SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND ITS EFFECTS IN AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This study explored factors which both develop and effect the acts of social exclusion in American Indian Communities. The American Indian Population represents 1.7 percent of all US population. American Indian reservation communities have endured over 100 years of governmental oppression. Because of this, communities are closely knit. Through this realization, the following question was formed to guide this study: How does social inclusion or social exclusion serve to build, enhance, deter, or diminish, the quality of communications on American Indian Reservations?

The informative research strategy included a qualitative library/documentary research approach through literature review, case study, and theory application. The theory of historical trauma helps understand how social exclusion can deter or diminish already damaged communities. Philosophical foundation was supported through Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Due to lack of research specific to the American Indian community, this research strategy, questions, and hypotheses can guide and build subsequent research.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The goal of this study is to examine the changing environment of American Indian communities by asking the question: How does social inclusion or social exclusion serve to build, enhance, deter, or diminish, the quality of communications on American Indian Reservations?

Studies show that socially inclusive communities provide a better foundation for the youth as well as ageing populations who are more susceptible to the negative effects of social exclusion, which are feelings of detachment and loneliness (Baumgartner & Burns, 2013). Feelings of detachment and loneliness and at an individual level not only contributes to a variety of deeply rooted mental health issues, but also to more detrimental issues such as suicide. At a community level, feelings of detachment and loneliness can increase already existing divides creating social exclusion and an unhealthy environment.

Importance of the Study

American Indian values are very different from that of greater society. Many American Indians have lived a life on a reservation that includes a history of devastation and tragedy, which has contributed to extreme poverty and more than one hundred years of generational grief (Verbos & Gladstone & Kennedy, 2010). American Indians living on Indian Reservations are exposed to a high level of psychological and physical health issues which can be increased by living in socially excluded communities (Brown-Rice, 2013).

The differing views and values of American Indians carry over into patterns of behavior that include social exclusion in the community, school, and greater society. These repetitive patterns of behavior can contribute to long-term difficulties both on and off the reservation.
This study will evaluate relevant literature to further define social inclusion and social exclusion specifically to the American Indian population and reservation communities and develop a path for further insight. It is important to note that not all American Indians live on a reservation, however, the scope of this study will focus on the reservation communities.

**Statement of the Problem**

American Indians represent the smallest minority group in the United States with only 1.7 percent of the country’s population (US Census, 2012). According to Kathleen Brown-Rice (2013, para. 2) in *Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma Among Native Americans* “Native American adults are at a greater risk of experiencing feelings of psychological distress and more likely to have poor overall physical and mental health and unmet medical and psychological needs”.

American Indian reservation communities experience high rates of poverty which increases the distress and overall mental health of the community (Brown-Rice, 2013). This information is critical to understanding the effects of social exclusion in American Indian communities because it provides understanding to the critical and complex psychological substructures created by poverty and historical trauma.

This study will use the theory of historical trauma to explain the current issues facing the American Indian reservation communities along with the iceberg theory to provide framework. The iceberg theory shows us that the culture of a community is both *overt* and *covert* and only one-fifth visible (Caputo, 2002, p.296). However, it is the unseen issues beneath the surface that is the bulk of the iceberg and it is also the most deeply rooted (Caputo, 2002). Beneath the surface is where historical trauma continues to be relevant to American Indian communities.
Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a theory of human motivation. This theory provides framework to this study and helps to understand levels of motivation. Belongingness is a strong human need that can also get in the way of a person’s ability to form strong social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, belongingness is a fundamental human need and important to move up the hierarchy to reach self-actualization which is where a person would reach full potential (Van den Broeck & Ferris & Chang & Rosen, 2016).

Social exclusion at minimum is due to lack of belongingness and the inability to participate in normal relationships and activities with others (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013). The intended purpose of this study is to take a deeper look at social exclusion coupled with historical trauma by reviewing empirical literature to help understand how it impacts American Indian communities.

**Definitions of Terms Used**

*American Indian:* a person who would have ancestors who were in the United States of American before the arrival of Europeans (US Census, 2012).

*Communication Dissonance:* inharmonious or incongruent communication which can occur because of language and behavior which is learned and influenced by ones’ cultural environment (Caputo, 2002).

*Community:* a group of people who live in the same place with common attitudes, interests, and goals.

*Ethnocentricty:* when people in a community become so deeply rooted that they fail to see beyond their own cultural boundaries (Law, 1993).
*Intergenerational Trauma/Historical Trauma:* the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations (Hartmann & Gone, 2014).

*Reservations:* a legal pre-defined land designation for an American Indian tribe which is also governed by that tribe as a sovereign nation within the United States of America.

*Ruralism:* living in a rural area and only relating to certain characteristics, attitudes, and interactions of the people living in that particular community.

