, as exhibited by anthropologist Fred Voget, author of *The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance* and other cultural articles, including one on the description of the Crow people's personality types (Gross, 2013). Like most NA tribes, the Crows are family-oriented. Members can rely on traditional clans and kin for support and protection of the orphaned children, poor parents, or disabled elderly members. This kind of close-knit value system amazed George W. Frost, who, when he was the superintendent of the Crow Reservation in 1877, observed a prevalence of marital infidelity. Polygamy was common and socially accepted, with the men taking as many wives as they could support, as adultery was not considered a crime. However, statistics reflect that Crows valued marriage. It is reported that 20% of Crows had four, five or more wives and, for each marriage, it was a long-term union (Huston & Howard, 2011).

### **Chapter Summary**

NA families have gone through much pain in the history of their people. This chapter discussed the events that caused the deterioration of the once-solid family structures that embraced traditional values and communal child-rearing of tribal units. Apart from the forced separation of children from their parents to be sent off to boarding schools or adopted by White families, migration outside of reservations of families seeking better opportunities have further contributed to the decline of traditional NA culture, values, and practices. These have once been woven into fabric of integrity of the NA people. Marred by hopelessness, NA families who have been denied opportunities outside the reservation have resorted to alcoholism, substance abuse, and other negative

factors. These have greatly impacted the parenting capabilities of NAs, especially the mothers who raise their children on their own. Historical trauma has left deep scars that have been passed on from generation to generation. Children imbibe them through family systems, exposing them to the negative outcomes of the traumatic experiences of their ancestors. Without proper guidance, these children may adopt some practices that they see which may have negative impact on their lives. As shown in this review, a common case is the abuse of alcohol, drugs, and cigarette. When NA children see adults indulge themselves in drugs and alcohol, the children tend to believe that such practices are normal.

The Strengths Perspective Theory gives much hope that NA families can rise from the ashes of their devastating experiences to achieve their goals and become resourceful members of society, whether they live on the reservations or have relocated outside. Mothers can find strength in their heritage of old wisdom in strong parenting values passed down from their NA elders if they only become open to it. The parenting interventions presented show evidence that such strengths can surface and serve them well. Due to the dearth of research on the perspectives of NA women raising their children outside the reservation, this study endeavored to conduct interviews to explore the psychological health and what the state of their relationship with their children is. The information of these personal stories is best gathered using qualitative means. Each person has a story to tell, and this study hopes to collect a wide variety of stories of such women, thus filling the gap in the literature. The theoretical framework that this study built on shall guide the researcher in understanding various concepts related to child-

rearing among the NA mothers. After listening to NA women's perspectives, information about their individual and common problems, parenting approaches, dilemmas, and hopes and dreams for their children and themselves were unearthed. Such information shall be shared in this study as well as the possible action that can be done to address their issues and concerns. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the methodology based on the phenomenological study. There is also discussion of research design and data collection.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I focus on the method that I used in the collection, analysis, and presentation of data. I make recommendations on this topic based on the information that I have gathered. I discuss the lived experiences of NA mothers who are residing off the reservations. I then explore their current living conditions, quality of life, and their parenting experiences in raising their children. The following questions guided my research:

1. What does it mean for a NA woman to grow up on the NA Indian reservation?
2. What experiences have led NA women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservations?
3. What challenges do women who grew up on the reservations face when they try to raise their children off the reservations?
4. What may be the reasons for NA women who grew up on the reservations to raise their children off the reservation?

### **Qualitative Research**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative researchers operate from the premise that people create and share a similar understanding of various situations. The use of narratives, case studies, observations, and interviews to gather information enables researchers to elicit personal views of participants and interpret the data they have collected to move toward change or reformations or to bring about a better understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I used research methods grounded in



interpretative epistemological assumptions to understand the phenomenon of NA women who chose to live off the reservations and how they raise their children. Because the topic of this study is lived experiences of NA women, a suitable method for this question is the interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

I used the phenomenological approach to gain a clearer perspective of what NA experience in certain situations (Gilbert, Knutson, & Gilbert, 2012). It is essential for a social researcher to create knowledge through understanding the world with the eyes of the participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Thus, phenomenology points to “An interest in the nature of human experience and the meaning that people attach to their experiences with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be” (Bryman, 2012, p. 45). Similarly, Creswell (2013) observed that “The sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people ‘know’ as ‘reality’ in their everyday non-or pre-theoretical lives” (p. 41). Therefore, whatever information the researcher can obtain from in-depth semistructured interviews with participants can be thoroughly analyzed with reflective interpretative analysis. The interpretative research allows the individual to shape reality using its interpretations, meanings, and understanding (Druckerman, 2012). For this analysis, I emphasized the lived experiences of NA women in their child-rearing practices outside the reservation. In addition, secondary literature was valuable in substantiating the findings.

In choosing Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a research method, the researcher was ready to delve into the world of the participants to better understand their lived experiences. The researcher was aware that during the interviews, it is

important to take note of nonverbal communication that participants may convey, and it was important to read between the lines. To ensure that what the respondents say is understood, it was necessary to read and reread the transcripts of the interviews as well as listen to the audio recordings to capture the full messages that the participants want to impart. The IPA process involves noting observations from the interview by recording some descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments.

Descriptive comments describe the content of the participant's verbalizations. Linguistic comments concentrate on the language use of the participant, and conceptual comments focus on a more interrogative and theoretical conceptual level (Parker, 2011). Then the development of emergent themes comes that may prevail in the interview. Statements related to certain themes have been organized together for further analysis, and then connections were found in the themes identified (Katsirikou & Skiadas, 2012). The literature was consulted to see whether such connections can be explained.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Patton, 2015). To this end, I asked probing questions, listen, and process the answers and then asked follow-up questions. I gathered the data rather than questionnaires or survey (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). My role was limited to an observer. I have no personal relationship with the participants besides the research work. I acted as an outside researcher, as I have no membership within the group I study. I made notes, reflect on perceptions, and explore and set aside any personal biases discovered. I informed the

participants about the study. I will continue to protect participant identity as part of the ethical concerns related to research.

## **Data Collection Methods**

### **In-depth Interviews**

For this study, the qualitative method of in-depth interviews was the most suitable research method. Using interviews as a data-gathering method enables the participants to discuss their interpretations of a concept and provided them with the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the research topic. Interviews make it possible to convey the respondents' personal feelings, opinions, experiences, and interpretations of given situations (Mouhammed, 2015). Other qualitative methods such as observation or questionnaires may not provide information as thorough as that taken from in-depth interviews. Like questionnaires, interviews directly provoke a response by asking specific questions to participants. Scheurich (2014) drew attention to the different styles of the interview: fully structured; semistructured, and unstructured. In a fully structured interview, the interviewer has predetermined questions and uses them in a preset order. The semistructured interview uses predetermined questions where the order can be modified or adapted as necessary. In an informal interview, the interviewer has a general area of interest yet allows the conversation to develop freely. I used the unstructured interview in this study.

Sensitive and responsible questioning on the part of interviewers can enhance the response rates of the participants (Brandimarte, 2013). In interviews, the response rate of participants is higher than in questionnaires because participants are more involved in the

process. It is a flexible tool that adapts to the situation and responses of the participants; ability to follow up immediately on their answers is an advantage of this method (Bryman, 2012). A significant disadvantage in any interview situation is the possibility of bias. The interviewer may unwittingly divulge his or her opinion or expectations by the tone voice or in the way the questions are asked. Even when recording the interview, it is important to remain aware of bias having an effect on how answers are understood and transcribed. However, these methods are a quick way to assess the participant's sincerity. I emphasized honesty in this study. In addition, theoretical orientation may bias questions and interpretation of answers.

## **Research Design and Rationale**

### **Participants of the Study**

In this study, the researcher did interview NA mothers who reside outside NA Indian reservations but possess enrollment in the federally recognized Crow Tribe of Montana. The criteria for the selection of the participants are as follows:

1. NA women with an upbringing on Indian reservations.
2. Current enrollment in the federally recognized Crow Tribe of Montana.
3. Decision to leave the reservations and reside off it.
4. Raising their child/children off the reservations single-handedly, with a spouse/partner or with a member of their family.

Finding women with the specific criteria required could have been a challenge for the researcher unless I locate places frequented by such women, or find a community where several identified women as described in the criteria. I sought help from people in

the local university. Posting an announcement about the need for such participants around the university campus was a good start. The posting called on anyone who knows NA mothers who reside outside the reservations to refer her for this study. The notice contained the researcher's contact details.

Apart from the university, the researcher could have approached agencies known for supporting NAs and ask for referrals for participants. Once the first or second prospective partaker is found, it was likely that they would have given a recommendation to others, especially those known by the first two participants. Another option was using social media such as Facebook to recruit the participants, as in that platform, news and information spread easily to a vast network in a short period. It was important to inform the social network community that the researcher needed their help in disseminating such information until the actual participants receive the notice. I aimed for eight to 10 participants for this study. For phenomenological studies that use interviews, such as this study, eight participants are a sufficient sample size to gather in-depth accounts from personal experiences to reach data saturation point (Moustakas, 2004).

Estimated duration of the interview was an hour or two depending on the openness and willingness of the participants to engage in a conversation about their lives as NA women who chose to live outside the reservation and raise their children away from it. As a researcher, it is important to be aware that factors may contribute to the unreliability of the data from the interviews; hence, it is necessary to try to reduce them in the best way possible. One such factor is researcher bias on the part of the participants. Participants may try to cooperate only to please the researcher even if what they share

may not be true. Assurance that no judgment shall pass related to what they share was given to the participants in the hopes to encourage honesty and sincerity. An additional factor may be a participant error, which may result from exhaustion due to the thoroughness of the interview process (Druckerman, 2012). I did make it a point to have reasonable breaks during the interview when I observed any symptoms of tiredness on the part of the participants.

### **Setting**

I conducted interviews in an agreed venue that was neutral territory for the participants. Druckerman (2012) strongly suggested conduction of the interview in a setting that the interviewees are comfortable with to make them relaxed when giving responses. It should be conducive to the participants to share their insights openly without any threat to their safety and security. Possible venues are a coffee shop, chapel, or park. Schedule of interview sessions were at the convenience of the participants.

### **Procedure**

The data collection procedure for this study was based on the recommendations given by Creswell (2013). I contacted the participants individually to explain what the study was regarding and its objectives and significance, and I negotiated the details of the interview schedule. I conducted the interview guided by the prepared questions, remaining open to the direction of the discussion as the participants may choose to spend more time on some issues or bring up related topics to the discussion. The whole interview was audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewee. The recordings were transcribed verbatim for further analysis after the interview (Creswell, 2013).

I ensured confidentiality of the participants' identity to gain the trust of the participants and to make them feel more confident in sharing their personal experiences and insights.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The only instruments this study used are the research materials used in the literature review and the guide questions for the semi-structured interviews. These inquiries are as follows:

1. What does it mean for a NA woman like you to grow up on the NA Indian reservation?
2. What experiences have led you as a NA woman who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise your child/children off the reservations?
3. What challenges do you face as a woman who grew up in the reservations and is now raising your child/ children off the reservations?
4. What are the reasons for your decision to raise your child/children off the reservations?
5. How do you evaluate your life with your children now that you are living off the reservations?
6. Do you have anything else to share with us regards to your situation?

### **Validity of the Data**

I measured the validity of the data gathered in several ways. I chose the verification checks from the validity procedures outlined by Creswell (2013). The three methods I used were triangulation, member checks, and clarification of researcher bias.

