Patterns of Communication and Interethnic Integration: A Study of American Indians in Oklahoma

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This article examines the patterns of communication of American Indians in Oklahoma, whose activities are closely interfaced with those of non-Indians. Given the highly integrated macro-social milieu, and based on Kim's (1988, 1995a, 1995b, in press) communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation, the present analysis addresses the extent to which American Indians in Oklahoma are communicatively engaged within and outside the Indian community and the nature of the relationship between these two types of communication activities and psychological and functional integration into the mainstream society. The analysis utilizes portions of the quantitative data obtained through 182 one-on-one interviews during 1988-1989 at six research sites in the state. Intraethnic and interethnic communication activities are measured by five indicators: (a) ingroup and outgroup perception; (b) casual interpersonal relationships; (c) intimate interpersonal relationships; (d) participation in community organizations; (e) use of mass media. Results show that as a group the Oklahoma Indians are active in both intraethnic and interethnic communication, reflecting the highly integrated macroenvironment of the State of Oklahoma. Those who are more actively engaged in intraethnic communication are found also to be more active in interethnic communication. Results further suggest that both intraethnic and interethnic communication activities of Oklahoma Indians are linked positively to their integration into the mainstream sociocultural milieu. Compared with intraethnic communication, interrethnic communication appears to play a more potent role in facilitating the integration process.

The social science literature for the past several decades reveals a customary conception of ethnic groups rooted in a view of ethnicity as an a priori human condition that profoundly affects the existence of individuals who share a common heritage of national origin, culture, language, race, and/or religion.[1] Ethnic identity has been seen as the person's "basic identity" formed during the earliest periods of socialization (Yinger, 1986) and the "driving force of individual and collective ethnic self-affirmation" (Roosens, 1989, p. 15). Ethnic identity has been explained as offering the individual a "ground on which to stand" that "no one can take away" (Giordano, 1974, p. 16).

In stressing the importance of positive cultural identity to psychological and social well-being, however, studies dealing with ethnic minorities have tended to ignore or downplay the phenomenon of cross-cultural adaptation. Individuals in a

given minority group are confronted not only with the issue of who they are, but how to live in the larger reality of the dominant cultural system. The conventional view of an ethnic group as a monolithic entity tends to result in an unfortunate exaggeration of the homogeneity of experience among those who happen to be affiliated with a particular ethnic group by birth or ascription. Such a tendency also contributes to the unrealistic and arbitrary separation of studies on ethnic identity and studies on adaptation as if they were two separate phenomena. This separation persists, although in reality ethnicity and adaptation are an inseparable part of the everyday existence of all ethnic minorities who crisscross multiple sets of identity boundaries.

Indeed, the traditional monolithic conception of ethnicity, ethnic group, and ethnic identity is increasingly being challenged. Efforts have been made to reflect individual and situational variations in the enactment of cultural identity in theorizing about individual behaviors in intercultural (interethnic) encounters (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995; Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1995; Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Root, 1992; Thornton, 1996).

American Indians in Oklahoma
This analysis is an attempt to extend these growing efforts to refine our understanding of ethnicity, ethnic group, and ethnic identity by examining the communication patterns of American Indians in Oklahoma.[2] The State of Oklahoma presents an appropriate macro-social context in which to focus on the likely variation in the experience of individual members of this ethnic group. The history of Oklahoma Indians is filled with forces of adaptation and identity struggle (Gibson, 1986; Strickland, 1980; Walker, 1972). Ever since the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the five land-runs for White settlement in the late 19th century, Oklahoma has been steeped in the Indian tradition, side by side with that of cowboys (Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department, 1990). Through active contacts and intermarriages with Whites, the traditions of Oklahoma Indians have undergone dramatic changes. Today many tribes are without a truly Native institutional structure or a coherent culture and language. As Cherokee anthropologist Thomas observes, "few Indians under 40 see themselves as members of a distinct, unique, autonomous peoples who are surrounded by a more numerous and powerful society. They see themselves simply as an American variant with a special heritage" (Cornell, 1988, p. 211). From the state's urban centers to its rural areas, almost all Oklahoma towns (except the northwestern corner of the state called the Panhandle) have Indians. Nowhere in the state are places that are exclusively or predominantly populated by Indians. Even the only existing reservation, the Osage reservation in the northeast corner of the state, does not have large continuous tribal land holdings (Rachline, 1968).

Along with the high degree of physical, structural, and cultural integration into the Anglo world, recent signs also point in the direction of tribal independence, self-sufficiency, and cultural revitalization. Reflecting the national trend of the last several decades, Oklahoma Indians today have a stronger and more assertive voice in setting agendas for themselves. They have promoted and strengthened their pan-Indian as well as tribal identity even as their old distinct identity erodes

(Cornell, 1988). Tribal languages are being taught in some schools. Many young people are showing a new interest in their heritage, while Indian writers and painters have immersed themselves in the traditions of their people, articulating them in new ways (Buice, 1986; Cornell, 1988; De Vos & Romanucci-Ross, 1975; Faherty, 1974; Roosens, 1989). Indian cultural events such as pow wows are prominently and frequently featured in the local media side by side with cowboy rodeos.