*Social Exclusion:* lack of resources and the inability to participate in normal relationships and activities with others (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013).

*Social Inclusion:* fairness and equal access which satisfies the human need to feel like one belongs in society (Baumgartner & Burns, 2013).

**Organization of Remaining Chapters**

Beyond this introduction, the following chapters are organized in such a way to present the collection of data and build upon communication theories, philosophical considerations, and ethical considerations, to help guide the researcher’s approach to this topic.

Chapter 2 provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of the literature reviewed in relation to the stated problem. In addition, theoretical and philosophical assumptions are also included to create a base of understanding to why the problem is relevant for research. This chapter is meant to be exhaustive and will be the longest chapter of this project and will also include rational arguments, research questions, and hypothesis statements.

Chapter 3 provides the scope and methodology for this particular study. The methodology proposed is the most viable approach to best serve to answer the research question. In addition, this chapter also discusses recommendations for data analysis and ethical considerations for this study.
Chapter 4 presents hypothesis statements to explain and encourage specific areas for examination. It will also empirically breakdown each hypothesis with completed research and discussion of philosophical considerations.

Chapter 5 is a synthesis of all materials as it relates to the research topic as well as discussing the limitations of the study and areas for possible research.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Philosophical Assumptions

Belongingness is a fundamental human need to be emotionally accepted by groups individuals associate with or are in close contact with during one’s life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, belongingness is a major source of human motivation (Taormina & Gao, 2013). According to Taormina and Gao (2013, para.1), the hierarchy of needs identifies five human needs, which are: psychological, safety-security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.

This framework provides a linear process which means that “the more each lower-level need was satisfied, the more the next higher-level need was satisfied” (Taormina & Gao, 2013, p.155). Before belongingness is achieved, one must meet the basic psychological and safety-security needs. If belongingness is not achievable, one cannot reach self-actualization which is the ability to reach full potential.

Socially exclusive experiences and environments can take away from the feelings of belongingness and acceptance because the basic psychological and safety-security needs will often be compromised. The needs of belongingness include friendship, sexual intimacy, and family (Gold, 2013, p.225). However, the unmet basic needs of people in communities or social groups that are historically mistreated are shown to develop a deeper sense of detachment to the world and people around them because they feel they don’t belong.

All human beings construct society, and “humans develop social selves through their association with others” (Musolf, 2001, p.285). If we consider Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the lack of belongingness with people can result in a lack of self-actualization which is realizing ones’ full potential.
Theoretical Basis

Intergenerational trauma or historical trauma can be defined as “the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide” (Hartmann & Gone, 2014, p.274). The deep roots of this trauma define many current problems facing American Indian people. Solomon et al. (2005, p. 52) in the Biology of Trauma writes “traumatic experiences cause traumatic stress, which disrupts homeostasis” or the ability to find balance and normalcy among society.

According to Hartmann and Gone (2014, p.275), the long history of genocide “historicizes” current issues in American Indian communities so that current issues are as a result of historical development. The idea of historical trauma theory began with the Jewish Holocaust but also specifically addresses American Indians and identifies that:

They [American Indians] would be at greater risk of developing physical and emotional concerns related to re-experiencing traumas…and are being confronted by emotionally significant stimuli in the present day that causes them to reflect about the historical traumas that occurred many generations ago. (Brown-Rice, 2013, para. 20)

Some examples of these reoccurring historical traumas experienced by American Indian families on Indian Reservations are broken families, high levels of domestic violence, relationship dysfunction, and substance abuse.

The Iceberg Theory states that culture is one-fifth visible and four-fifths invisible (Caputo, 2002, p. 296). The Healing Forest Model is similar to the iceberg theory but it is more applicable to the American Indian minority group. The healing forest model is helpful in identifying the roots of historical traumas and identifying the deeply rooted traumas that are
reoccurring for American Indians. This model also provides solutions to healing and promoting healthy more socially inclusive communities for the future.

Just as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs identifies what motivates people, self-determination theory proposes that people experience different types of motivation to varying degrees based on three psychological needs, “the need for autonomy, need for competence, and the need for relatedness” (Van den Broeck & Ferris & Chang & Rosen, 2016, p.1196). Self-determination is where American Indian communities need to be for healthy communities, autonomy to self-govern, competence to manage their own affairs, and relatedness among one another, individually, within the American Indian community, and within greater society. Meeting these needs develops a sense of connectedness which then increases ones’ psychological and physical health and as a result, increases a sense of belongingness (Vanhalst et al., 2015).