Triangulation is a validity procedure in which the researcher searches for convergence among multiple different sources to form categories and themes in a study. Through the researcher's view, data are sorted to find common categories or themes and eliminating overlapping areas. A way to obtain corroborating evidence is the triangulation of observations, interviews, and documents to locate themes (Creswell). Member checks assist in ensuring the correctness of the data, and the participants had the option of reviewing the transcripts of their interviews (Merriam, 1998). I asked them to provide any notations of missing information or misunderstood responses (Stake, 1995).

Clarifying researcher bias is important in a qualitative study because the reader needs to understand the researcher's position and any preferences about the topic (Creswell, 2013). Although I am not a NA decedent, I am married to an enrolled member of the Chippewa Tribe of North Dakota, making my children associate members. I was also born and raised on the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana. I am aware of my experiences concerning NAs and the reservations. By expressing them and acknowledging their difference from the research subjects, I can bracket my biases (Moustakas, 2004)

Trustworthiness supports the argument that the research findings are worthy of attention (Katsirikou & Skiadas, 2012). For research to be trustworthy, it should have credibility, transferability, dependability, and reliability. Credibility refers to the authenticity of the participant and the information they provide. It should reflect the truth so that the conceptual interpretation of the data supplied is reliable. Transferability is the applicability of the findings to other situations, other than the topic of the study.



Dependability refers to the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, analysis and the establishment of new theories. Finally, reliability shows how well the research findings can be trusted, to tell the truth (Khan, 2011).

### **Analysis of the Data**

In analyzing the data derived, the interview transcripts should be examined thoroughly for patterns of behavior or other pertinent information and should be appropriately categorized in thematic codes (Little, 2014). Inductive analysis, McDougal (2012, p. 81) explains, means that “The patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis.” Bowen’s (2015) analysis of data supports Patton’s (2002) interpretation of data analysis and also, studies and patterns that emerged from the analysis and made logical associations with the interview questions.

Moustakas (2004) method of data analysis was employed in this research. The steps of analysis are as follows:

1. **Horizontalization:** Go through the transcripts, highlight significant statements. The accent areas reflected an understanding of each participant’s experience with the phenomenon.
2. **Cluster of Meanings:** Develop a cluster of meanings from the statements and make themes from them.
3. **Textural Description:** Take the themes and make descriptions of what was experience of the participants. Moustakas (2004) notes descriptions of the

setting that influence the experiences are part of the themes/significant statements. This influence is known as Structural Description.

4. Essential, Invariant Structure (The Essence): This is the final part of the analysis where I have written a combination description that includes the essence of the phenomenon. This section is a paragraph or two of descriptive passages that focus on the shared experiences found among the participants. The reader of this passage is able to walk away with an understanding of the experience of the phenomenon.

The researcher used NVivo to help organize and analyze the unstructured data qualitatively. The primary use of this software is an analysis tool for qualitative data. The software publisher assures the software will organize, analysis, and find insights in unstructured data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Pfeffer and Rogalin (2012) argue that moral decisions are made throughout the research process. They point out four ethical rules for research on humans: the informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the researcher's role. Informed consent was from the perspective of the participants themselves. Confidentiality was ensured to them, as some of the information they may share may be too sensitive that revealing their identities may be risky. Insurance of safety and security of the participants was present at all times during the interview process. The researcher's role was to conduct the

interviews with utmost sincerity, honesty, and kindness. This study did comply with the ethical standards and considerations in conducting research with human participants.

Hinkel (2011, p. 71) states how “Ethical research involves getting the informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take materials from.” Guidelines by Hawkins (2014) who maintains that an informed consent form should contain specific information, such as the nature and purpose of the project, information on confidentiality and anonymity, and a note to participants regarding freedom to withdraw from the study. All of the information highlighted as important was included in a preliminary letter, as well as in a consent form that was completed before the interview. The informed consent form has been included at the appendix of the final report. Also included in the letter was contact details for the researcher, should participants have any questions before the interview takes place. During the data collection stage, confidentiality of participants was respected at all times. The participants were informed, in the letter that was sent to them, that they are free to withdraw from their participation any time they feel uncomfortable, or their safety and security are threatened due to the information they share. Participant’s names are not known outside the research and are be known by pseudonyms. Data has been password protected on the researcher’s computer, will be kept for 5 years, and destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study.

### **Limitations of the Research**

This study has a limitation regarding the research questions posed as well as the nature and the small number of the participants recruited. Information derived from this research may not necessarily apply to the whole population of NA women living off

reservations, but they may be suggestive of the conditions experienced by such women. The findings should not apply to other cultural groups. These limitations should be put into consideration by anyone using the study.

### **Use of Research Data Results**

Since marginalization of the NA population is established in the literature review, a more detailed examination of the lives of NA families living outside the Indian reservations is worth doing. Gaining first-hand information from NA mothers with regards to their current life conditions, child-rearing, and the challenges they encounter in their everyday lives is an essential step in identifying their needs. Such requirements may be communicated to the appropriate agencies and individuals such as legislators, politicians, public administrators, social welfare personnel, etc. as they are in a better position to extend the much-needed help to such populations. Findings of this study may also be relevant in policy development and decision-making.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has thoroughly discussed the components of the research method proposed for this qualitative study. It has provided a background on the research process and compared qualitative and quantitative research methods. It has identified that the research methods used and has also described the research design that indicated the selection of participants, setting, and procedure of the research plan. The only data collection instrument used is the interview guide questions that are enumerated in this chapter. The validity of the qualitative data is also justified. Analysis of gathered data from the interviews is thoroughly discussed as well.

The research methods selected for this study were best suited to the research topic on the lived experiences of NA women raising their children off the reservations. Ethical considerations in conducting this study were discussed as well as the limitations of the study and the use of the research data to be derived from the interviews with the NA mother participants.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of NA women living off the reservation regarding their current living conditions, their quality of life, and their parenting experiences in raising their children. Four research questions were used to guide the study, including:

RQ1. What does it mean for a NA woman to grow up on the NA Indian reservation?

RQ2. What experiences have led NA women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservations?

RQ3. What challenges do women who grew up on the reservations face when they try to raise their children off the reservations?

RQ4. What are the reasons for NA women who grew up on the reservations chose to stay with their children off the reservation?

This chapter includes a description of the setting of data collection, followed by a presentation of the relevant demographic characteristics of the study participants. The chapter then continues with descriptions of the implementation of the data collection and data analysis procedures described in chapter 3. This is followed by a discussion of the evidence of the trustworthiness of the study's results, and then by a presentation of the results themselves. The presentation of results includes a detailed analysis of nine semi-structured interviews. The interviews were analyzed to develop emerging themes in

NVivo 11 software, using the four-step method of inductive analysis described by Moustakas (2004). The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Setting**

Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants to ensure that interviewees would be able to describe their lived experiences and perceptions at leisure, without feeling rushed by scheduling constraints. To further ensure that participants were as comfortable as possible in providing rich and detailed responses to the interview questions, the participants were invited to choose as the setting of the interview any public place in which privacy was available. In accordance with participants' preferences, the interviews were conducted in parks or coffee shops. When an interviewee and I had met and introduced ourselves at the location chosen by the participant, we found a place to sit that was sufficiently secluded from other visitors that the participant would not feel constrained by anxiety about being overheard. When the interviews took place in coffee shops, I turned off the recorder and suspended the conversation with the interviewee if a server approached the table, to protect the participant's privacy. When interviews were conducted in parks, the interviewee and I chose a place to sit that was sufficiently distant from heavily trafficked areas and other visitors that we were not interrupted and could not be overheard. There were no personal or organizational conditions at time of study that affected participants in a way that would influence the interpretation of the results.

### **Demographics**

Participants were nine NA mothers who reside outside NA (NA) Indian reservations but possess enrollment in the federally recognized Crow Tribe of Montana.

The Crow Tribe of Indians of the State of Montana has an enrolled tribal membership of approximately 11,000, of whom 7,900 reside on the Crow Indian Reservation. Population demographics for the tribe were not available at the time of this writing. All participants in this study were at least 18 years old and met the following inclusion criteria:

1. NA women with an upbringing on Indian reservations.
  2. Current enrollment in the federally recognized Crow Tribe of Montana.
  3. Decision to leave the reservations and reside off it.
  4. Raising their child/children off the reservations single-handedly, with a spouse/partner or with a member of their family.
- Participants' ages ranged from 28 to 55 years, with a mean age of 41 years. Participants had between two and four children, with a mean of 2.7 children. Table 1 depicts relevant demographic information for the study participants.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

****	Age	Residing in (US state)	Number of children
1	34	New Mexico	2
2	48	New Mexico	4
3	55	Colorado	2
4	38	Montana	4
5	52	Montana	2
6	32	Montana	2
7	42	Montana	3
8	39	Montana	3
9	28	North Dakota	2



### **Textural Descriptions**

The following textural descriptions were generated as the third step of the four-step process of data analysis described by Moustakas (2004). Each textural description is a summary of one participant's lived experience of the phenomenon, based on the themes that emerged during the analysis of the data from her interview.

**Participant 1.** Participant 1 lived on the reservation for 31 years. She described her childhood as being surrounded by Crow culture. Her extended family played a significant role in exposing her to tradition, including her ability to be bilingual. She was raised by her grandmother and had only sporadic exposure to her parents. Her mother worked two jobs and was present more often when she did not have a boyfriend. Participant 1 felt that it was better when her mother was not around because her mother was a verbally and emotionally abusive person. All she recounted of her father was that he taught her (by example) what she should not want in a man.

Participant 1 described her childhood as one in which she was sheltered from the "white" world by her grandmother, who felt the traditional ways were best. She said that it never crossed her mind that she would leave the reservation. She wanted her future children to be exposed to her traditions. In describing her transition into adulthood and her romantic relationships, Participant 1 said her relationship with the father of her oldest son was short-lived because her partner didn't seem to want to grow up and never worked. Her next long-term relationship was with a fellow patrol officer who was older. She thought his more advanced age would guarantee a more stable and mature relationship. The relationship started to disintegrate when her partner became jealous of

her being promoted above him. She said that when he “got mean” she decided to abide by her self-imposed rule forbidding her to be in a relationship with a man who resembled her abusive father; she took her boys and moved back in with her grandmother. When she finally married, it was to a man who was both older and retired, and this allowed her to avoid the issue of competing careers.

Although both of her children were born on the reservation, she moved off initially for employment, but also with growing recognition that social conditions on the reservation were deteriorating. Although she is saddened that her sons have few friends and she can’t let them run around the way she did as a child, she could not remain on the reservation and risk her sons becoming like the men who abused drugs and women. She said that one of the most difficult conditions for men living on the reservation is that they are no longer needed to hunt and protect, and this leaves them not knowing how to act. Participant 1 is motivated by the desire to teach her sons to be different from those uprooted men, to have their traditions but also to be able to have a guiding purpose outside of the traditional male roles.

**Participant 2.** Participant 2 described her childhood as happy, and in a sense sheltered, but also as comparatively uninfluenced by her tribal affiliation or culture. She grew up unaware of difficulties between her parents and of the poverty around her. It is only in looking back that she has an awareness that her father was rarely around, and that, while all her needs were met, other children depended on assistance given by the tribe for basic needs. She thought it was normal for her father to spend more time playing sports

and drinking at the bar than with his family. Her mother did all the housework and childrearing.

Participant 2's parents never participated in NA cultural events, and it was only in overhearing her father say they were enrolled that she became aware of her tribal affiliation. There was so little exposure to NA culture that even when she was old enough to participate she declined to, because she was apprehensive about interacting with "real Indians." Participant 2 said that for as long as she could remember she wanted to leave the reservation. When she left for college she rarely visited and knew she would never live there because of the worsening social conditions.