On the whole, the situation of Indians in Oklahoma today can be characterized as a healthy mixture of the acculturative-deculturative experience of adaptation to the American mainstream environment on the one hand, and the strengthening of their group vitality on the other. They enjoy a significant demographic presence throughout the state. Although American Indians (including Eskimos and Aleuts) constitute less than 1% (0.8%) of the total population in the United States, they comprise 8% of the population of Oklahoma (Roberts, 1993). A recent report released by the Health and Human Services Department indicates that Indian suicides in Oklahoma are only one-half of the national rates. The same report points out that, whereas the national suicide rate for young Indians from 15 to 24 years of age is higher than that for any other ethnic group, the suicide rate of White youths in Oklahoma is higher than that of Indian youths (*The Sunday Oklahoman*, June 26, 1994, p. A14).

The Focus
It is this macro-social context of high integration and high ethnic group vitality that makes Oklahoma Indians an important population in the investigation of the multiplicity of adaptive experiences playing out at the grassroots level. This analysis follows an earlier one (Kim, Lujan, & Shaver, in press), in which we reported findings that speak to the preponderance of integrative identity experiences among Oklahoma Indians as well as variations in these experiences that range from a highly ethnic (intraethnic) to a highly interethnic orientation. In this article we focus our analysis on patterns of intraethnic and interethnic communication activities of Oklahoma Indians. We seek to understand how individual Indians vary in their communicative engagements within and outside Indian communities and the extent to which the two types of communication are separate or interrelated phenomena. In addition, we examine how strongly these communication activities are linked to the Oklahoma Indians' integration into the predominantly Anglo sociocultural milieu.

Theory
Guiding this investigation is the cross-cultural adaptation theory developed by Kim (1988, 1995a, 1995b, in press). Kim's theory, briefly described here, offers a system for the description and explanation of the varied facets of the experiences of individuals who cross cultural boundaries.

Adaptation as Person-Environment Communication Relationship
Among the well-known contemporary theories addressing cross-cultural adaptation issues (Berry, 1980, 1990; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988), Kim's theory offers an analytic framework that is most directly pertinent to this analysis of intraethnic and interethnic communication. Kim's theory places the communication activities

of an individual at the core of the dynamic relationship between that individual and a given environment. The theory directs investigators' attention to a wide range of communication activities from (intra)personal to social levels. Emphasizing the centrality of communication, the theory argues that an individual's communication activities influence, as well as reflect, the nature of his or her relationship to a particular environment at a given time.

The theory also explains the long-term process of systematic change in the individual's psyche that is caused by prolonged and extensive intercultural communication experiences. Kim argues that the *process* of such a gradual psychic transformation takes place because of a "stress-adaptation-growth dynamic"—a cyclic movement of "draw-back-to-leap" that is both "progressive" (an increase in integration of previously distinct subunits) and "regressive" (weakening or even "breaking up" of a previously integrated entity). To the extent that stress is responsible for frustration, anxiety, and suffering, then, it is credited as a necessary impetus for new learning and growth—a process that leads to a gradual development from a monocultural to increasingly *intercultural identity,* along with increased *functional fitness* and *psychological health* vis-à-vis the dominant environment. Given this articulation of the adaptation process, Kim's theory identifies its *structure* by delineating key factors of communication and environment that reciprocally influence one another (see Figure 1). In proposing this structural model, Kim posits that an individual's intrapersonal and social communication activities, along with his or her predisposition and environmental factors, influence one another and that together they facilitate or impede the overall process of intercultural transformation. Here cross-cultural adaptation is conceived of as a multifaceted Gestalt that cannot be reduced to a single variable that can be measured by one or more psychological or social indicators (e.g., satisfaction level, number of friends, language proficiency, cultural knowledge). Instead, adaptation is depicted in Kim's theory in terms of the *totality* of the process that is co-defined and co-facilitated by multiple dimensions of factors.

Focus of Analysis

Kim's theory mainly describes and explains the process of change in those individuals who are fully socialized in one culture (or subculture) and find themselves in a different and unfamiliar culture. Of primary theoretical interest in our analysis, then, are the questions of how the same theory may be applied to the situation of Oklahoma Indians—a group of indigenous ethnic minorities whose lives closely interface with the mainstream Oklahoma environment. Substantively, our main aim is to understand how the macro-level characteristics of strong interethnic integration and strong ethnic group vitality in Oklahoma are reflected in the patterns of communication and interethnic integration of individual Indians.