**The Literature**

Indian Reservation communities are very tightly knit. Because of this deep and close connection, many American Indians experience a lot of displacement when leaving the reservation, not only in society, but also when returning to their own reservation communities. The pattern of this displacement on a greater scale is a result of generations of social exclusion by the U.S. government and society. On a smaller scale this is social exclusion, the effects of social exclusion within smaller communities can be detrimental to some community members and the community as a whole.

**American Indian Population.**

According to the US Census (2012), the American Indian population is reported as 1.7 percent of all people in the United States. In addition, 0.7 percent of the total population identified with one or more other races while 0.9 percent only identified with American Indian
and Alaska Native (US Census, 2012). The US Census defines the racial classifications as if an individual:

1. Would have ancestors who were in America before the arrival of Europeans
2. Would be recognized by the community as Indian; and,
3. Holds himself or herself out to be Indian.

The National Native American Bar Association (NNABA, 2015, p.15) conducted a study on *The Pursuit of Inclusion* and stated that the complexity of simply being Indian is that, “In addition to racial classification, the U.S. Supreme Court has declared that there is a political status to being Native American”. American Indians are the only minority group that are required to obtain tribal membership in a tribe recognized by the federal government, and the dilemma is that not all tribes in the United States are federally recognized (NNABA, 2015). For purposes of race classification and being identified as a minority for the US Census, one does not have to be enrolled in a federally recognized tribe to identify themselves as being American Indian; the census only measures what race an individual chooses to identify as.

Census numbers are important to clarify with this research because the American Indian population is the most underrepresented minority group in the United States. Even with the smallest numbers the American Indian community has a 26% poverty rate compared to the 12% of the entire US population. Also “a large number of [the American Indian] population suffer from psychological, economic, social, environmental, and physical distress” (Brown-Rice, 2013, para. 40).

**Defining Community and Culture.**

A community is a group of people who live in the same place with common attitudes, interest, and goals. Together these attributes further define and identify a community and the
importance of culture. The culture of a community is what creates a larger and deeper meaning. The center of a community and culture resides in its people and together this creates a multifaceted phenomenon as it relates to communication, because people and attitudes can grow and change a community and its culture over time (Law, 1993).

The dynamics of a community and its culture vary differently among ethnicities. According to Eric Law (1993, p.4) in the *Peaceable Realm*, “ethnic culture” includes “values, beliefs, arts, food, customs, clothing, family, and social organizations, and government of a given people in a given period”. In isolation, people in a community become deeply rooted in their culture and community norms to the extreme that they fail to see beyond their own cultural boundaries; this is referred to as *ethnocentricity* (Law, 1993, p.4).

When a person stays within his or her own community, less strain or cultural dissonance is experienced while communicating. However, once removed from a familiar cultural environment, then communication will become strained or dissonant, complicating success outside their environment. Communication dissonance is “inharmonious or incongruent communication” which can occur as a result of language and behavior (verbal/non-verbal), which is learned and influenced by ones’ cultural environment (Caputo, 2002, p.290).

For the purpose of this study, and before we can discuss cultural dissonance with American Indians outside of their community, we must analyze dissonance in communication within the community. Dissonance within American Indian communities greatly influences the success of communication between the US European and other cultures outside of the reservation.

*American Indian Community.*
American Indian communities are unique in the way that most are located in rural areas and American Indian reservations are sovereign nations, governing themselves within the United States of America. As stated, there are many struggles that promote or increase social exclusivity among reservation communities. These harmful behaviors of exclusion within American Indian communities due to tribal and cultural divides are passed down from generation to generation and are promoted by tragic and historical events and intergenerational trauma, which contributes to broken families, alcoholism, and social distrust (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005).

The Iceberg Theory states that culture is one-fifth visible and four-fifths invisible (Caputo, 2002, p.296): Coyhis and Simonelli’s (2005) thought is similar to this idea but refers to the Healing Forest Model. The healing forest model is an analogy to more culturally appropriate the cultural approach to healing in American Indian communities because it involves the interconnection of many deep roots.

Much like the iceberg, the culture of a community is both overt and covert (Caputo, 2002, p.296) where many of its underlying issues are passed on in unseen ways. The forest analogy adds to this concept by adding family trees that are deep rooted and highly connected but its roots together are influenced by deep-formed anger, guilt, and shame, creating an unhealthy forest or an “unhealthy community” (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005, p.328). Steps to strengthen the roots in American Indian reservations must be included and considered as a solution to promote a more socially inclusive environment.

The struggles of American Indian rural communities are not uncommon. In fact, the primary agenda for the US Government was to take American Indian lands and assimilate the American Indian population to the European-American culture (Brown-Rice, 2013). Most American Indians were forcibly moved to remote reservations where agriculture and hunting was
scarce (Brown-Rice, 2013). Many American Indians continue to make their home living a rural life on a reservation. Walsh and O’Shea and Scharf (2013, p.17) point out that “rural life can be unsympathetic” which can complicate and increase social exclusion.