In their present life outside of the reservation, no one is aware that she and her family are of NA ancestry. She and her husband enrolled their children in the tribe, however, in order to secure financial assistance for their college educations. Participant 2's mother, who is not NA, is the one who introduced her daughters to tribal traditions of naming and powwow participation. Participant 2 and her husband are not ashamed of their heritage, but do not consider it central to their lives or identities.

**Participant 3.** This participant grew up in poverty, in conditions that included a lack of indoor plumbing. She reported little exposure to NA culture, but her parents adhered to strictly defined gender roles, such that her mother was remarkably efficient at "women's work" such as skinning and dressing a deer carcass, while her father refused to assist with feminine activities and confined himself to the occasional mechanical repair. After her father was killed while serving as a soldier, her mother remarried; the second

husband, Participant 3's stepfather, was an alcoholic who favored his own children at the expense of Participant 3. He blamed Participant 3 when she was raped as a teenager.

This participant attributed her lack of exposure to NA culture to her mother's Catholicism and the associated idolatry taboo; this alienation from the surrounding indigenous culture extended even to Participant 3's being forbidden to play with children who were "too Indian." Participant 3 married a man who resembled her father and stepfather, in that he was a distant, abusive, philandering alcoholic. He infected her with a venereal disease that caused her to suffer five miscarriages after the birth of her first child, until the birth of her second surviving child 13 years later. Participant 3 subsequently left her husband. She had decided to raise her children outside of the reservation relatively early in life, when she was raped and blamed by her stepfather; she reported that she did not want her own children to be exposed to the cruelty and indifference she had experienced in her childhood family.

**Participant 4.** Due to poverty and abusive partners, Participant 4's single, bisexual mother moved their family frequently from one reservation to another, until Participant 4's grandmother insisted on taking the children in, to provide them with stability and material comfort. From her grandmother, Participant 4 learned an NA language, as well as the practice of beading. She felt that, through her grandmother, she had significant contact with NA culture. In her early adolescence her uncle began giving her alcohol and raping her; she told other relatives of this abuse, and they "made him stop," but she received no help in recovering from the rapes. Instead, her relatives assured her that she would "get over it."

Although Participant 4 felt a sense of belonging for the first time in her life when her grandmother introduced her to NA culture, she left the reservation when she married in order to pursue work opportunities with her husband. She regrets her distance from her NA heritage, and also regrets that her children have so little exposure to NA traditions. She and her husband both greatly value their NA heritage, however, and continue to hold NA religious beliefs and participate in NA traditions.

**Participant 5.** Participant 5 described her childhood as one where all her needs were met and there was more adherence to Catholic faith traditions, like going to church, than NA ones. Upon reflection, she suggested that the reason she lacked connection to NA culture was that her mother was never taught about it by her grandmother. Although both her grandparents were NA, neither of them were traditional, as adherence to NA traditions was forced out of them by the United States federal government, either through military service or enforced attendance at a white boarding school. Due in part to the enforced extinguishment of her grandparents' traditions, Participant 5 cannot speak the tribal language.

As a child, Participant 5 was unaware of her family's poverty; they always had enough to eat and decent secondhand clothes. Family rules for children included not asking for things, not speaking out of turn, and using good manners. In her adolescence, Participant 5 had some exposure to traditions such as powwows and sweats through friends, but she felt an overall lack of interest in developing her connection to NA culture. She always knew she wanted to leave the reservation, largely because of the disrespect and abuse of tribal women by the men.

The largest contributing factor in Participant 5's decision to live off reservation after college was the murder of her best friend by another member of the tribe. She eventually married a non-native man and they had two sons. Thirty-eight years later, her eldest son lives close by and the younger lives and works on the reservation. She expressed the hope that her youngest would move off the reservation to have children, so her grandchildren would not be raised in the impoverished and drug-ridden conditions she ascribes to the reservation. Although she does not blame all white people, Participant 5 refers to her grandparents' experiences and places the bulk of the blame for present reservation conditions on the US government. Participant 5 expressed the wish that the people who visited the reservation to buy "trinkets" appreciated the severity of the living conditions there.

**Participant 6.** In describing her childhood on the reservation, Participant 6 began by relating that her mother abandoned her and her siblings to the care of their paternal grandmother. She was two and a half years old when this occurred. The children never lived with their father because of his drug and alcohol abuse. Despite going back and forth between her grandmother's and her aunt's houses, Participant 6 felt spoiled by her grandmother and believed she had turned out well despite the perception by whites that it was abnormal for extended family to raise children.

Like other participants who were raised by their grandparents, Participant 6 stated that due to her grandmother's staunch Catholicism she was raised without much exposure to NA culture. Despite her grandmother's wanting her to stay on the reservation, this participant left to go to college and met her non-Native husband there. Participant 6

reflected on how reservation life had devastated her family: her father is dead, her mother is an alcoholic, and her siblings are either drug addicts or dead from drug- or alcohol-related accidents. Although she wants two of her aunts to remain involved in her life, she wants nothing else to do with the reservation.

**Participant 7.** Much like Participant 1, Participant 7 described her childhood as richly influenced by NA culture. She cited examples such as her mother being bilingual, learning to dance before walking, learning how to bead before starting school, and attending both local and regional powwows. Participant 7 recalled a sheltered childhood in which she had both Native and non-Native friends, did well in school, and was oblivious to any strife between her parents until they divorced when she was in middle school. She knew children who were poor and received poor grades, but as a child she had attributed those conditions to the absence of those children's fathers rather than to more systemic issues of poverty and drugs.

As a teen, Participant 7 had less contact with her father but was heavily involved in sports, and her mother encouraged both her and her brother to keep up with spiritual practices. This participant suggested that her mother had always kept them busy to keep them out of trouble, and she now takes the same approach with her own children. Her decision to leave the reservation was based on a desire to further her education and pursue vocational opportunities. After she finished nursing school and paid off her student loans by providing services on the reservation, she and her husband moved away for better employment. They visit rather than live on the reservation because of the educational opportunities that are available to their children in their new community.

Participant 7 expressed gratitude that her husband supports their children's exposure to NA culture, but she believes that being raised away from the reservation will make her children better-rounded.

**Participant 8.** Participant 8 was adopted by her aunt and uncle after her 19-year-old mother abandoned her with them. She recalled a good childhood, in which her adoptive parents were "strict but fair," and she remembers her relationships with her siblings as positive. Despite this positive environment, Participant 8 had no exposure to NA culture or activities. She knew from an early age that she would move off the reservation because of the pervasive drinking and drug abuse: she had witnessed the bad decisions made by people in her family under the influence of alcohol, and she did not want to behave in that way or expose her children to that behavior.

In college, she met her husband and they had two children. They eventually moved to New Mexico, where she began working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Participant 8 always thought she would move back to Montana to be closer to her family on the reservation, but her recent divorce and child-custody arrangement with her ex-husband are keeping her in place until the children graduate from high school. Participant 8 stated that if it were not for her job with the BIA and a traditionally inclined sister, she would have no NA culture in her life.

**Participant 9.** This participant remembers a happy childhood in which she was raised primarily by her grandmother and an aunt, while her relationship with her mother was more one of friendship. During her childhood her grandmother kept her separated from her half-sister, who was a member of another tribe. She never knew her father,



although her father and grandfather were both rumored to be alcoholics. Her uncles lived with her in her grandmother's household until one of them molested her and one of her cousins and was expelled.

Her exposure to NA culture was limited to sporadic attendance at traditional funerals or powwows, and she continues to feel indifferent toward her NA heritage. When she was 17, her grandmother died, and she moved out of her childhood home and began to live with her boyfriend, with whom she later left the reservation and had two sons. She later left her boyfriend due to his infidelity and drug use. She feels that she subsequently prospered away from the reservation, enjoying steady employment and healthy, active children. She has no connection with NA culture or with other NAs, and she intends to remain away from the reservation due to the pervasive drug use and the high dropout rates among students.

### **Data Collection**

Interview data were gathered from nine participants. One face-to-face, semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant in a public place of the participant's choice, in all cases either a park or a coffee shop. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, using a digital recording device. The average duration of the interviews was approximately one hour. There were no deviations from the data collection plan described in chapter 3, and no unusual circumstances were encountered during data collection.

## **Data Analysis**

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo 11 software for analysis. Data were then analyzed using the four-step method of inductive analysis described by Moustakas (2004). In the first step of the analysis, horizontalization, I reviewed the transcripts and highlighted significant statements to develop an understanding of participants' experiences with raising their children outside of NA reservations. The second step involved clustering statements with similar meanings into themes, which corresponded to the research questions. In the third step, I used the themes to develop a textural description of the experience of each participant; the results of this step of the analysis were presented in the demographics section of this chapter, above. In the fourth step of the analysis, I used the textural descriptions to develop an essential, invariant structure, or a description of the phenomenon that combined the common elements of the nine textural descriptions. The result of this fourth stage of the analysis is presented as the chapter summary, below. The table in Appendix A depicts the themes that emerged during the analysis of the data, the codes that contributed to the themes, and a representative quotation from each theme.

## **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

A study's credibility is the degree to which its findings accurately represent the reality they purport to describe (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance this study's credibility, I conducted member-checking of my interpretation of the data, as

recommended by Creswell (2013). To conduct member-checking, I first analyzed the data from the nine interviews to produce a textural description of each participant's lived experience. The textural descriptions are presented in the demographics section of this chapter, above. I emailed the textural description I had derived from each participant's interview responses to the participant with a request that she review it and either confirm that it accurately represented her lived experience or suggest corrections. All participants responded to this request for confirmation or correction, and all participants confirmed that the textural descriptions I had generated were accurate reflections of their experiences.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which the findings from this study will hold true in another research context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is determined by the reader of the study, as the author does not have information about the specific contexts in which her findings might be applied. To allow readers to assess the transferability of the results, I have followed the procedures recommended by Lincoln and Guba. First, I have provided rich, textural descriptions of the study participants, to allow readers to better estimate the extent to which the findings in this study might hold true of other samples or populations. I have also provided thick descriptions of the contexts of data collection.

### **Dependability**

A study's dependability is the extent to which the same results would be obtained if the study were repeated by other researchers using the same methods in the same research context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member-checking enhanced the dependability

of this study's results, as recommended by Creswell (2013). I also enhanced dependability by providing detailed descriptions of the data collection and data analysis procedures I used, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the extent to which a study's results are determined by the ideas and experiences of the participants, rather than by any characteristics of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I enhanced the confirmability of this study's results by creating an audit trail throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of the study. In creating the audit trail, I attempted to document every decision I made during the collection and analysis of the data.

### **Results**

This presentation of results is organized by research question. Results associated with the first research question include participants' descriptions of what it means to be an NA woman growing up on an NA reservation. In relation to the second research question, results indicate what experiences led participants to make the choice to raise their children outside of an NA reservation. Results associated with the third research question include participants' descriptions of the challenges they face as they raise their children outside of an NA reservation. Results related to the fourth and final research question include participants' reasons for continuing to raise their children outside of the NA reservation despite the challenges they face.

### **Research Question 1: What Does It Mean for a NA Woman to Grow Up on the NA Indian Reservation?**

Three subthemes emerged from the analysis of data indicating the meanings participants ascribed to growing up on NA reservations: *varying degrees of cultural exposure, feeling sheltered, and family relationships*. Results related to the first subtheme indicated that two participants grew up deeply engaged with NA culture, while the other seven participants were raised in families that did not encourage contact with NA culture or transmit NA traditions. In relation to the second subtheme, results indicated that most participants associated their upbringings on the reservation with a sense of being sheltered from outsiders and/or from economic hardship. Results associated with the third subtheme indicated that participants experienced a variety of relationships with immediate and extended family, ranging from abuse and abandonment to love and nurturance. There is no significance to the order of themes listed.