Given these theoretical and substantive interests, we examine in this analysis the following 13 variables derived from Kim's structural model. The original terms *host communication* and *intercultural transformation* are replaced by *interethnic communication* and *interethnic integration.* These two alternative terms are consistent with the meanings of the original terms, while more accurately reflecting the situations of native-born ethnic minorities such as Oklahoma Indians.
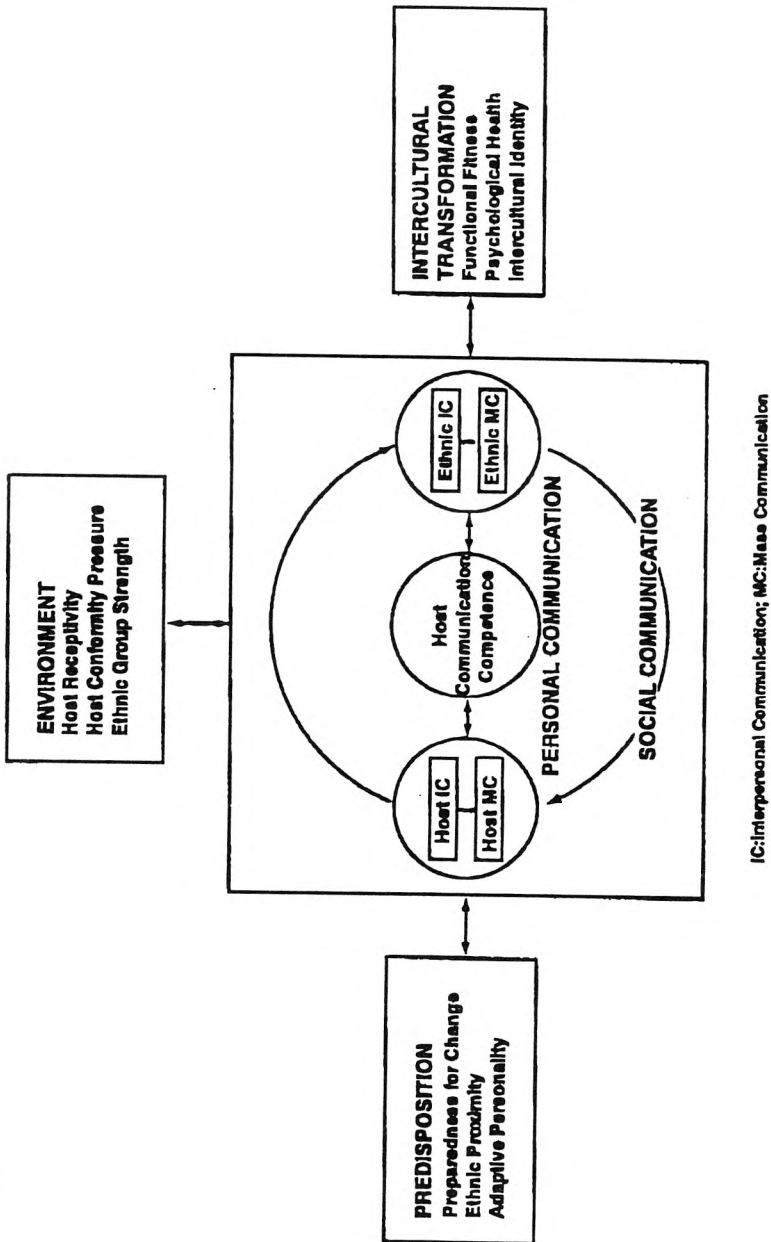
Figure 1. Factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation: A structural model (Kim, 1995a, p. 189).

Intraethnic Communication

1. *Intraethnic perception* measured by the subject's evaluation of Indian people as a group.
2. *Intraethnic acquaintances* measured by the subject's casual relational involvement with other Indians.
3. *Intraethnic friends* measured by the subject's intimate relational involvement with other Indians.
4. *Intraethnic organizations* measured by the subject's membership in Indian community organizations.
5. *Intraethnic mass communication* measured by the subject's use of mass media available primarily for American Indians.

Interethnic Communication

6. *Interethnic perception* measured by the subject's evaluation of White people as a group.
7. *Interethnic acquaintances* measured by the subject's casual relational involvement with Whites and other non-Indians.
8. *Interethnic friends* measured by the subject's intimate relational involvement with Whites and other non-Indians.
9. *Interethnic organizations* measured by the subject's membership in mainstream organizations.
10. *Interethnic mass communication* measured by the subject's use of mainstream mass media.

Interethnic Integration

11. *Functional fitness* measured by the subject's income level.
12. *Psychological fitness* measured by the subject's sense of happiness.
13. *Interethnic identity* measured by the subject's accommodation of both Indian and non-Indian (American) identities.