People living in rural areas create a “perception of place” which can be both positive and negative, but it is very difficult to change because it creates strong and influential attachments to a small rural community (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013, p.17). The perception of place can also increase the gap in communications of American Indians in US European society as American Indians who immerse themselves in US European society are then left to respond in an ethnocentric manner by constantly excluding themselves from actively participating within the US European culture. The detrimental effects of perception of place among the American Indian community will show unsuccessful results such as quitting a job or quitting school to move back to the reservation.

Social Exclusion.

Social exclusion is defined as the lack of resources as well as the inability to participate in normal relationships and activities with others (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013). Ethnic minorities, including American Indians, have always been at high risk to the effects of social exclusion, which limits or provides no access to “supportive relationships, involvement in group activities, and civic engagement” (Baumgartner & Burns, 2013, p.9). This phenomenon and its dangerous effects are increased by things such as ruralism, mental health, and poor economic status, and it has the ability to affect choices and reactions of individuals communicating both within their own community and outside of their cultural norm (Baumgartner & Burns, 2013).

Social exclusion is very apparent on Indian Reservations in many ways. This also contributes to negative reaction and responses to social inclusion as American Indians immerse
themselves into the US European culture, while seeking higher education and/or work off the reservation.

There does not seem to be much literature addressing social inclusion and social exclusion specifically within Indian Reservations or American Indian communities. However, there is current research with social inclusion among adolescents and ageing which can be framed to address reservation communities. Because there are similar effects within American Indian communities such as ruralism, mental health, and poor economic status, that need to be understood and discussed as it relates to social exclusion and social inclusion.

**Social Inclusion.**

A healthy community is and must be inclusive. According to Baumgartner and Burns (2013, p.1), social inclusion is the “key outcome” to avoiding the effects of social exclusion because inclusion satisfies the human need to feel like one belongs in society. To what degree a community must be inclusive is a conscious decision and not always absolute, as it varies from person to person as well as community to community.

As Baumgartner and Burns (2013) identify in their article, *Measuring Social Inclusion – a Key Outcome in Global Mental Health*, social inclusion boils down to fairness and equal access. In addition, a community working toward being more socially inclusive is the key outcome for success in communication with individuals of lower status, such as the American Indian population (Baumgartner & Burns, 2013).

One key component consistently linked to building social inclusion within a community is belongingness and the human need to belong (Baumgartner & Burns, 2013). American Indians appear to lack equal access, fairness, and belongingness, not only within reservation
communities, but also as American Indians immerse into greater society by going to college and seeking work off the reservation.

**Analyzing the Need to Belong.**

The concepts of social inclusion and exclusion are simple although the simplicity of these concepts often provides confusion. The importance of a community being socially inclusive are so that members within a community feel like they are accepted and belong. It is easier to exclude than to include; and, according to Baumeister and Leary (1995) in their article, *The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation*, he provides evidence that speaks to both being accepted and/or being rejected can have serious and long-lasting effects on a person and a person’s ability to accept or reject matters of social inclusion or social exclusion in future communication with others.

Belongingness has multiple strong effects on emotional patterns and cognitive processes that can get in the way of a person’s ability to form strong social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Lack of belongingness contributes to loneliness and loneliness also contributes to an individual’s response to social situations. Self-determination theory tells us that “the feeling of connectedness is a powerful predictor of psychological and physical health” (Vanhalst et al., p.932, 2015). In a study conducted by Vanhalst et al. (p. 943, 2015), they point out that people who suffer from loneliness are “hypersensitive to social exclusion and hyposensitive to social inclusion”. So, in both cases, responses to social inclusion and social exclusion were dealt with in detrimental self-defeating ways.

When considering the effects on a reservation community, Baumgartner and Burns’ (2013) definition of limited access in regards to social relationships is applicable in the community while Walsh and O’Shea and Scharf’s (2013) definition of limited access due to
social margins is more applicable outside of the reservation. However, it is the response to social exclusion in the form of supportive relationships and civic engagement within their own community that contribute to American Indians’ negative reaction and responses to US European exclusion. In other words, experiencing social exclusion in the American Indian community level can set one up for failure in the US European community level because it creates automatic feelings of being excluded and unheard.

**Theory of Historical Trauma.**

Intergenerational trauma or historical trauma can be defined as “the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide” and it defines the current problems facing American Indian people to “historicize” current issues in American Indian communities (Hartmann & Gone, 2014, p.274). In regards to trauma, studies show that American Indians are at greater risk of developing mental health conditions, suicide rates are 3.2 higher than the national average, and this “trauma is transferred to subsequent generations through biological, psychological, environmental, and social means, resulting in a cross-generational cycle of trauma” (Brown-Rice, 2013).