**Varying degrees of cultural exposure.** For Participants 1 and 7, growing up on an NA reservation meant being immersed in NA culture. For Participant 1, this meant participating in a culture in which women had a definite place but were treated with respect. “Becoming a woman” in the NA reservation’s culture meant having real responsibilities, such as caring for younger children, but it also meant a sense of inclusion and a feeling of being valued:

As I got older and “became a woman” more was expected of me. I had to help take care of the younger kids. But I was respected as a woman not as a slave child, ya know. I did not mind helping because I was looked at as older. I got to eat with the adult, and bead with the women at night. It was difficult at school cause I was so mature compared to the other kids, especially the white kids. But I

did not mind, I knew that once I got home I would be around the people who understood me and taught me the important things. (Participant 1)

The masculine role was just as clearly defined as the feminine one. For Participant 1, growing up on an NA reservation meant being immersed in a culture with well-defined gender roles:

I was raised on tradition, my grandmother taught me about the ...well everything. But it was everywhere, it was my grandfather, my uncles, my aunties, My uncles taught me about what the men were supposed to do. My uncle would say do not pick a man who cannot hunt, but he would also say make sure you can be in charge of the teepee. My grandmother was in charge of the cooking, the cleaning, the sewing, the kids...ya know the teepee. (Participant 1)

Participant 7 also experienced immersion in a culture with well-defined gender roles, and for her the experience was also associated with a sense of autonomy and of being respected and valued:

I had a great childhood. We were very into culture. My mother was bilingual, she could quilt and bead and sew. We were dancing before we could walk. I was beading before I started school. We would go to the powwows all summer, we went to the big ones a couple of times also, you know Albuquerque and Denver. Oh I loved the Denver powwow, for some reason mom trusted the place, we got to run around with new found friends. (Participant 7)

In contrast, for Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9, growing up on an NA reservation meant being estranged from or indifferent to the surrounding indigenous

culture. For Participant 9, growing up on an NA reservation meant being exposed to a certain amount of xenophobia toward other NAs, particularly as it was manifested in the prejudices of members of her grandmother's generation. This xenophobia was sufficiently pronounced that it caused Participant 9 to be somewhat estranged from her half-sister, who was a member of a different tribe and who was therefore effectively segregated from Participant 9 during their childhood:

If my sister was staying with my mom I would stay with grandma cause my sister was a spoiled brat and I didn't want to be there if she was. She lived most of the time with her other grandmother. She was the only grandchild on her dad's side at that time and her grandmother was determined to raise her traditional, she had her first jingle dress when she was two years old, shit she could barely walk in that thing I bet. My grandmother was more interested in keeping me away from "those" Indians. They were not Crow, so ya know that was not OK. I am not sure she ever forgave my mom for having a baby for a Northern Cheyenne. That is probably why I am not close to my sister, we were raised so different and almost to hate each other's tribes. There is nobody a Crow dislikes more than, well... anyone who is not Crow. (Participant 9)

Aside from her exposure to traditional prejudices, Participant 9 had little contact with NA culture: "I went to a few traditional funerals and the powwows. I didn't get much more culture than that. We didn't go to the powwow cause you couldn't drink there and I knew my sister would be there, ugh, so bitchy." Participant 2 also grew up without

a sense of deep immersion in NA culture, such that growing up on a reservation meant having a childhood that seemed generic:

We never did anything cultural, or Indian. My parents acted like we weren't Indian. To be honest I am not even sure when I figured out I was Indian. Somewhere I heard my dad say we were enrolled. My kids are enrolled, not cause of my blood but their dad's, I still wouldn't ask my dad about it. I think he would tell me not to do it, that there was not reason. My husband's life was a bit different, I mean they at least talked about being enrolled and participated in things that they could get from the tribe, housing and commodities, oh and the school supplies. You know they gave out school supplies. My parents did not get any of that stuff. Well but we did use IHS. But that is the only thing I can remember we got from the tribe. (Participant 2)

Like Participant 9, Participant 2 experienced some xenophobia toward other NAs:

I did not know that there were differences in culture or ethnicity, I thought all us little kids were the same and that we all had enough to eat. I don't know if my parents worked to keep us innocent or if I was ignorant, uhmm I just don't know. I just don't know when I saw it different. When I got older I knew about PowWow's and stuff but I didn't think I could go, I guess I thought somehow, I would get in trouble or be bullied by the real Indians. Looking back I guess that was silly, or maybe even racist, I guess nobody told me anything. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 also recalled what it was like to grow up without significant exposure to NA culture:



Oh there was never much Indian culture at my house, nothing I can remember...Culture was not part of my upbringing. My mother was raised Catholic, very Catholic. You did not worship false god by going to a pow wow. My mother did speak her native language, but she did not teach us kids you used it to talk about stuff you didn't want them to know, and you could do it right in front of them. (Participant 3)

Participant 5 also described how it felt to grow up without significant exposure to NA culture in her family, as well as her later indifference to that culture after she dabbled in it briefly during early adolescence:

We didn't do traditional things; I mean that was not the Catholic thing. There is only One God, right, and that was the Catholic God. I remember we did not go anywhere or do anything, like the movies or the carnival...When I was like 13 I started to get to go out with my friends, and we went to some pow wow's and I learned from their parents a little about sweats, but once I got into high school I just stopped doing any of that or caring about it in any way. I had my small group of friends, we were always together. I had my best friend, but the six of us were always together. None of us were athletes or cheerleader or honor society, but we were good kids, ya know drinking a bit on the weekends, but not too much crazy stuff. We were good kids, under the radar, not too pretty, not too popular, just there ya know. But we had no interest in culture stuff. We wanted to go to college and have a life. (Participant 5)

Like Participants 3 and 5, Participant 6 was forbidden by a Catholic guardian to participate in NA culture, which was described as idolatrous. Thus, for Participant 6, growing up on the reservation meant feeling alienated from the culture that surrounded her. Her estrangement from NA culture was not as strictly enforced as that of Participant 2; Participant 6 engaged occasionally in NA traditions, though without adopting the underlying beliefs:

We weren't cultural, we were Catholic. I guess we did go to the Pow wow's, I dressed up for Pow wow's a couple of time, but not any of my other catholic friends. Ya know you couldn't believe in One God and believe in the Creator. The two are incompatible. So many of my friends were just like me, being raised by grandmothers and being raised Catholic. But it was so nice we had so much in common, but it was outside the culture in common. Now Catholics on the Rez are finding a way to have both religion and spirituality in their lives. I think that is so great, I mean why would God care if you went to church and a Sweat. What else should I say, there is so much about my childhood with my grandma, it was so great for me, but I know it was so bad for some kids. (Participant 6)

For Participant 8, growing up on the reservation also meant feeling disengaged from the surrounding NA culture: "We did not participate in any cultural activities, nothing. I know you want to know more about my culture, but really we had nothing. Well we had Pelton quilts in the house, does that count?"

**Feeling sheltered.** For most participants, growing up on the NA reservation

meant feeling sheltered in some sense. For Participant 1, growing up on the reservation meant being sheltered from threats and from the “white world”:

I was allowed to be a child, a kid. I was told to play and learn how to be independent. There were certain rules and they were strict, but they were few and they made sense. But I was a bit sheltered I don't know, from the other world, ya know, the white world. I do not think it was intentional. My grandma just, how can I say, I don't know how to say. It was not like she did not want the outside world, she just felt her ways were better, or just how it was suppose to be.

(Participant 1)

Participant 2 described her experience of growing up sheltered from the poverty around her:

What I can remember of my first years of life I was very happy, I thought my parents got along great and we were all happy. Well I thought my sister was a brat, but I was a happy kid...Growing up I did not know other kids were poor, now I know that my friends didn't have enough, but I didn't know then. I did not know that other kids only got the small box of crayons because that is what the tribe gave out for free. I thought if you had the small box of crayons it meant you had mean parents. I look at the houses they grew up in or think about the clothes they wore and I realize they were pretty poor. (Participant 2)

Like Participant 2, Participant 5 described what it was like to grow up sheltered from poverty; like Participant 1, Participant 5 also grew up with a feeling of being sheltered in a more general sense, such that she felt safe and shielded from threats:

Growing up I never knew we were poor, we always had food, mom would make a big meal for dinner every night. We had nice clothes, they were hand me downs but they were nice, she always fixed our hair. People would always tell mom that we all looked so nice...You just did not ask. You did not ask for thing, I knew not to ask for things, but I thought that was normal. You know Indian kids are pretty quiet, we don't just speak out of turn or without being spoken to. We had real good manners, I was so quiet at school, the teachers would always say what a good kid I was. I just thought I was normal, I did what I was told. I don't even remember what punishment was if you were bad, I don't think I was ever bad. I don't think I was afraid, I just knew how to act and I wanted to be good.

(Participant 5)

Participant 6 also described the experience of growing up sheltered from hardship: "All my friends were privileged, they were all spoiled, none of my friends were on welfare. I know now how hard some kids had it when I was growing up, but then I had no idea." For Participant 7, growing up on the reservation also meant being sheltered from the surrounding poverty to such an extent that she was unaware of the hardships her peers were exposed to:

School came pretty easily to me, so I never had to argue with my mom about school, I liked school, I had friends. I had friends both Indian and white, my dad was white, but that wasn't it, everyone knew I was Indian. I knew kids who were poor, but you know, ya thought, oh it's cause they don't have a dad or something. We did not understand that some kids were really poor and we did not understand

about the drugs. And I always thought kids would got bad grades were lazy, not that anyone just wasn't good at school or that they were too hungry, ya know.

(Participant 7)

**Family relationships.** Participants described the meanings their relationships with their mothers, with their fathers, and with their extended families gave to growing up on a reservation.

**Mothers.** Participants who discussed their mothers reported a variety of relationships, ranging from abuse and neglect (Participants 1, 3, 4, 6, and 9) to love and nurturance (Participants 2 and 7). Participant 1 experienced abuse and neglect from her mother:

My mom worked two jobs, she was there sometimes and sometimes not. It would depend on if she had a boyfriend. I t was better if she was not around, my mom was not the nicest person. I mean she is my mom, I, well, I mean I want to be helpful for you, ohhh, she was very verbally, verbally and emotionally abusive.

(Participant 1)

Participant 3 described the experience of growing up with a mother who was neglectful, in part due to economic hardship:

My mom never stuck up for us. I remember feeling like no one gave a shit about me. Really, I was just there to help with the younger kids. Have you ever changed and washed out cloth diapers? Disgusting! I could never understand why my mother put up with it from two husbands, but now I understand, she was raised

even poorer than I was and to her a bad husband was better than no husband at all.