Methods

The above research variables are examined based on portions of the data collected in one-on-one interviews with 182 Oklahoma Indians during October 1988 and May 1989. The six-member research team consisted of three members who had Indian backgrounds and were long-time residents of Oklahoma. One of the three was an active, full-blooded Kiowa. The other three non-Indian members were of Asian, Black, and Irish backgrounds. Assisting this research team were 26 Indian undergraduate and graduate students who volunteered to serve as interviewers and coders. In addition, 17 Indian residents in five different locations around the state agreed to serve as community informants (Johnson, 1990). Their personal insights into the Indian life and culture in Oklahoma were utilized in planning and implementing this study.[3]

Throughout the study, we have taken a methodological approach that integrates the *etic* and *emic* perspectives (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973; Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990; Jones, 1979). This combined method was an attempt to discover underlying adaptation patterns that shed light on the diverse yet related experiences of individual Oklahoma Indians. The study began with broad etic

categories provided by the guiding theory. At the same time, the study was continually molded by the emic perspective as it progressed. The Indian research team members and community informants offered insiders' insights, particularly in developing interview questions, analyzing the transcribed oral data, and interpreting the findings. The primary base of the emic perspective, of course, was the interviews themselves. Relatedly, the study combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to measurement and analysis. For our statistical analysis we employed standardized, closed-ended questions and a relatively large and representative sample. Limitations of these questions, however, were compensated for by open-ended questions through which the interviewees were encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings freely.

Sampling

Although Indian communities and social networks are maintained through churches and civic organizations primarily organized for Indians, the pressure of increasing intermarriages and migrations to urban centers weakens the role of the family and the tribe as forms of community structure. Many Oklahoma Indians are without tribal affiliations and traditional Indian facial/physical features. Even with tribal membership, the notion of what constitutes the proper method for determining when one is considered Indian, including the method based on blood quantum, has been argued.[4] The difficulty in ascertaining who Indians are and where they are located led to a decision to employ the method of self-identification. Census data based on this method have shown that about 8% (252,420) of the slightly more than three million total population of Oklahoma identify themselves as Indians. The two largest urban centers in the state, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, are the top three US metropolitan areas having the largest Indian populations. At least one of the major state universities also uses self-identification as the method for ethnic minorities (including American Indians) to qualify for financial assistance programs (*The Oklahoma Daily*, March 30, 1992, p. 6).

With self-identification as our basic sampling guideline, we employed a two-stage sampling procedure that combines a cluster sampling procedure with a subsequent snowball sampling procedure. This procedure was taken to reflect maximally in the final sample the geographical distribution of Oklahoma's Indian population, and at the same time to minimize some of the logistical difficulties of traveling to and from interview sites. First, a *cluster sampling* method was used to select statewide locations where interviews were to take place (compare Ten-Houten, 1990). In this procedure, we sought to balance potential interviewees from eastern and western regions and urban and rural areas. Tulsa (urban) and Ada (rural) were initially chosen to represent the eastern half of the state. The Oklahoma City metropolitan area (including the City of Norman) and the largely rural Anadarko were chosen to represent the western half. Tahlequah and Stroud were subsequently added to increase the representation of eastern semi-rural and rural residents. In each location a sizable Indian population existed with tribal organizations (e.g., tribal headquarters and community centers) and agencies that served large numbers of Indians (e.g., health clinics, Indian student centers, hospitals, libraries). These agencies served as interview sites, allowing natural access to potential interviewees.

The initial pool of interviewees at each site was based on the personal contacts with the Indian members of the research team, student volunteers, and community informants. Once the interview process began, additional interviewees were selected through a *snowball sampling* procedure (Frank & Snijders, 1994; Henry, 1990; Rothenberg, 1995; TenHouten, 1990). At the conclusion of each interview, the interviewee was asked to provide other potential interviewees, particularly rural residents. This procedure provided a reasonable alternative to probability sampling procedures given the absence of well-defined and comprehensive information on the sampling population. The snowballing process continued at each site throughout the project, resulting in a total of 182 completed interviews.

The sample consisted of 85 (47%) males and 97 (53%) females. Their ages ranged from 18 to 81 with the average age 27 (*sd*=13.5). Fewer than one third (29.7%) of the interviewees were from the eastern region (Ada, Tulsa, Stroud, and Tahlequa), and about two thirds (70.3%) were from the western region (Anadarko, Oklahoma City, Norman). Represented in this sample were all major tribes in Oklahoma: Cherokee (25), Chickasaw (12), Choctaw (13), Creek (23), Seminole (9), Kiowa (28), and Commanche (6).

All interviews except 11 (6.0%) had at least some Indian physical attributes that the interview teams recognized. On the other hand, most interviewees except 15 (9.0%) revealed at least some Indian speech characteristics recognized by the interviewers as associated with "Indian speech style." About one fifth (23.6%) of the interviewees had at least some high school education, whereas the remaining two thirds (76.4%) had some college education. The median monthly income category was $1,000-$1,500, with 32.5% earning less than $500 and 11.6% more than $2,000. Despite the special effort made to reach rural residents, the combined cluster-snowball sampling method did not secure a balanced representation of the Indian population in urban and rural Oklahoma. About one third (35.2%) were from small towns in rural areas (Ada, Stroud, Anadarko, Tahlequa) and the rest (64.8%) from urban areas (Ada, Tulsa, Oklahoma City-Norman). This sample characteristic is taken into account later when presenting the findings.