It is a known fact that American Indian reservations are among the poorest communities in American society, having the lowest income, least education, highest poverty, and lowest life expectancy rate of any group in the United States (Brown-Rice, 2013). Suicide is the second leading cause of death for American Indians as a race and is 1.5% higher than the national average for ages18-35 years old (CDC, 2016). The CDC (2016) states that 7.9% of American Indian population who are over the age of 18 report having suicidal thoughts.
In an article published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2010) Mental Health Disparities: American Indians and Alaska Natives states that in analyzing the mental health of the American Indian population, American Indians “experience serious psychological distress at 1.5 times more than the general population” (2010, para. 1). The report further attributes the mental health issues to “historical traumas, forced relocations, cultural assimilation, numerous broken treaties, and other social, economic, and political injustices” (APA, 2010, para. 9).

Historical trauma theory provides a conceptual framework broken down into three phases:

1st Phase – entails the dominant culture perpetrating mass traumas on a population resulting in cultural, familial, societal, and economic devastation for the population.

2nd Phase – occurs when the original generation of the population responds to the trauma showing biological, societal, and psychological symptoms.

3rd Phase – is when the initial responses to trauma are conveyed to successive generations through environmental and psychological factors, and includes prejudice and discrimination. (Brown-Rice, 2013)

Hartmann and Gone (2014, p.275) have identified historical trauma theory through the Four C’s, which are: colonial injury, collective experience, cumulative effects, and cross-generational impacts. Cross-generational impacts identify actions such as prejudice and discrimination as a result, not only among other minority groups, but also in identifying with other American Indian groups (Hartmann & Gone, 2014).

Both theory definitions of historical trauma, the Four C’s and the conceptual framework, point out phases that have occurred as a series of linear steps and happen overtime. If historical
trauma is unrecognized, it continues to redefine with time and as this trauma redefines, it also increases the symptoms developed from previous historical traumas with previous generations.

The theory of historical trauma was derived from literature from the Jewish Holocaust survivors and this literature has been used to explain why some American Indians also experience similar effects of historical trauma (Brown-Rice, 2013). The theory of historical trauma is not widely accepted and is approached with skepticism, continued research on the significance of historical trauma is greatly needed (Hartmann & Gone, 2014). With further defining and continuous application of research to this theory, it will help build its validity (Hartmann & Gone, 2014).

**historical loss/historical loss symptoms.**

The theory of historical trauma measures two core concepts, the historical loss and the historical loss symptoms (Brown-Rice, 2013). The historical loss is the loss to “land, family and culture”, while the historical loss symptoms refer to the “socio-environmental, psychological, and physiological distress in American Indian communities” (Brown-Rice, 2013, para. 9).

A survey was completed by comparison of two scales, the Historical Loss Scale and Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale (Brown-Rice, 2013). The survey had 306 American Indian adult participants from reservations. The purpose behind the survey was to measure and quantify frequency of thoughts and symptoms of historical loss due to experiences of historical trauma (Brown-Rice, 2013). The results of this survey stated that:

- 36% had daily thoughts about the loss of tradition and language in their community;
- 34% experience daily thoughts about loss of culture;
- 24% felt angry regarding historical losses;
- 49% had disturbing thoughts related to these losses;
46% had daily thoughts about substance abuse dependency and impacts on community;

- 22% said they felt discomfort among white people;

- 35% felt distrustful of the intentions of the dominant white culture due to the historical losses suffered. (Brown-Rice, 2013, para. 21)

In addition, the survey also points out that these thoughts have contributed to distress, prejudice, and discrimination against others.

Analyzing the theory of historical trauma and considering the historical loss/historical loss symptoms in relation to the research question is vital to the historical context in which social exclusion occurs among American Indian communities as well as bringing awareness to be more socially inclusive.

**Rationale**

The research reviewed in this paper opens the idea to start discussing the sources and the impacts of social inclusion and social exclusion within American Indian reservation communities. There are limitations to this research, as there does not appear to be a lot of material addressing social exclusion/inclusion or historical/intergenerational trauma among American Indian communities. The effects of power and social exclusion and historical trauma in reservation communities need to be discussed for growth and sustainability of both the community and people within the community.

**Specific Purpose.**

Understanding research studies and empirical literature will continue to build the ability to frame the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion and help others in American Indian communities and other reservation communities become more aware of its dangerous and lasting
effects. More importantly, continuous research will help to recognize the effects and how to plan for future success and improvement within reservation communities.