(Participant 3)

Participant 3's mother also isolated her and attempted to stunt her ambitions:

We were not allowed to play with kids who my mom thought was too Indian, so that meant any kids that were involved in that culture. Of course, we couldn't play with the white kids either. My brother tried to be friends with a kid in his class until mom found out he was the son of the school principal. His family was too far about our station. We might not have practiced the culture of NAs but my mom kept us in the culture of poverty. She taught us not to expect much from our lives, that we would always be less than. (Participant 3)

Participant 4's childhood experience was characterized by the disorder of frequent relocations initiated by her mother, and also by maternal neglect:

Very chaotic, my mom moved us a lot. We started in, we started in one place and moved from reservation to reservation. We never stayed for more than a year, but usually less. We left the first place because my father was abusive. Not just to my mom, well mostly to my mom but also to me and my sister. But we were so poor, and never stayed anywhere for long. Sometimes there was not enough to eat, thank goodness for school. I never understood why she kept moving, like the next Rez was gonna be any better...My mother was homeless some of the time and had decided she was bi-sexual. She didn't have time for us, we didn't fit in her life. She kept moving until she was first diagnosed with cancer, then she settled down

and moved less. She had cancer twice, she beat it, she is still living. (Participant 4)

Participant 9 also reported feeling neglected by her mother:

When my mother had the boys she had less time for me. Really though, it seems sad, but I wasn't sad. I look back now and she was like my big sister. My grandmother raised me, bought my clothes and my school supplies and my prom dresses, my mom would come and take pictures and act all proud, ya know like she had anything to do with how I looked... whatever. (Participant 9)

Participant 6 described her abandonment by her mother:

I grew up on the reservations, when I was 2.5 my mom dropped me off at my Grandmother's (my dad's mom) and she never came back, then she brought my sister, then my brother. She never came back for any of us. We would go back and forth from grandmothers to my aunt's. (Participant 6)

Participants 2 and 7 reported good relationships with their mothers. Participant 7's mother believed in keeping her children busy, such that Participant 7's childhood was characterized by engagement with sports and tradition:

My brother and I were both very involved in track and cross country. He was so good; he went to state every year. I did OK myself. Mom still did her best to keep us involved with spiritual practices. My brother was expected to go to sweats once he was old enough and I was expected to help with the feast and make fry bread or soup. We were just really busy all the time, I guess I try to do that with my kids. Keep them busy so they stay out of trouble. (Participant 7)

Participant 2's childhood was characterized by the presence of a mother who was deeply involved in homemaking and caring for their family: "My mom was always home, she worked part time, but only while we were at school. She did all the housework, cooking and anything that had to do with raising children."

**Fathers.** The childhoods of Participants 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9 were characterized by absent, ineffectual, or abusive fathers. Participant 1 said very simply, "My dad taught me what I didn't want in a man. I knew I wanted someone different than him." Participant 2 described a father who remained a part of the family without being present:

I understood that my dad was never around, but I thought that was normal. I thought all dads played softball, golf and bowling and usually had a beer at the bar before coming home. I was very used to him not being around on the weekends. If the weather were nice he would be at the golf course and if the weather was bad, he would be at the bar...I have no memory of my father cooking a single meal or ever taking us anywhere with him. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 described the experience of growing up with a disengaged father and an alcoholic stepfather:

My mother could skin and dress a deer in minutes. I thought it was so sad that she was the one who had to take care of that, but my Dad did not do anything that would be women's work. My stepdad was worse, at least my father did mechanical repairs. My step dad was so lazy and a drunk, and he treated the kids that were his way better than he treated us. (Participant 3)



Like Participant 3's stepfather, Participant 6's father abused substances: "We never lived alone with my dad either, he had a drug and alcohol problem, but he moved in and out of the house." Participant 9's father was completely absent, but was rumored to be an alcoholic:

I didn't know who my dad was and my grandfather was not really in our lives either. He was a drunk, and so was the man that was my dad my auntie told me. I didn't feel like I was missing anything. My uncles lived with my grandma most of my life. Well until one of them touch me and my cousin. Then my grandma kicked him out, but we never talked about it again. (Participant 9)

Participant 7's father was physically available but emotionally remote after his divorce from her mother:

My parents split when I was in junior high. I never really knew why, I never saw them fight. I still have never seen them fight. We did our weekends with our dad, he was in our life after the divorce, but not every day. The older we got the less we saw him. I was just so busy with ya know being a teenager. My brother lived with him for a while, but, I don't know if it was that long of a time or what. He is part of my life now, but ya know he has his other family and stuff. (Participant 7)

***Extended families.*** Participants 1, 4, 6, 8, and 9 described what it was like to be raised primarily or entirely by extended family, either grandparents or aunts and uncles. For Participant 1, growing up on a reservation meant being raised by a grandmother, not only for her but for so many children that she called the arrangement "a tradition": "I lived on the reservation for 31 years, I was raised by my grandmother. Which really is a

tradition also.” For Participant 4, the experience of being transferred from her mother’s to her grandmother’s household was associated with a vast sense of relief, and with a significant improvement in her standard of living:

After a while of this moving around my grandmother put her foot down, she told my mother to bring us to her and then she could go run around wherever she wanted. I don’t know why my mom listened to her, but she did. We went to live with our grandmother and everything changed. Things got so much better. We finally had a permanent home and culture in our lives. I always felt in touch with my culture, thanks to my grandmother. She told me the stories, she taught me words in our language, she taught me to sew and bead. I could bead for hours, I loved it so much. It just felt like it was where I was always supposed to be. I finally felt like I belonged somewhere and to someone, I was the happiest I had ever been. (Participant 4)

Participant 6 was also raised by her grandmother, and, like Participant 1, she described this experience as normal on a reservation:

The relationship I had with my parents was not normal, not by white standards. I know that by my husband’s family, they always say [my parents] were more like my siblings than like my parents. Now that I live in a white world, I see that is probably true. Even though I don’t think it is OK how they acted, I wasn’t the only one raised by her grandma, it can’t be bad, I turned out OK. I don’t think they mean it was bad, just different. (Participant 6)

Like Participants 1,4, and 6, Participant 9 described a happy childhood in which she was raised primarily by a grandmother and an aunt:

I had a great childhood. It was not what a white girl would say was normal, but it was to me. I was raised mostly by my grandmother, but kinda also by my auntie. And I spent time with my mom too. I knew she was my mom, but lots of girls were raised by their grandmothers so I never thought anyone would think it was strange or different. Ya know, if my cousins were staying at my auntie's that is where I stayed. (Participant 9)

Participant 8 described her experience of a happy childhood under the auspices of her aunt and uncle, who became her adoptive parents after her birth mother abandoned her with them:

When I was three months old my mother gave me to my aunt and uncle to adopt me. My birth mom was only 19 years old and she knew she was too young to raise me. We lived on Crow Agency for the first 5 years of my life, then my [adoptive] parents decided to move to Lodge Grass. My parents has a grocery store in Lodge Grass. I had a good childhood. Most of my family lived on Crow Agency, so that was hard, but the school was better where we were. We had a good life, my parents were strict but fair. I got along well with my siblings, had good friends at school when I was little. I grew up in a time that you could run around all day and be home by dark. My siblings were a bit older, but there were kids to play with and I always found something to do to keep me busy. My mom would work all day at the store and then come home and cook and clean. She was

so crazy about having the house clean. When I would come home after being out all day and I was dirty, she would get so mad at me. Dirt was about the only thing that made her mad. (Participant 8)

**Research Question 2: What Experiences Have Led NA Women Who Grew Up on the Reservations to Choose to Raise their Children off the Reservations?**

Three subthemes emerged during the analysis of data related to the experiences that had caused participants to choose to raise their children off the reservation: *social conditions*, *personal trauma*, and *opportunities elsewhere*. Results related to the first subtheme include participants descriptions of their experiences of the pervasive poverty, substance abuse, and mistreatment of women on the reservations. In relation to the second subtheme, personal traumas included sexual abuse, the murder of a friend, and the addiction-related deaths of close relatives. Results associated with the third subtheme include participants' descriptions of the educational and career opportunities that drew them away from the reservations.

**Social conditions.** Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8 chose to raise their children off the reservation because of their experiences of the prevailing social conditions on the reservation. Participant 1 chose to leave the reservation with her children because of her perception of the dangers to children and the damaging role models there:

Things are so different now, I mean, I cannot let [my children] run around [unsupervised] like I did when I was little. My grandmother would let me go out for all day. I would, ya know, just have check in once a while...I kinda knew already that I couldn't have my boys grow up there, things were just getting bad,

the drugs and the men, I couldn't let my boys be like those men, like the guys who do drugs and hurt women. (Participant 1)

She attributed the harmful behavior of the men on the reservation to the obsolescence of the traditional masculine role:

I wanted to teach my sons different. The men used to protect and hunt, in today's world that is not so much that is need, so the men do not know how to act. We don't need warriors now, we don't need hunters, well they hunt, but it is not a lifestyle, Nobody takes days to go out and get a buffalo. (Participant 1)

Part of Participant 5's motivation to raise her children away from the reservation was her awareness of the social conditions on the reservation; like Participant 1, she was alarmed by the prevailing mistreatment of women:

I always knew I wanted to leave the reservation, I just knew there was something bad about it. I wouldn't move back, the men are not respectful of the women, they try to say they are all traditional and stuff, but they are not, women are supposed to be the leaders of the clan, but not on the reservation, they are abused and hurt. (Participant 5)

Participant 8 felt impelled to raise her children away from the reservation because of her experience of the pervasiveness of alcoholism:

I guess I always knew I would move off the reservation. There was so much drinking and drugs. Drinking was very important in my family. Everyone drank. My sister and her husband drink quite a bit now, but I never really drank. I think

because I was so much younger, I watched everyone get drunk and be stupid and I knew I did not want that, or my kids to see me like that. (Participant 8)

Participants 2 and 3 reported that they had decided to raise their children away from the reservation because of their experiences of the reservation's poverty. Participant 2 described the experience in these terms:

Now everyone is poor, I could never live there. It is so sad there, nobody seems happy, I mean like ever. I knew from as long as I can remember that I wanted to get off the reservation, like right away. I left right after graduation to go to college. I did go home the first few summers, but after that I never lived there again. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 was also affected by the experience of extreme poverty. She recalled a childhood illness during which her family seemed indifferent to her survival because they were so numbed by hardship:

My first memories of my childhood were being poor. We had nothing. We had no indoor plumbing. We had chickens in the front yard for eggs and if times were tough, well tougher than usual, a chicken might be dinner...I had a mass behind my ear [during early adolescence], my mother was told I needed to go to the hospital in Washington and I might not survive. She put me on the train by myself at age 12 and went home. The next day she sold all my belongings. When I got off the train two weeks later, no one was there to pick me up, I walked home and when I walked in the house everyone seemed surprised to see me, but not

necessarily glad. I know now that my mother's life was just so hard she had no time for joy, no reason to believe anything would ever be happy. (Participant 3)

**Personal trauma.** Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 were motivated in part to raise their children away from the reservation because of their experiences of personal trauma.

Participant 3 was raped by her stepfather:

I was raped as a teen. Every day he would come in my room and say, did you have your period yet, wait for my answer and then leave. So, after I had my period I asked to be sent to catholic school, I knew that would make them happy, I mean I might become a nun. I knew that wouldn't happen but it would get me off the reservation...I always knew I wanted to leave the Reservation, well ever since my rape, well even before that, probably since the surgery and nobody seem to care if I was there or not and all the people are so cold, even my family. Who would want to raise a child in that environment? (Participant 3)

Participant 4 also became disenchanted with the reservation after suffering sexual abuse:

As I got older I began to see the cracks in my perfect world. We started to hang out with more family members. As I got older my uncle gave me those small cans of Budweiser. He called them, "Kids Budweiser". That was when he began raping me. Once I told about it, they made him stop, but I know there were other kids he hurt. It is just what happens to so many of us, we are told we will get over it, like they got over it. I worry about my sister's kids, they are still there, I would take them in a heartbeat. My family assures me they are fine, but I can't help but wonder. (Participant 4)

Participant 5 chose to leave the reservation when a friend was murdered there:

I was going to college with my best friend, but one month after we graduated, to the date, she was murdered, you might have heard about it, it was all over the news the last few years because her killer got people to stick up for him and he got out of prison. But anyways, I was so depressed, I partied a lot and flunked most of my classes. I didn't want to go back to the reservation, so I went to live with her parents. They had moved off the reservation after her murder... Ya I was angry for so long about the murder, I couldn't go back to the Rez. But then we started to go back to visit, it just seems to get so sad, so angry. The meth gets worse every day. (Participant 5)

Participant 6 felt that she had lost her family to addiction:

My dad is dead from COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease], my mom is still an alcoholic. My siblings are addicts, I actually lost two siblings in two different car wrecks that involved alcohol. Why would I ever want to be part of that world. (Participant 6)

**Opportunities elsewhere.** Participants 6, 7, and 9 were influenced to leave the reservation because they had found better opportunities elsewhere. Participant 7 left to pursue her education and to advance her career:

I decided to go to nursing school. I was always very conscious of what things cost and if we were poor. Mom was always talking about how much things cost. I think she wanted me to understand money, but it just made me nervous to not have money. So I heard my auntie say one day that one of my cousins was gonna



be a nurse cause they make “good money” and the tribe will help you pay for school. That was reason enough for me. So I had to work at IHS for a couple years to get my loans paid off and then I left the reservation. I got offered jobs on the reservation, but I wanted to do psych medications and no one could be a mentor, so I had to move to one of the bigger towns. It wasn’t about leaving the rez it was about moving towards something. I kinda thought I would move back.  
(Participant 7)

Participant 6 also left to further her education:

My whole life my grandmother wanted me to live my life on the reservation. I left the reservation because I wanted to go to college, I got a degree in public relations. I was not sure if I would return to the rez, there were more education where I was, but it was so much more expensive to live. (Participant 6)

Participant 9 left the reservation with her child to remain with her boyfriend while he worked: “My boyfriend moved to North Dakota to work in the oil fields and within a few months I ended up moving with him. I dropped out of high school and we had our first son.”