Interview Procedure

The interview was conducted based on a *systematic interview questionnaire* (Weller & Romney, 1988). The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and closed-ended questions with prearranged response categories. Unlike ethnographic interviews or survey interviews, our questionnaire was designed to balance the research efficiency of structured questions and response categories with the spontaneity and depth of information solicited through less structured questioning. The questionnaire dealt with six topical areas: (a) demographic and other background characteristics; (b) lifestyle and acculturation indicators; (c) indicators of interpersonal and organizational communication patterns; (d) mass media consumption patterns; (e) perceptions and attitudes toward self, other Indians, and non-Indians; (f) ethnic/interethnic identity orientations.

The questionnaire was developed in several stages. First, our community informants served as an "expert system" (Benfer, Brent, & Furbee, 1990). We held four separate meetings with 15 of the 17 informants at five of the six interview sites. Their personal knowledge of the life and culture of Oklahoma Indians helped to
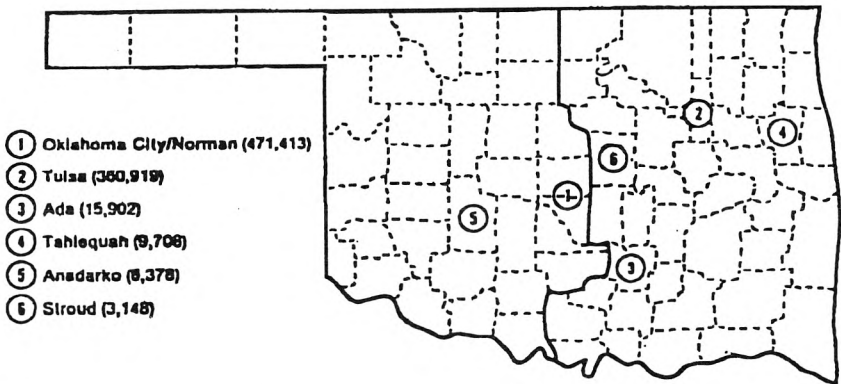
① Oklahoma City/Norman (471,413)
② Tulsa (360,919)
③ Ada (15,902)
④ Tahlequah (9,708)
⑤ Anadarko (6,378)
⑥ Stroud (3,148)

Figure 2. Interview sites (population sizes based on the 1980 Census).

refine the ways questions were posed and responses were categorized. Once the questionnaire was drafted, it was pretested among the 21 Indian students who had joined the research team as interviewers and coders. They were encouraged to offer comments on the clarity, cultural relevance, and appropriateness of the questions, as well as the adequacy of response categories provided in the closed-ended questions.

Each interview was conducted by a two-person team, with one person interviewing and the other recording. All interview team members were trained for six hours in two three-hour sessions. In this training, interview simulations were conducted with a set of detailed instructions concerning various aspects of effective standardized interviewing that included clarity, precision, and neutrality in asking questions and the techniques of raising consistent follow-up questions for open-ended questions (Fowler & Mangione, 1990). Because all interview team members were Indians with recognizable Indian facial and other physical features, we were able to minimize interviewer effects introduced by the ethnicity of interviewers (Cotter, Cohen, & Coulter, 1982; Fowler & Mangione, 1990; Reese, Danielson, Shoemaker, Chang, & Hsu, 1986). We considered the possibility that their being visibly recognizable Indians might introduce into the interview process an element of social desirability bias (Nederof, 1985), a subtle pressure of "political correctness" that could lead the interviewees in the direction of accentuating or even exaggerating their loyalty to the Indian identity. We decided to take this risk, however, in favor of avoiding the opposite biases that non-Indian interviewers were most likely to introduce, such as making some of the interviewees feel uncomfortable about expressing their true feelings toward non-Indians, particularly Whites.

All interviews were conducted in English except one in which the interviewee needed occasional assistance from the interviewer. Each interview began with the interviewer describing the purpose of the study and requesting the interviewee's permission to record the interview. Every one of the 182 interviewees consented to this request. The interviews lasted approximately 40-90 minutes. At the conclusion

of the interview, two debriefing questions were asked, which allowed the interviewee to express additional feelings about their experiences as Indians and to express their opinions concerning the interview itself. Comments made in response to the debriefing questions indicated largely positive feelings toward the interview experience.[5]

Results

An examination of the 182 interviewees reveals a sample profile that is highly integrated into the mainstream sociocultural environment. Almost all those interviewed (181) used English as their primary language in daily activities. Only 14% could speak an Indian language fluently, whereas two thirds (67%) spoke only a little or none. About three fifths of the interviewees (61.8%) reported that both of their parents were Indian; two fifths (34%) reported one of their parents being non-Indian.

Descriptive Analysis

When asked to assess on five-point scales their perceptions of "White people," "Indian people," and themselves ("Self") in terms of how "good" each category was, the responses indicated a generally positive view of all three. The perception, however, tended to be most positive toward Whites ($x=4.1, sd=.9$), closely followed by perceptions of themselves ($x=3.8, sd=.9$). Their perception of other Indians ($x=3.2, sd=.9$) fell behind that of Whites and themselves.