**Research Question(s)/Hypotheses**

This research question is focused on the American Indian reservation community. How does social inclusion or social exclusion serve to build, enhance, deter, or diminish, the sustainability of communications within the American Indian reservation environment? From this question developed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Communications within the American Indian communities are negatively impacted from the effects of social exclusion.

**Hypothesis 2:** Creating a more socially inclusive community will increase communication and build a solid healing foundation for stronger American Indian communities.
Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology

Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how socially exclusive environments can be detrimental to people, more specifically the American Indian population. American Indians as a race have suffered over one-hundred years of intergenerational trauma (Verbos & Gladstone & Kennedy, 2010). Even though the American Indian communities vary from tribe to tribe, the experience of historical trauma leaves similar long-lasting impressions on the human being. Therefore, this study has a broad scope to include the race of American Indian of people living on reservations and is not specific to any one tribe or reservation.

In addition to the Theory of Historical Trauma, this study also focuses on the Iceberg Theory to analyze non-visible effects that are beneath the surface. The Healing Forest analogy provides a more culturally appropriate view by identifying the depth and connectedness of roots of an American Indian community. As an explanatory study, the reader should have a basic realization and open-mindedness to the history American Indian people and results of historical traumas which can deter American Indian people from successfully integrating with mainstream society.

Methodology of the Study

Qualitative.

As previously stated, this is an explanatory study on a specific group within society. The best way to gather information is through a qualitative approach. Qualitative research provides an umbrella approach to understanding the social world by searching for a deeper understanding though different lenses of other groups lived experiences (Orosz, 1997, p.543). The inductive research of a qualitative study allows the researcher to make sense of its participants rather than
relying on their own “tacit and formal theories” (Orosz, 1997, p.545). Utilizing qualitative methods is extremely important because of the complexity of the subjects and by possibly giving a voice to what is rarely heard. The theory of Historical Trauma is not widely accepted, used, or applied, but it is an important theory to include with this interpretive research study because it specifically addresses problems facing American Indians as a minority group (Brown-Rice, 2013).

To appropriately address this research question, one would utilize qualitative data collection techniques by use of historical-comparative research methods. A qualitative research is one that is not numerically based and is based more on direct observation and written documentation (Orosz, 1997). The historical-comparative method is a research strategy to clarify when a societal change takes place to discover meaning to build and apply to current theories, create comparisons, and apply it to research (Neuman, 2011). In addition, the historical-comparative method creates explanations that are beyond a particular time and place so creating a comparison between the theory of historical trauma and the effects of social exclusion among American Indian communities will give us the insight and connection from past atrocities and how they can contribute to current behaviors.

**Data Analysis**

Solutions can be found by looking at communities that are socially inclusive and have found solutions to avoiding the dangerous effects of social exclusion. Because there is lack of data specific to American Indian communities, a comparison of rural communities to encourage inclusive activities among the youth and ageing can be modified to be applicable to the American Indian reservation community.
The solution must also be communicated and understood by an American Indian audience and people familiar with American Indian cultural norms in addition to being significant to other outside sources. Some of the case studies mentioned above have created awareness in their own specific communities to promote inclusiveness of those less able.

Conducting this research will help clarify and understand the need to discuss these issues to create some awareness to encourage healthy inclusive American Indian communities for the reason that there is a lack of data in this area.

**Ethical Considerations**

Because this research is based within American Indian communities and its main purpose is to inform, there are ethical considerations in regards to culture which must be addressed. Perceptions of the American Indian population have generally been marginalized by society as many people view American Indians as non-existent and disappeared into a “myth, stereotype, and [lost in] history” (Verbos & Humphries, 2013, p.4).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) developed a research related response to ethical considerations in able to identify risks when addressing detrimental cultural and historical perceptions while conducting research (2003). These risks are broken down to external risks and intracommunity risks and are as follows:

1. **External risks**: racism, ethnic, religious, and social well-being;
2. **Economic risks**: genetic discrimination, internal and externally;
3. **Social risks**: stigmatism, reinforcing stereotypes;
4. **Legal and political risks**: misrepresentation, misinterpretations, and;
5. **Intracommunity risks**: looking from the outside in, risk to cultural and moral authority. (AAP, 2003. para. 4-8)
Because of the external and intracommunity risks, this study is an umbrella view of social exclusion among American Indian reservation communities so that this study also able to address the importance and overall impact of intergenerational trauma. Verbos and Humphries (2013) identify this as a relational ethic, understanding the interconnectedness and responsibility to all living things.
Chapter 4: The Study

Introduction

This report will examine how social inclusion or social exclusion serve to build, enhance, deter, or diminish the quality of communications within American Indian Reservation communities. The method of data collection will be through traditional library research and review of scholarly journals or “archival/documentary research” (Rubin & Rubin & Haridakis & Piele, 2010). According to Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, and Piele (2010, p.212), archival/documentary research “centers on finding, examining, and interpreting message that were communicated in the past…[which] can tell us about communication during a particular period…that affect how we communicate”. Qualitative archival/documentary research will provide a connection from past events to current behaviors which pairs nicely with the theory of historical trauma that connects past events to explain current behaviors.