### **Research Question 3: What Challenges Do Women Who Grew Up on the Reservations Face When They Try to Raise Their Children off the Reservations?**

Participants reported facing two closely related challenges. The first, reported by Participants 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9, was the cultural challenge of maintaining a connection to NA culture and/or a sense of rootedness while living off the reservation. The second challenge, reported by Participants 1 and 6, was the personal challenge of maintaining a

connection with family members who had remained on the reservation and/or of establishing connections with the people they now lived among. Participant 2 described the challenge of staying connected to her heritage in these terms:

Now that I live off [the reservation], well no one knows we are Indian. Not like we hide it are anything, we just don't talk about it. We enrolled the kids really just to help them if they want to work for the BIA or to help with college. It is not something we talk about or discuss at home. It is not something I am embarrassed or anything. I guess I just don't know where I would start with the kids, telling them stuff. (Participant 2)

Participant 4 and her husband worked hard to keep their children connected to their Native heritage, but she still felt that her children were too distant from their heritage:

I am not sure I could have left if my husband weren't so in touch with his culture. My husband dances, and speaks some of his language and does leather work. He has the same beliefs in The Creator that I do. We are very together, it helps a lot since we are away from our people...We are trying our best, we want to for our girls, well and for ourselves. We tell stories of our families and traditions, I teach the girls beadwork and crafts, my husband and I both do leatherwork. Any way we can teach them our point of view. Because they are missing so much. They do not know that life. I don't see any of them ever living on the reservation, our life is so nomadic I just don't know where they will end up. I do feel disconnected from my culture, like I said we are trying out best, we try hard. But there are so many things they cannot do. I realize now that kids on the Rez don't know how to

relate to other cultures. But my kids are disconnected from culture, my youngest came home and said, “we learned about the Indians at school today”, she did not realize that was HER history. (Participant 4)

Participant 5 also felt that her children’s NA heritage was not important to them: “My boys have always known they were Indian, but it is not something that seems that important to my oldest. He never asked questions or wanted to go with his friends to anything [cultural].” For Participant 7, her children’s distance from NA culture had to be balanced against the well-rounded upbringing they were receiving away from the reservation:

[My children] go visit [the reservation] in the summer and my daughter dances and my mom is teaching her beading. I keep the spiritual side of NAs in my life. My husband is white and we go to church for him, but he does not get upset or anything about the Native spirituality that I want the kids to have. They can have both, it is good for them. I am lucky, but I also worked hard. Nursing school was hard, grad school was hard, marriage is hard, but I worked to make them work. I have a good life, I cannot say if it would be the same if I stayed on the reservation. I imagine my kids would have more culture in their lives, but they have some and they have other things. I want them to be well rounded, I think they will be. (Participant 7)

Participant 9 also described a sense of disconnection from NA culture that affected both her and her sons:

I had no idea what I was getting myself into, moving to the big city just me and the boys. But somehow I found a babysitter for when I worked nights and we make it work. We did good, I have a house and a car, my boys don't do drugs, they were in sports, ya know and good kids. We don't go to church and we don't have nothing to do with other Natives. There are some here and they have powwow and Indian Club at the school, but we just aren't part of that. (Participant 9)

Participant 6 felt disconnected from NA culture and also, more importantly to her, from her close family members who had remained on the reservation:

Well I want to have my family in my life, it is weird I don't want anything to do with the Rez, but I want to have my family in my life. I have a couple of aunts I am real close to. I just was thinking, I am the only one who left and I am the only one who doesn't do drugs, or well drink. I wouldn't want to be back in Washington, that is too far from family, but where we are close enough here on the other side of Montana. It does take a lot for them to come see me though. I have had two miscarriages, one at nine weeks the other was 20 weeks. For him we had a funeral. My husband had to call my mom and invite her to the funeral, she wasn't going to come just for me, she had to hear that we needed her, how stupid is that. I guess it is another cultural thing, she had to be invited by the male leader of our household. It is so weird, I have very little culture in my life, but if I want to have any contact with them I need to know the crazy rules. (Participant 6)

Participant 1 expressed that she and her family felt disconnected from the people they lived among off the reservation: “I like the town we live in now, it has a good school, but it is kinda lonely. I can’t let the kids go run around and they don’t have many friends.”

**Research Question 4: What Are the Reasons for NA Women Who Grew Up on the Reservations Chose to Stay with Their Children Off the Reservation?**

There was considerable overlap between the reasons participants cited for their initial decision to raise their children away from the reservations (discussed in relation to research question two, above) and their reasons for adhering to that initial decision in spite of the challenges discussed in relation to research question three. For example, Participant 1’s references to the pervasive drug abuse and mistreatment of women on the reservation, quoted above, were offered to explain both her initial decision to raise her children away from the reservation and her adherence to that decision in spite of the sense of disconnection she experienced in her new community. The only interviewee whose reason for leaving differed substantially from her reason for staying away was Participant 9, who became more aware of the negative social conditions on the reservation in retrospect than she had been while she lived there:

It was not like I made a conscious decision to leave the Reservation, but once I was gone I knew I could never go back, I didn’t want my boys to smoke weed and drop out. And I began to see how messed up it was that my mom didn’t raise us. I could not imagine letting my boys live with someone else or let someone touch them. (Participant 9)

In addition to their primary reasons for continuing to raise their children away from the reservations, Participants 6, 7, and 8 cited relationships as reasons for remaining away. Participant 6 said:

Before I was sure what I would do [away from the reservation], I met my husband. I stayed with him then we moved to Spokane. Well there is no culture there and with a white husband, well you see it was just hard for someone who barely had culture to begin with...I have no connections to my culture, my husband is White, he has no interest in Native culture. (Participant 6)

Participant 7 was kept away from the reservation by her marriage, her job, and the educational benefits her children received in their present community:

I met my husband and got married and his life was in [city] and I had a good job. Now that are kids are in school and the city has all these programs we don't have at home, I would never move them to the Rez. (Participant 7)

Participant 8 was kept from the reservation first by her marriage, then by the desire to maintain custody of her children after the divorce:

I ended up dating a guy from there and we got married a couple of years later. We had two children and life was pretty good ya know. After a while I missed Montana and wanted to move home. We moved back to Montana for a few years but my husband had a better job in New Mexico with the oil fields so we moved back again. I went back to the BIA and I am still there. It is a good place to work. Federal benefits and you can transfer to other places. Kinda thought we would move back to Montana, I just wasn't sure. But a few years ago, we got divorced,

and you know how parenting agreements are these days, neither parent can move out of town without risking custody. So I will be here until my kids graduate.

(Participant 8)

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of NA women living off the reservation regarding their current living conditions, their quality of life, and their parenting experiences in raising their children. To achieve this, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine NA mothers who reside outside NA Indian reservations but possess enrollment in the federally recognized Crow Tribe of Montana. Four research questions were used to guide the study.

The first research question was: What does it mean for a NA woman to grow up on the NA Indian reservation? Three subthemes emerged from the data related to this question: varying degrees of cultural exposure, feeling sheltered, and family relationships. For most participants, growing up on a reservation meant feeling isolated from the surrounding NA culture by a family that did not participate in that culture; only two participants reported that their families had been very observant of NA traditions. A majority of participants felt sheltered during their childhoods on the reservation, either from NA culture, from “white” culture, or from the poverty that surrounded them. In describing the meaning their family relationships had given to growing up on a reservation, participants described a variety of experiences, ranging from abuse and abandonment to love and nurture. A majority of participants were raised by extended family, rather than by their parents.

The second research question was: What experiences have led NA women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservations? Participants initially made the decision to raise their children away from the reservations because of their experiences of negative social conditions (including poverty, drug abuse, and mistreatment of women) or personal trauma on the reservations, or because of educational and career opportunities outside of the reservations. The third research question was: What challenges do women who grew up on the reservations face when they try to raise their children off the reservations? Participants reported that they faced two challenges: the cultural challenge of maintaining a connection to NA culture and/or a sense of rootedness while off the reservation, and the personal challenge of maintaining connections with family who had remained on the reservation and/or of establishing close connections with members of their new communities. The fourth research question was: What are the reasons for NA women who grew up on the reservations chose to stay with their children off the reservation? Most participants chose to remain away from the reservation for the same reasons they initially decided to leave: pervasive poverty, substance abuse, and mistreatment of women on the reservation; personal traumas, including sexual abuse and the addiction-related deaths of close family members; and opportunities or relationships off the reservations.

In Chapter 5, the results are discussed within the broader context of the experiences of NA women in the reservation and their lives outside of it. The findings are also interpreted in light of the current literature on parenting experiences and quality of life of NA women. Chapter 5 also includes recommendations for further studies based on



the limitations of the present study. Chapter 5 highlights the importance of understanding how NA women perceive their roles, which further demonstrates how social structures impinge upon their meaning-making processes.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

Due to the impoverished state of reservations, NAs face societal and familial challenges that consequently impact their decision to stay or leave their homes (Frank, 2013). In leaving the reservations, people become uprooted from their native culture and need to adapt to a new one (Miller, 2014). This confusion regarding their cultural background is experienced by NA children whose mothers left the reservations (Miller, 2014). The purpose of the present study is to explore the experiences of NA women living off the reservation regarding their current living conditions, their quality of life, and their parenting experiences in raising their children. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

**RQ1.** What does it mean for a NA woman to grow up on the NA Indian reservation?

**RQ2.** What experiences have led NA women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservations?

**RQ3.** What challenges do women who grew up on the reservations face when they try to raise their children off the reservations?

**RQ4.** What are the reasons for NA women who grew up on the reservations chose to stay with their children off the reservation?

Results of the study revealed subthemes emerging from the research questions, which reflect the lived experiences of NA women living off the reservation. RQ1 explored the meaning of growing up on the NA Indian reservation, and the subthemes are

“varying degrees of cultural exposure”, “feeling sheltered”, and “family relationships”.

RQ2 determined the experiences that have pushed the participants to leave the reservation and raise their children off the reservation. The subthemes that emerged are “social conditions”, “personal trauma”, and “opportunities elsewhere”. RQ3 aimed to identify the challenges that NA women, who grew up on the reservation, face when they raise their children off the reservation. The challenges identified by the participants are maintaining the connection to NA culture and maintaining connection with relatives. Lastly, RQ4 explored the reasons as to why the participants chose to stay with their children off the reservation. Social conditions such as prevalent drug abuse and mistreatment of women are the main reasons why NAs chose to stay off the reservation.