The respondents' casual interpersonal involvements were found to be active both within and outside the Indian communities. On average, they reported somewhat greater numbers of interethnic (non-Indian) acquaintances ($x=104$; 72.3 Whites, $sd=58.3$; 18.0 Blacks, $sd=19.2$, 11.6 Hispanics, $sd=32.1$; 3.3 Asians, $sd=6.8$) than ethnic (Indian) acquaintances ($x=59.3, sd=48.1$) A similar pattern was seen on the friendship level, as well: An average of 23.0 Indian friends ($sd=20.9$) was reported, compared with 20.0 White ($sd=24.2$), 6.6 Black ($sd=12.0$), 3.4 Hispanic ($sd=9.5$), and 1.4 Asian ($sd=7.9$) friends. Although these numbers are unlikely to be precise, they do nonetheless reveal useful information regarding the relative degree of intraethnic and interethnic interpersonal involvements.

On the organizational level, the respondents reported a somewhat greater involvement in Indian organizations than in non-Indian, mainstream organizations. Compared with the 86 interviewees who belonged to at least one local Indian organization, 63 reported belonging to at least one mainstream organization. In the area of mass media, over 80% (83.7%) of the respondents reported watching television programs five or more days a week, and everyone (100%) reported listening to the radio everyday. More than half (57.0%) owned a VCR, and all of these VCR owners reported seeing video movies at least once a month. Given that there were 48 Indian community newspapers published throughout the state, about 70% (70.9%) of our respondents reported that they read Indian newspapers regularly. Comparatively, they were relying more heavily on mainstream newspapers for their news. Over 90% of the respondents (92.1%) reported reading non-Indian newspapers regularly.

In addition, the three facets of interethnic integration (intercultural transformation in Kim's structural model) were measured. When asked about monthly gross

income as a simple indicator of functional fitness, about half the respondents (55.6%) reported earning less than $1,000 a month and about one fifth reported an income between $1,000 and $1,500 (23.7%) and more than $2,000 (20.3%) respectively. To assess psychological health we asked the interviewees to assess their overall level of happiness on a five-point scale (from "very unhappy" to "very happy"). The result indicates the mean happiness level, 3.9 (*sd*=1.0).

The third aspect of interethnic integration, interethnic identity, was assessed by transforming the respondents' oral answers to four open-ended questions dealing with identity experience: (a) "What is your opinion about White people in general? How do you feel toward them? Please tell us your true feelings"; (b) "Generally speaking, how do you feel about the way White people see you? Do you feel that your being an Indian in any way influences their dealings with you personally?"; (c) "Like many minorities in America, Indians are said to live in two worlds—the Indian world and the White world. How do you see this situation? Do you feel any conflict between the two ways?"; (d) "How do you identify yourself in relation to the Indian and the White world? Where do you see yourself fitting in? Or do you feel you don't fit in either one?"

Employing an ethnographic content analysis method (Altheide, 1987), a given interviewee's entire response to the above questions were recoded into five numeric categories on the ethnic-interethnic identity continuum.[6] The result shows that everyone expressed at least some degree of psychological ties to both Indians and the larger society. This finding was reflected in the statistical result that on the 5-point identity scale (1 = "highly ethnic," 5 = "highly interethnic"), the mean score (*x*) was 3.4 (*sd*=1.35). This result indicates that by and large the Oklahoma Indians situate themselves in the middle—a place that connects them to both Indian and non-Indian worlds.[7]

These descriptive findings suggest a generally active and positive communicative relationship that the interviewees enjoy with respect to their Indian community as well as to the predominantly White-Anglo social milieu. On average their perceptions of Indians and Whites were positive. Although their involvement in relationships with non-Indians was active, they were also actively engaged with Indian acquaintances and friends. Although they relied on mainstream newspapers and other media for information and entertainment, they read Indian community newspapers as well. Each of these communication patterns suggests a high level of sociocultural integration into the mainstream Oklahoma and a strong ethnic group vitality.

Correlational Analysis
The above observation is further strengthened by results of a simple correlational analysis among all 13 variables. As shown in Table 1, many of the variables of intraethnic and interethnic communication are positively correlated. Among the more notable are the correlations between the perception of Indians and that of Whites (r=.39, p=.000); between the number of Indian acquaintances and that of White acquaintances (r=.64, p=.000); between the number of Indian friends and that of White friends (r=.20, p=.003); between the number of membership in Indian organizations and in mainstream organizations (r=.35, p=.000); between the degree