Pointing out census numbers on the American Indian population and defining minority status will help to begin this comparison. Theoretical and philosophical perspectives will help further analyze and interpret research. And a closer look into the theory of historical/intergenerational trauma will be helpful in comparing the issues specific to American Indian reservations. Defining social exclusion and social inclusion based on case studies conducted in rural areas and among the elderly and disabled will help bridge the research in a comparative and useful manner. Two proposed explanations were made for further examination in this study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Communications within the American Indian communities are negatively impacted from the effects of social exclusion.
Hypothesis 2 (H2): Creating a more socially inclusive community will increase communication and build a solid foundation for stronger American Indian communities.

Results of the Study

Hypothesis 1.

H1 helps us understand how social exclusion can deter or diminish the quality of communication on American Indian reservations. The negative impacts of social exclusion as described by Coyhis and Simonelli (2005) contribute to issues of broken families, alcoholism, and social distrust. These negative impacts are also increased by the phenomenon of historical/intergenerational trauma (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005).

Walsh and O’Shea and Scharf (2013) conducted a study on Exploring Community Perceptions of the Relationship Between Age and Social Exclusion in Rural Areas, in this study, Walsh and O’Shea and Scharf (2013) suggests that rural life can complicate and increase the effects of social exclusion due to the “perceptions of place”. Creating a perception of place can create stronger influential attachments to a specific community or environment. The perception of place creates a gap that increases social exclusion within the individual (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013). Once excluded within their perception of place, the individual will develop a pattern of behavior to exclude themselves in social situations outside of their rural community (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013). Additionally, it is found that the effects of social exclusion become increased by ruralisim, mental health, and poor economic status, all of which are apparent in high rates among American Indian reservations (Walsh & O’Shea & Scharf, 2013).

Hypothesis 2.

H2 focuses on building a stronger community that is socially inclusive to provide a way of healing and to build and enhance American Indian communities. The Healing Forest Model
(Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005) provides an accurate structure for this observation by identifying the roots of historical trauma as well as the deep interconnectedness of the community. Furthermore, this model predicts that when the roots of the trees become sick (anger, guilt, shame) then the sickness spreads to all of the roots (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005). In able to provide healing, one must begin by strengthening the roots and minimizing the sickness to strengthen all of the trees in the forest, or building a stronger community.

Self-determination theory supports H2 as it tells us that “the feeling of connectedness is a powerful predictor of psychological and physical health” (Vanhalst et al., p.932, 2015). In addition, “a satisfied need to belong contributes to well-being and flourishing, whereas a frustrated need to belong can result in a variety of psychological and physical health problems” (Vanhalst et al., p.932, 2015). Additional studies on self-determination theory as it relates to motivation within the American Indian community can build stronger feelings of belongingness which can increase a socially inclusive environment.

**Discussion**

**H1 Theory Discussion.**

H1 suggests that communications within American Indian communities are negatively impacted from the effects of social exclusion. As some of the negative impacts are listed above, this study also includes the theory of historical trauma and iceberg theory.

The theory of historical trauma is the “collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide” (Hartmann & Gone, 2014, p.274). A critical element of this theory as applied to this study is the understanding that historical trauma occurs over a lifespan and across generations. The concept of this theory is “collective and multilayered” among the close-knit American Indian
communities which “differs from the European perspective” (Brown-Rice, 2013). If we consider the perception of place and learned behaviors accordingly, the theory of historical trauma adds another layer of complexity when it comes to responses to socially exclusive behaviors.

The iceberg theory is a theory of omission where culture is one-fifth visible and four-fifths invisible (Caputo, 2002, p.296). The healing forest model adds to this thought but is more culturally appropriate to American Indian communities because it shows deep interconnectedness of roots which effect all the trees as a whole (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005). What is invisible are the feelings of anger, guilt, shame, and fear that contribute to an unhealthy community (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2005). According to Coyhis and Simonelli (2005), American Indian communities must learn how to grieve and process grieving (anger, guilt, shame, and fear) in able to strengthen the community roots from historical traumas of the past.

Both the historical trauma theory and the iceberg theory with the healing forest model support H1 to the effect that this is an area needed for additional research. Brown-Rice (2013, para. 39) writes “the majority of scholarship on historical trauma has been theoretical in nature. Therefore, there is a need to have empirical evidence to substantiate this concept”. There was little to no empirical evidence specific to historical trauma or the effects of social exclusion within American Indian communities.