These subthemes demonstrated how the participants perceive their experiences and how these experiences relate their decision in staying and raising their children off the reservation. Understanding the meaning-making processes of NA women in light of these issues showed how their experiences growing up on the reservation have consequently impacted their decisions later in life and in relation to their role as a mother. Findings also showed how their perceptions are hinged on the recognition – or lack thereof – of their cultural background and experiences of trauma and belongingness in relation to both the culture on the reservation and with their family. The next sections include an in-depth discussion of the results in light of the current literature on NA culture and the parenting roles of NA women.

## **Experiences of Native American Women on Reservations**

Research questions one and two aimed to investigate the meanings and experiences of NA women who grew up on the reservation, and how these experiences have led to their decision to leave and raise their children off the reservation. For RQ1, the subthemes “varying degrees of cultural exposure”, “feeling sheltered”, and “family relationships” showed the meanings of being a NA woman on the reservation. These reflect the participants’ perception of their status as NA women. On the other hand, RQ2 revealed the external forces that impinge upon the personal experiences of NA women, and how these experiences relate to their role as a mother and their decision to raise their children off the reservation.

**Life on the Reservation as a Native American Woman.** Based on the accounts of the participants, family and gender roles are pivotal in defining the meanings of being a NA woman on the reservation. The first subtheme “varying degrees of cultural exposure” mainly involves the meaning of gender roles, particularly the role of women, on NA reservation’s culture. There is a definite delineation between feminine and masculine roles. These roles are also associated with a sense of autonomy and being respected and valued. This is incongruent with the common notion that NA women have to contend with gender inequality in society (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). “Becoming a woman” in the NA tradition meant taking care of the younger ones – a role seen as respectable of a woman that requires a high level of maturity. Several participants also recounted being taught life lessons by their family and relatives. These lend support to the notion that NA women’s identity and role as caretakers and child bearers are based on

the principles of spirituality, extended family, and tribe (Flake, 2015). Native women are revered for their views on sacred matters, herbal medicines, and tribal history (Flake, 2015), which is reflected by how the grandmothers and mothers are seen as educators of traditional values of their culture.

Even though they grew up on the reservation, the participants reported different degrees of immersion to the traditional values of NAs. For those who were not exposed to the culture, feelings of alienation and indifference are prevalent. The main challenge is the contradicting teachings of NA spirituality and Catholicism. This dichotomy is best described by one of the participant, stating that being Catholic means not being rooted on cultural roots. While this is an interesting finding, little is known about the dissonant experiences of NAs, let alone NA *women*, who grew up in a Catholic household in an NA culture. However, this shows how acculturation transpires in the participants who were not immersed to the traditional NA culture. It could be noted that the participants who expressed indifference or alienation constantly used the phrase “I don’t know”, “I don’t remember”, or any similar terms, which could be indicative of the confusion in reconciling Catholic teachings to NA spirituality. Acculturation can also result to the abandonment of the culture of origin in order to assimilate to the new culture (Feinstein, 2012; Sax, 2015), which, in this case, is experienced by the participants whose parents did not immerse them to the NA traditional culture.

The second subtheme “feeling sheltered” reflects the need for protection from the “white world”, poverty, and other general threats in the NA reservation as well as from societal expectations. This lends support to the study by Lajimodiere (2013), stating that

stereotypes on NA women spring from a white colonist viewpoint rather than from first-hand experiences of NA women. Previous studies (Bond, 2012; Druckerman, 2012; Schiffer, 2014) have also shown how stereotypes portrayed NAs as naturally inferior, lacking self-respect, dignity, self-control, and morality. Some stereotypical labels given to NAs are drunken Indians, the Squaw, and the Indian princess (Schiffer, 2014). The caregivers of the participants, who are generally the mothers or grandmothers, preferred that things stay as they are – that is, that their daughters grow up being taught with the traditional culture and values of NAs. This shows how NA women sought agency by sticking to the native beliefs amidst colonialism.

Due to the impoverished state of the reservation, NA parents also perceive a need to protect their children from the threats of poverty around them. Based on the accounts of the participants, it could be seen that their caregivers were actively sheltering them from the realities outside their household. Although the participants reported that they had a semblance of what poverty is, they admitted that they really had no idea about the experiences of their less fortunate peers. Poverty in areas with a large population of NAs is well-documented, showing that NAs have the highest birth rate and are thrice more likely to live in poverty compared to their white counterparts (Frank, 2013). In addition, these environmental factors may influence resiliency to mental health issues based on the individual's previous experiences (Mileviciute, Trujillo, Gray, & Scott, 2013; Seshadri & Rao, 2012). Historically, the industrialization of the United States prevented the dispersion of wealth, thus leaving reservations to suffer in poverty (Turansky & Miller, 2012). The low quality of life on the reservation area was found to be associated with

increased teenage pregnancies (Frank, 2013), high rates of substance and drug abuse (Seshadri & Rao, 2012), and high drop-out rates (Chua, 2011).

Majority of the participants also experienced abusive to negligent parents, a narrative that is also revealed in previous studies focused on NA culture. Due to high rates of teenage pregnancies (Frank, 2013), many mothers are distressed because of lack of knowledge and resources in raising children. Distressed NA mothers, mostly still adolescents, may lash out at their babies because they are not ready to handle the demands of an infant (Reiter, 2011). They become irrational, angry and hurt their children to stop them from crying or simply abandon and neglect these children (Badinter & Hunter, 2011). Due to the retrospective nature of the accounts, it is interesting to note that, while it is evident that several of the participants' mothers were abusive and neglectful, participants had finally come to understand that their parents' actions stemmed from economic hardships and other problems.

Some participants have also experienced being cared for by extended families. Being raised by a relative, usually by grandparents, was described as a tradition and is normal in reservation culture. Turansky and Miller (2012) demonstrated the experiences of NA children from the time of forced removal from their families due to the belief that the home environments on the NA reservations were unfit for child-rearing. NA parents and elders were deemed as negligent, abusive, and unable to provide for the basic needs of their children because they were destitute themselves. NA mothers were declared to have poor mothering and domestic skills, and the fact that there were a significant number of young, unmarried NA mothers exacerbated the situation, validated the policy

of having NA children reared in proper boarding schools or by their adoptive Caucasian families. However, Turansky and Miller's (2012) proposition that relatives are negligent and abusive is incongruent to the present study's findings, which showed that some participants even described the transfer to extended families as a relief from a stressful living situation. True enough, previous studies have shown that NA families value the significance of the extended family system, especially in supporting children.

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relations or clan members normally take part in the upbringing of the NA children on the reservation (Badinter & Hunter, 2011).

### **Life on the Reservation as a Trauma Experience**

RQ2 explored the experiences of NA women on the reservation, and how these have led to their decision to raise their children off the reservation. Life on the reservation is typically hard and impoverished. This is amplified by the subthemes that emerged from this research questions, which are: "social conditions", "personal trauma", and "opportunities elsewhere". The subthemes "social conditions" and "personal trauma" are reflective of the collective trauma that NAs experience on the reservation; "opportunities elsewhere", on the other hand, involves the agency of the participants in regards to their decision to leave the reservation. In relation to this, RQ4 determined the reasons as to why the NA women decided to stay with their children off the reservation. The main reason is because of the pervasive social ills such as drug abuse and mistreatment of women.

Life on the reservation was described as damaging both to the physical and emotional safety of the participants' children. The prevailing social conditions on the



reservations, particularly of the obsolescence of the traditional masculine role, is seen as a danger to the children. This lends support to the study by Banados (2011), which revealed that substance abuse, child abuse, and teen pregnancy are the major reasons as to why NAs leave the reservations. In addition, reports demonstrated that NAs experience twelve times the U.S. national rate of malnutrition, nine times the rate of alcoholism, and seven times the rate of infant mortality; as of the early 1990s, the life expectancy of reservation-based men was just over forty-four years, with reservation-based women enjoying, on average, a life expectancy of just under forty-seven years (Frank, 2013).

It is interesting to note that gender role is also emphasized in this theme, where in the obsolescence of traditional masculine values on the reservation is a threat to the NA women's and children's well-being. For the participants, the men are tasked to protect and hunt. Such categorization of traditional masculine role lends support to how Brodie (2012) delineated the roles of women and men in the NA culture – that is, there is bound to be more equality if a NA woman is raising children; she has the common issues of raising children and instilling in them the values needed to be responsible adults. Men are better equipped with manual tasks and labor (Brodie, 2012).

The participants described the prevalence of substance and drug abuse and women and child abuse is associated with the dwindling value to the traditional masculine role. Traumatic events such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, addiction, and death of a friend experienced on the reservation also pushed the participants to leave and start anew someplace else. The second subtheme “personal trauma” is somehow related to “social conditions” in the sense that the social conditions are structural and societal

forces that infringe on the individual, while personal trauma mainly involved interpersonal experiences with people that are close to the individual. The social and personal dimension of trauma has led NA women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservation.

This is reflective of the current literature on the life of NAs on and off the reservation. The life expectancy of NA residing on a reservation is decades less than that of the national average (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). In particular, NA women are part of a marginalized population who endured a painful history of relocation from their homeland (Bigfoot & Funderburk, 2011). Add this to the long history of trauma due to relocation and displacements of NAs as a result of the colonialism (Turansky & Miller, 2012). NA descendants are usually born into circumstances that are not favorable to their ideal growth and development (Druckerman, 2012). Years of structural oppression have resulted in their removal from their families, with the goal of sending them off to better conditions. However, these children were subjected to torturous punishments, isolation, abuse, and neglect (Stange, Oyster, & Sloan, 2011). The participants' reasons as to why they chose to leave the reservation are reflective of the current plight of NAs on the reservations.

The third subtheme "opportunities elsewhere" is a rather positive category, which shows how the participants were able to use their agency in alleviating their experiences, as well as in protecting their offspring from the harsh realities of life on the reservation. Such opportunities involve the participants' career growth and education. This, however, seems incongruent with the current literature showing NA women get jobs, if at all, that

pay very low because the majority of them do not possess the skills and education for higher paying jobs (Chua, 2011). Interestingly, such discrepancy could be explained by the fact that opportunities for career growth and education are scarce on the reservation. This is exemplified by one participant's account, stating that there were no opportunities for the kind of job that she wanted on the reservation so she sought somewhere else. Another participant expressed that she left the reservation because she wanted to pursue undergraduate studies.

These results also showed how the life experiences of the participants affect their collective and personal identity formation and patterns (Wilcox & Kline, 2013). NA descendants are usually born into circumstances that are not favorable to their ideal growth and development (Druckerman, 2012). Prejudices such as seeing NA mothers as having poor mothering and domestic skills, and the fact that there were a significant number of young, unmarried NA mothers exacerbated the situation, validated the policy of having NA children reared in proper boarding schools or by their adoptive Caucasian families (Turansky & Miller, 2012). Thus, this may also explain as to how engraved the familial and gender roles are in the lived experiences of NA women.

The subthemes that emerged from RQ2 and RQ4 revealed the external forces and intrinsic motivations of the participants to leave the reservation and stay outside. External forces such as societal ills, abusive relationships, and lack of opportunities impinge on the participants' decision to raise their children off the reservation. Intrinsic goals such as personal and career growth also push the NA women to leave. It could be said that the,

based on the participants' accounts, life on the reservation also involves traumatic experiences that consequently impact the quality of life and well-being of NA women.