Table 1. *Correlation Coefficients(r) Between Key Variables*

Variable	Ethnic Communication					Interethnic Communication					Interethnic Integration		
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)	(07)	(08)	(09)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
I. Ethnic Communication													
(01) Perception-Indian	—												
(02) Acquaintances-Indian	-.08	—											
(03) Friends-Indian	.09	.34	—										
(04) Organizations-Indian	.01	.15	.07	—									
(05) Newspapers-Indian	.08	.26	.09	.25	—								
I.Interethnic Communication													
(01) Perception-White	.39	-.12	.03	-.13	-.08	—							
(02) Acquaintances-White	-.17	.64	-.05	.05	.07	-.05	—						
(03) Friends-White	.03	.26	.20	-.01	-.05	.07	.39	—					
(04) Organizations-White	-.05	.13	-.05	.35	.07	.12	.32	.13	—				
(05) Newspapers-White	.12	.18	.08	.04	.24	.10	.17	.13	.11	—			
I. Interethnic Integration													
(01) Income Level	-1.0	.23	.06	.17	.24	.13	.28	-.03	.30	.09	—		
(02) "Happy"	.18	.08	.09	.23	-.03	.16	.09	.15	.15	.14	.09	—	
(03) Interethnic Identity	.07	.07	00	.21	.21	.12	.20	.13	.29	.15	.22	.12	—

Note. All coefficients greater than .12 are significant at *p*= .05 or less.

of Indian newspaper readership and of mainstream newspaper readership ($r=.24$, $p=.001$).

In addition, the three indicators of interethnic integration (income level, happiness, and interethnic identity) are also positively associated with both intraethnic and interethnic communication variables. Income level, for instance, is positively correlated with the number of Indian acquaintances ($r=.23$, $p=.001$) as well as with the number of White acquaintances ($r=.28$, $p=.000$). The same variable (income level) is also positively associated with participation in Indian organizations ($r=.17$, $p=.010$) and in mainstream organizations ($r=.30$, $p=.001$). Psychological health (happy) is positively correlated with a positive perception of both Indians ($r=.18$, $p=.010$) and Whites ($r=.16$, $p=.017$). Similarly, the degree to which one's identity is integrated ("interethnic identity") is positively linked with an active involvement in Indian organizations ($r=.21$, $p=.003$) and in non-Indian organizations ($r=.29$, $p=.000$), as well as regular readership of Indian newspapers ($r=.21$, $p=.003$) and mainstream newspapers ($r=.15$, $p=.024$). Additional positive associations are seen between interethnic identity and the remaining three indicators of interethnic communication—perception of Whites, White acquaintances, and White friends.

Exceptions to this generally positive association between both intraethnic and interethnic communication and interethnic integration are found in the negative or statistically insignificant correlations between intraethnic communication variables (perception of Indians, Indian acquaintances, and Indian friends) and interethnic integration variables (income, happiness, and interethnic identity). This finding suggests the likelihood that, on the whole, interethnic communication activities play a more potent role than intraethnic communication activities in facilitating the interethnic integration of American Indians into the mainstream sociocultural environment of Oklahoma.

Discussion

This analysis was prompted by our interest in uncovering variations and complexities in the reality of individual Oklahoma Indians and focused on their communicative engagement within and outside Indian communities. Based on the findings reported above, we delineate a number of theoretical and research implications.

First, we have demonstrated that the macro-level sociocultural integration of Oklahoma Indians, as well as their collective strength as an ethnic group, is evidently reflected in their micro-level realities at the individual level. Because the snowballing procedure employed in this study relied on the referrals by the initial pool of interviewees, we might have been unable to reach those individuals who are extremely marginalized or maximally assimilated. Nevertheless, a preponderance of evidence exists both for their interethnic integration and for their intraethnic engagement and vitality. This finding offers a clear contrast to the findings of previous studies of American Indians elsewhere in the US that show greater psychological and social ills among those who find themselves in an extremely segregated and conflicted milieu. Studies have shown, for example, that separatist identity and marginalization are associated with lack of economic upward mobility (Berreman, 1972; Blackwell & Hart, 1982), social polarization (Lanigan, 1988), and regressive and related dysfunctional personality and behavior charac-

teristics (Berlin, 1986; Hallowell, 1972; Holmgren, Fitzgerald & Carman, 1983; James, 1961; Levy, 1972).

The observed positive association between greater participation in interethnic communication and greater interethnic integration renders support for Kim's theoretical proposition that links outgroup communication and mainstreaming of ethnic minorities. This finding also reinforces the extensive body of empirical evidence from studies of immigrant and indigenous ethnic groups. Berry, Kim, and Boski (1988), for instance, reported that ethnic minorities (including American Indians) in Canada favoring integration experience the least stress; those prefer-ring separation experience the most. Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980), in a study of Eastern European immigrants in the US, observe that bicultural identity orienta-tion contributes to greater adaptation. (See also, Boekestijn, 1988; Dasgupta, 1983; Earlum, 1980; Faherty, 1974; Hutnik, 1986; Hutnik & Bhola, 1994; Wondergem, Kennan, & Hill, 1982).