**H2 Philosophical Discussion.**

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology that provides five layers of analysis on human motivation. Belongingness is the third layer before self-esteem and self-actualization (Taormina & Gao, 2013). In able to move to the next level of motivation, one must realize each layer accordingly and if a layer is not realized then one cannot move up in theory to find self-actualization. In socially exclusive communities the feeling of belongingness is
compromised and often times non-existent because it promotes a disconnect within individuals and communities and people within the community remain detached.

The theory of historical trauma must always be considered as it is apparent within American Indian communities because of the “cataclysmic history of genocide” of American Indians living within reservation communities (Hartmann & Gone, 2014, p.274). The forced assimilation has generated into a cross-generational cycle of trauma for both individuals and communities, which provides a greater risk to the effects of socially exclusive situations (Hartmann & Gone, 2014). Both the theory of historical trauma and Maslow’s’ hierarchy of needs support the examination of how socially exclusive environments can be detrimental to the American Indian population and reservation communities.
Chapter 5: Summaries and Conclusions

Limitations of the Study

As mentioned in the literature review, the theory of historical trauma is not widely accepted and it can be approached with skepticism. This not only provides a limitation to this particular study but can also be a recommendation for further study to build its significance and validity. There are several studies on the effects of trauma to human biology and psychology but the difference with historical trauma is that it does not focus on one specific event of trauma. Historical trauma relies on a historical emphasis with cross-generational impacts as far back as European colonization.

Because of this, there is also a lack of studies conducted on social exclusion within American Indian communities. Much of the information provided in this study are studies that were conducted on youth or with ageing populations. Applying previous studies that focused on the American Indian community would help strengthen the validity of a research question but a lack of studies was a limitation that had to be managed with this particular research question.

It is worth noting that all American Indian tribes and reservation are extremely different and it is important not to categorize them as one minority group. However, because there is a lack of studies with American Indian communities, is why an overall qualitative approach was necessary to provide an umbrella view to lead or influence discussions and begin to apply theory. Limiting this research to one particular tribe would have required additional previous studies and applicable framework that would be specific to the American Indian communities in able to make a valid comparison among reservations and/or tribes. An umbrella view was necessary but it also limits this study.
Recommendations for Further Study

Social exclusion in American Indian communities is an area that could benefit from further study altogether. Developing studies particular to tribes and discussing various tribal issues could also be an area needing further development and can be beneficial while analyzing tribal communities.

In addition to these studies, applying the effects of ethnocentricity (both verbal and non-verbal) and cultural dissonance experienced while communicating is another layer to this subject and it could help improve the continued development of social exclusion among American Indian communities.

Social exclusion is just one aftereffect of historical trauma. Continued research on the theory of historical trauma or intergenerational trauma could help build its validity for more understanding and for the importance of cultural healing. Not only within American Indian communities but also for greater society to have a better understanding of historical trauma and its harmful effects. Not only to American Indian tribes, but to other minority groups as well.

Conclusions

In reference to my research question and in regards to this research, social exclusion can be defined as a self-defeating psychological symptom that is aggravated by historical traumas experienced by American Indian communities. To once again put it in perspective, American Indians are the smallest minority group in the United States at 1.7 percent. American Indians also have the highest poverty rate in the US at 26% and double the unemployment rate compared to the entire US population (Brown-Rice, 2013). Other statistics include American Indians have the highest alcohol consumption rate, lowest life expectancy rate, and highest suicide rate which is at
3.2 times higher than the national average (Brown-Rice, 2013). Considering the statistics, there is no doubt that American Indian communities are still suffering.

Communication theory helps us develop understanding on how people communicate. This study begins with the basic philosophy of human emotional need, the need to belong. Human beings have an inherent need to belong and moreover, to be a part of something greater than themselves. People communicate to become something greater than themselves. With American Indians having some of the most severe statistics in the United States, it provides alarming needs to gain more understanding to why and how communication, or lack thereof, affects the American Indian communities.

Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs tells us, if one cannot achieve belongingness, then they are unable to realize self-actualization. The theory of historical trauma tells us that American Indian communities do not feel belongingness because of the deep roots of historical trauma which go back hundreds of years. The healing forest model provides the framework to heal American Indian communities by focusing on the roots of historical trauma to promote healthy more socially inclusive communities.

This study is meant to deepen understanding and encourage dialogue by bringing awareness to the issues of social exclusion as well as the effects of historical traumas within the American Indian population.
References


*Ethical Considerations in Research with Socially Identifiable Populations.* (2003, December 31). Retrieved November 04, 2016, from http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/113/1/148