### **Challenges in Living off the Reservation**

For RQ3, the researcher sought to identify the challenges that women who grew up on the reservation face when they try to raise their children off the reservation. Results of the study showed two main challenges: (a) maintaining cultural rootedness, and (b) maintaining and/or establishing connections with relatives on the reservation. In both challenges the theme of disconnection, whether interpersonal or cultural, is prevalent. Interestingly, this is a common theme in NAs who left the reservation to leave behind their traumatic experience and find better opportunities for growth. The uprooting of an individual's native culture and transfer to a new one requires abandonment of the culture of origin (Gordon, 2012). Reflective of the experiences of the participants with regards to their children and their attempt to connect their selves to their culture of origin, acculturation gap can lead to the cultural discontinuity when at home (Sax, 2015).

While some participants expressed that they do attempt to stick to the roots and teach them to their children, others admitted that they do not see a good time or reason to tell their kids about their culture of origin. However, it is notable that several of the participants expressed confusion as to how they will reconnect to their roots and family given that they are not physically present in the place of origin. This shows how relocating from the reservation into urban areas has overwhelmed NAs, as this is the first exposure to life outside the reservation (Badinter & Hunter, 2011; Miller, 2013). One participant also recounted how overwhelming it was to move from the reservation to the

big city, something that is experienced by many other NAs who have left the reservation (Miller, 2013).

However, it is interesting to note that for some participants, living off the reservation means that their children will grow up to be more well-rounded and will have greater opportunities than when they have decided to go back to the reservation. This shows how NA women perceive their relocation in a more positive note, as amplified by the subthemes discussed in the previous sections. However, the disconnection with the culture of origin is a concern for some participants. This reflected how it is likely that an acculturation gap grows between children and parents of immigrant families, with the parents holding onto their traditional culture and the children acculturating to the new culture (Seshadri & Rao, 2012). Children have less difficulty picking up the new language and learning the traditions and cultural behaviors of the people in the new culture.

Based on these results, it could be noted that women who grew up on the reservation but decided to stay with their children off the reservation value their connection to their culture and with their relatives on the reservation. However, because of acculturation, NA women face challenges that hinder their relationship with their culture. While some parents proactively attempt to establish a cultural connection with their family, some participants find it difficult to introduce their culture of origin to their offspring.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The results of the study must also be interpreted in light of its limitations. First, while the interpretive phenomenological approach was able to capture the nuances and complexity of meanings of the lived experiences of NA women, the retrospective nature of interview data could be less reliable when analyzing the relationships of the constructs being studied. To enrich the results obtained from this study, it is advisable to employ quantitative approaches such as ANOVA and regression analyses to further nuance the variables of the construct. Developing and using questionnaires from previous studies could be beneficial in increasing the validity of the results.

Another issue is the generalizability of the topic. Phenomenological analysis often involves looking for and understanding the unique patterns and themes that are specific to the demographics that is being studied. It is, however, very useful in understanding the experiences of NA women with regards to leaving the reservation and living in more contemporary times, as well as raising their children off the reservation. Nuancing these social realities inevitably involves looking into the core themes and categories of these experiences, thus removing its viability to be applied in different contexts. To address this limitation, another research design may be employed to further our understanding of the experiences in this context.

For example, future studies could employ another qualitative design such as discursive psychology or discourse analysis. This could explain the power relations of NA women vis-à-vis structural and societal forces. It would be interesting to look into the different power relations that involve child-rearing in the context of NA families living

off the reservation. Another major limitation is the lack of research on NA women and their lived experiences as a mother and as someone who has left the reservation. The challenge here was to ensure that the research and follow-up questions could capture the depth of the experiences of the participants.

### **Recommendations**

Results of the study showed the different themes of the lived experiences of mothers from the Crow Tribe of Montana who have left the reservation and decided to raise their children off the reservation. It is apparent that societal structures such as gender roles are important in understanding how NA women create meaning from their lived experiences. It is recommended that future practical studies focus on the policies and laws that either promote or hinder the quality of life of NA women. Such studies would be helpful in recognizing the shortcomings of policies, and to appropriately address this through evidence-based knowledge.

For research, it would be beneficial to look into the different variables – predicting, moderating, mediating, etc. – that affect the quality of life of NA women living on the reservation and those who live in more contemporary times. This would give a better picture of the differences in living conditions, perspectives, and cultural practices that could also be a source of knowledge for social workers and other practitioners. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, due to the shifting paradigms in the mental health system, it is advisable to understand the mental health conditions of NAs due to their unique experiences.

## **Implications**

The results of the present study contributed to the growing body of literature on the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of NA women. Looking into these perceptions is important in understanding how NA women navigate their experiences vis-à-vis cultural changes and globalization. The themes that emerged from this phenomenological study provided empirical evidence to identify the socio-psychological processes that they undergo when reconciling their lived experiences on the reservation and the cultural disconnection in the city.

**Positive social change.** Aside from contributing to the literature, the subthemes that emerged from the study could help identify the root causes of problems among NA families for positive social change. Being able to recognize the challenges that NA women face in their daily lives is important for them to situate their roles amidst economic hardship. Understanding how NA women adjust, cope, and navigate the challenges that they encounter during motherhood may help them be more aware of their struggles as individuals and as part of a collective.

For scholars, practitioners, and leaders, the results of the study offered additional insight on the importance of the role of NA women in the environmental and cultural contexts. The results may help in promoting and developing practitioners and scholars to provide appropriate interventions for NA families. It is also important to understand culture-specific factors that would impact the effectiveness of these interventions. In addition, the results of the current study may help leaders in creating policies that would emphasize the welfare of NA environment and culture. Aside from the preservation of



their culture, structural changes that are based on NA beliefs would help in alleviating the traumatic experiences that they face on an almost daily basis. Results from this study provided a more concrete foundation for the intervention and support programs for NA women and families.

These findings may help in creating policies and laws that target the specific and general needs of NA women. Legislators, politicians, and social workers may use these insights to develop policies that emphasize the welfare of NA women living off the reservations. The present study highlighted the challenges that NA mothers encounter in raising children off the reservations. The knowledge from this study may be relevant to non-government institutions, specifically those in the marginalized sectors, to launch essential interventions for NA mothers.

In light of the results, the current study offered theoretical knowledge on the meanings of the lived experiences of NA women with regards to their experiences growing up on the reservation and later living in more contemporary times. The shifting roles of the family within the larger societal context places immense pressure on the family members, especially the mothers. NA culture is rooted in spirituality and family; a disconnect to their core beliefs poses inevitable stress to the individuals. The results of the study further substantiate the need to improve evidence-based studies focused on NAs and apply these into praxis.

In summary, the present study offered evidence-based knowledge on the meanings of lived experiences of NA mothers. Such meanings are bound within the unique context of life on and off the NA reservation. In addition, the study was able

provide insightful knowledge that can contribute to positive social changes within the NA community, especially NA women. The results of the study demonstrated the need to further improve current policies, systems, and interventions focused on the cultural and environmental contexts of NA families living in more contemporary times.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study is to understand the lived experiences of NA mothers who are raising children outside the reservation. Results of the study revealed subthemes that entail personal, structural, and societal struggles of NA women living in the contemporary times. To be a NA woman on the reservation, exposure to culture, feelings of being sheltered and family relationships are essential. However, due to social conditions, personal trauma, and better opportunities, NA women are forced to leave and stay off the reservation. Once they are acculturated in a different environment, NA women experience feelings of disconnect to their culture and encounter challenges in maintaining relationships with their relatives on the reservation. These themes provide evidence-based knowledge on how NA women perceive their experiences both as a woman and as a mother. Future studies are recommended to enrich the results by employing different research designs to further understand how NAs situate themselves in the shifting local and global landscape.

## Appendix A

*Themes, Codes Contributing to Themes, and Representative Quotations*

Theme	Codes contributing to theme	Representative quotation
RQ1. What does it mean for a Native American woman to grow up on the Native American Indian reservation?	Little cultural exposure; sheltered; never thought about living off reservation; family and romantic relationships; surrounded by culture; family and mothers; family and father figures; extended family; becoming a woman; cultural conflict	We never did anything cultural, or Indian. My parents acted like we weren't Indian. To be honest I am not even sure when I figured out I was Indian. Somewhere I heard my dad say we were enrolled.
RQ2. What experiences have led Native American women who grew up on the reservations to choose to raise their children off the reservations?	Social conditions-historical trauma; social conditions-poverty; social conditions-trauma; shifting roles; education and employment	I couldn't have my boys grow up there, things were just getting bad, the drugs and the men, I couldn't let my boys be like those men, like the guys who do drugs and hurt women.
RQ3. What challenges do women who grew up on the reservations face when they try to raise their children off the reservations?	Staying connected; fragmenting relationships; lack of connection	Now that I live off [the reservation], well no one knows we are Indian. Not like we hide it are anything, we just don't talk about it.
RQ4. What are the reasons for NA women who grew up on the reservations chose to stay with their children off the reservation?	Safety; relationships	It was not like I made a conscious decision to leave the Reservation, but once I was gone I knew I could never go back, I didn't want my boys to smoke weed and drop out.

## Appendix B:

### *Consent Form*

You are invited to take part in a research study on the life experiences of Native American mothers residing off the reservation. The researcher is inviting women who are enrolled in the Crow Tribe of Montana, are currently raising at least one child and are residing off the reservation. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Xan B. Creighton, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to examine how being raised on the reservation affects a mother's decision to raise her children off the reservation.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will first be asked to:

- Complete a brief questionnaire via email to assure you meet the criteria for the study (approximately 5 minutes)

If your responses to the questionnaire show you meet the study's research requirements for enrollment status, parenting status, and location of primary residence, you will then be asked to:

- Complete a one-on-one interview with the researcher in a private setting (approximately 1 hour)
- Be audio recorded in the course of the interview
- Interview will take place in a private, comfortable setting (i.e. researcher's private office). For those who are not in a commutable distance, teleconference options are available (i.e. Skype).
- There will be a debriefing that will take place after the interview to talk about the study and your experience in the study.
- Participate in a second, follow up interview (about a month after the initial interview) to review the responses given in the first interview and validate all information given is accurate (approximately 30-60 minutes)
- There will be no compensation of any kind given for participation in this study

Here are some sample questions:

- Living off a federally recognize Native American reservation
  - During your adulthood (18 years old) and once you began raising a child, how can you describe your family life and cultural experiences living off the reservation?

- During what stage of life do you believe you decided to raise your children off the reservation?
- How do you describe your connection with your culture now that you are not on the reservation

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. You will not be treated differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomfort from talking about sensitive personal issues and experiences, such as psychological stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. A list of professional referrals will be provided to all participants.

Participants can learn the results of the study to find out how being raised on the reservation may or may not play a role with Native American mother's decision to raise children off the reservation. If life experiences on the reservation do indeed play a role in one's decision to raise her children off the reservation and the reasons/themes are noted, then participants can gain a better understanding of themselves, their self-concept.

#### **Privacy:**

- Any information you provide will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, while the electronic media will be stored on a protected flash drive: All information will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by keeping it in a locked cabinet, while a password will be required to access the data kept on electronic file. Further, numbers will be assigned to each case, avoiding any possibility that participants can be identified. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.
- All information will be held confidential and privileged unless there is suspicion or you report that you have neglected or abused a child.
- All information will be held confidential and privileged unless you report suicidal or homicidal ideation, intent or plan in such that the researcher believes you are dangerous to yourself or to someone else.

#### **Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or text at (406)812-0688 or email at [xan.creighton@waldenu.edu](mailto:xan.creighton@waldenu.edu). If you wish to talk privately about your rights as a participant you may email the Walden IRB department at [irb@mail.walden.edu](mailto:irb@mail.walden.edu). Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

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