Some of the measurements we employed need to be refined to assess the patterns of communication and interethnic integration. Functional fitness, for ex-ample, needs to be operationalized with more than a single indicator, income. Similarly, the concept *psychological health* needs to be assessed by a multiple-item scale rather than the simple assessment of how happy one feels generally. One way to improve on these measurements is to employ the hybrid technique we used in generating numeric data on ethnic-interethnic identity orientation from the text data. This hybrid coding system is consistent with the general emic-etic method-ological integration attempted in this study. We began with a set of broad etic categories provided by Kim's adaptation theory. At the same time, the emic per-spective was incorporated into the entire research process, beginning with the ideas offered by the Indian research team members and community informants. As intermediaries or go-betweens (Fetterman, 1989), these individuals provided an insider's perspective and insights throughout the study—from the formulation of our research questions, selection of interview sites, the process of snowball sam-pling, and the interpretation of the findings. Most of all, the emic perspective has been provided by our 182 interviews through their responses to our open-ended questions. Thus this integrative methodological approach enabled us to arrive at theoretically relevant and analytical conclusions while allowing us to stay close to the interviews' own realities.

The findings from this study need to be tested and strengthened. To begin with, our theory-guided findings can be elaborated through a more descriptive analysis of the text data. Such an analysis should reveal further insight into the full com-plexity and richness of the identity experiences of Oklahoma Indians. A series of cross-sectional case studies may be conducted among a carefully selected small sample of Oklahoma Indians representing both ends of the ethnic-interethnic continuum of communication and identity orientation. Employing highly qualita-tive research tools such as ethnographic interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) or long interviews (McCracken, 1988), we may strive for a fuller description of the communication and identity experiences of the two subgroups. We may also inquire about their other facets of life, for example, what kind of core values individuals with a highly intercultural identity orientation hold and how they

respond to wide-ranging social issues—from the macro-societal issues concerning intergroup relations to personal dealings with people of varying ethnic backgrounds.

Efforts are also needed to extend the generalizability of our findings through a more comprehensive survey based on a sample that is more representative of all Oklahoma Indians, particularly those highly marginalized or highly assimilated individuals whom we may not have been able to reach in this study. This study can be further extended to a wide variety of Indian populations in different sociocultural contexts. In addition, the communication and identity experiences of Oklahoma Indians can be compared with those of Indians elsewhere, particularly to those living in isolated Indian reservations on contiguous lands (e.g., Navajos in Arizona and New Mexico and the Crow reservation in Montana), or to those living in large urban centers (e.g., Los Angeles and New York). Through such replication studies, we can learn more about variations in communication and identity experiences while taking into account variations in macro-environmental conditions.

In the meantime, this study offers a body of tentative evidence that is consistent with the well-documented theoretical and empirical linkage between the outgroup communication of ethnic minorities and their sociocultural integration into the mainstream society. In particular, our findings reflect the pragmatic sensibility with which many Oklahoma Indians find ways to reconcile and piece together their potentially conflicting communication practices and identity experiences at a higher level of integration. Rather than being constrained by a fixed notion of identity at any cost, they join many others in the US in choosing a path of integration into the larger society without forsaking their ethnic heritages.

Notes

[1]The terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic identity* are employed interchangeably with other related terms such as *culture* and *cultural identity.*

[2]We use the term *Indians* instead of *Native Americans* because it is the expression most commonly used by the population to refer to themselves and each other. This observation was verified by our community informants and Indian research team members. Pratt and Lujan (1994), both American Indian scholars, also indicate their preference for this term for the same reason.

[3]The community informants helped us refine the wording of our interview questions. They recommended, for example, the use of informal expressions such as *Indian people* and *White people* (and not *Native Americans* and *Anglo Americans*). We also followed their suggestion that two categories of interpersonal relationships, acquaintances and friends, should be used rather than the three categories (*acquaintances, casual friends,* and *intimate friends*) included in the initial draft of the questionnaire.

[4]Although the federal government established 25% blood quantum minimum for participation in federal Indian programs, federal law also allows tribes to determine their own membership criteria. As a result, several tribes in Oklahoma including the Cherokees have lowered their blood quantum requirement except in the case of educational assistance.

[5]Close to one third of the interviewees explicitly verbalized an appreciation for the opportunity to think and talk about their experiences. One interviewee said, for example, "I'm glad someone is interested in Indians' feelings, and it's the first time I've ever been asked these types of questions" (#01121).

[6]The coding of text data was carried out by two teams, each consisting of two coders. All the coders were the graduate student members of the research team. No theoretical expectations were formed or discussed by any of the research team members before or during the coding process. On the first 20 interviews, two coders in each team worked together to achieve a common basis for assigning numeric values, followed by independent codings on the remaining data. When all numeric codings were completed, the two teams' overall intercoder agreement for the ordinal, five-point ethnic-interethnic identity scale was 88% based on Holsti's R (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967).

[7]Because our sample consists of more Indians from urban areas than from rural areas, the above correlations have been examined further to detect any difference between the two groups of interviewees. The results of an analysis of variance show that the urban residents had a slightly higher educational level than their rural counterparts and that, although the latter group had slightly more Indian acquaintances, there was no significant urban-rural difference in all of the reported variables.

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