

Glimpses of Local Masculinities: Learning from Interviews with Kiowa, Comanche, Apache and Chickasaw Men

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Introduction

This paper emerges out of the American Indian Fatherhood Project (AIFP), originally based at the University of Oklahoma, with follow-up currently taking place through Wake Forest University.¹ From 1998 through 2000, the project's staff conducted 375 interviews with 204 Chickasaw, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache subjects (80% men and 20% women) on the topics of fatherhood and masculinity. Two full-time ethnographers lived and carried out participant-observation in these communities. Ten interviewers were employed by the project; nine of the ten were Native Americans from Oklahoma, though not in all cases of the same tribal backgrounds as the interviewees.

The male participants in the study were biological and/or social fathers of Indian children; the women were biological and/or social mothers of Indian children. Indian blood quantum (degree of Indian ancestry) and tribal affiliation(s) were self-reported. The study included representatives of all socioeconomic categories, and participants ranged in age from 18 to 87.

Community members were involved in designing this project as well as carrying it out. Focus groups from each community, including representatives of tribal government, worked with researchers on the design of each of two interview instruments. These focus groups continued to meet monthly while the research was being conducted. The researchers also held events designed to provide project results and benefits to the communities, such as *Oklahoma Indian Fathers: A Celebration of Tradition*, a day-long celebration and educational event, featuring free health screenings, workshops, and a fun run.

The project explores the ways in which fatherhood and masculinity are conceptualized and practiced in these communities, and the complex intersection between these masculinities and the hegemonic forms of mainstream U.S. culture. There are several reasons to think that not only would masculinity in these two communities differ from the masculinity of the dominant society, but also that these two forms might differ substantially from one another. The Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches (locally called KCAs) were originally treated as a single population because they are extensively intermarried and have since the early twentieth century inhabited a common geographic and jurisdictional area. They also share important

social and cultural characteristics. From the introduction of the horse into the nineteenth century, all three cultures revolved around mobility, hunting (especially of bison), gathering, warfare, and raiding. Men's activities were the primary basis of the subsistence of these groups, and male status was based on war honors and, in some cases, on membership in male military societies. All three were traditionally organized into bands on the basis of extended family ties and marriage and exhibited cross-sex avoidance between in-laws and/or cross-cousins. The three groups have also traditionally recognized bilateral kinship ties. These tribes have origins in the Plains and Southwest.²

The Chickasaws, by contrast, were originally Southeastern farmers, having been removed to Oklahoma (then Indian Territory) in the nineteenth century. Matrilineal descent groups have served as the primary basis for Chickasaw social organization. By contrast with the Plains and Southwestern groups, the Chickasaws and others from the Southeast received the dominant society's label of "civilized tribe" (e.g. see Foreman 1934). This meant that in the nineteenth century they adopted Christianity, and some mainstream U.S. practices such as farming techniques formal education.³ Today, on the whole, Chickasaws exhibit less indigenous language use and less participation in non-Christian traditional religious practice than do the Kiowas, Comanches and Apaches. (As a possible reflection of this, when asked if they follow elements of the "Indian Way," 65% of Chickasaws say yes, while 90% of Kiowas, 91% of Comanches, and 100% of Apaches say yes.) The Chickasaws also have a higher standard of living than these other groups. The two groups, KCAs and Chickasaws, thus embody many significant dimensions of cultural contrast (e.g., traditional economic and social roles, kinship, and religion) as well as overlap related to fatherhood and masculinity.⁴

Finding multiple masculinities, even within a population sometimes treated as unitary by outsiders, should not be surprising. Recent gender studies scholarship has made it clear that the word *masculinity* has no single, monolithic referent, and that accepting the existence of multiple *masculinities* is an important step toward responsible scholarship in this area (Connell 1995 and 2005, Hooper 2001, Paechter 2003, Sargent 2005, Whitehead 2002, Whitehead and Barrett 2001). The reasons for this are important. First, masculinity is never disconnected from other aspects of social life, including culture, race, class, sexuality, and history (Adams and Savran 2002, Brandth and Haugen 2005, Elliston 2004, Gavanoas 2004, Radhakrishnan 2005, Weis 2003, Wilde 2004). As these change, local forms of masculinity change too. Second, masculinity is not currently understood as an essence, a permanent characteristic of biological males. Masculinity is produced through the meaningful, transformative actions of situated individuals (Elliston 2004, Paechter 2003). This is one of the reasons why much scholarship over the past generation has focused on the relationship between masculinity and labor (Brandth and Haugen 2005, Mills 2003, Willis 1977). Considering masculinity as situated practice means that specific forms of masculinity will always be highly context-dependent.

Masculinities always articulate with power structures and with national and global processes (Connell 2005, Mills 2003, Weis 2003). Forms of masculinity can position members of a group to be closer to or farther from a society's dominant model and the rewards associated with it. Masculinity can support or interfere with large-scale transformations. This is why the U.S. government and its agents encouraged Chickasaws and other Indians of the Southeast to transform their perceptions of masculinity to support male farming and property transmission through men. Women had been the traditional farmers of Southeastern societies, but men were seen by European Americans as better suited to the technological innovations and individualism of the European-American agricultural traditions. Making farming manly also meant that Southeastern men would not have to engage in wide-ranging hunting and warfare in order to enact their masculinity, but could be more contained and land-centered. This was to the benefit of European-American expansion and its associated plans for land use.

It is important to understand that, though masculinities are produced through practice, they are not entirely the creative product of individuals. Institutions and structures that are already in place provide the tools and the media with which individuals work in practice. In the dominant U.S. culture, the institutions that contribute to the production of specific forms of masculinity include the nuclear family household, formal educational institutions, mainstream religious institutions and the American mass media. But in looking at KCA and Chickasaw masculinities we have the opportunity to study the impact of alternate structures, such as men's societies, descent groups and other extended family units, traditional religious societies, Native American boarding schools, and the lessons coming from native history, mythology, and language.

KCA and Chickasaw men mobilized and described quite different resources when talking about their lives as men and as fathers in the interviews. In this paper, I consider three such differences in turn: the ways in which KCA and Chickasaw men used their indigenous languages in the interviews, the cultural or personal narratives they offered or alluded to when asked about oral traditions that helped them, and the cultural institutions that they talked about as sources of lessons, models or support. This paper is not intended as a comprehensive account of masculinities in these communities. It addresses only the specific phenomena just mentioned as reflected in interviews focused on masculinity and fatherhood. These phenomena were chosen because they created noticeable patterns in the interviews and suggested interesting differences between the communities that should be the subject of further ethnographic research.

Language Use⁵

Although these interviews were conducted in English, there are numerous occurrences of native language vocabulary within them. This is not the kind of sustained code-switching in which the interviewee signals a change in tone, content

or context by changing from “casual interview” English to some other dialect or language for an entire response, sentence, or even phrase. Rather, it is almost always one word at a time. There is another interesting pattern in the interviews, in which both interviewer and interviewee switch not codes exactly, but channels or media, by temporarily turning off the tape recorder. This phenomenon is actually quite widespread in the interviews, and while it probably entailed a specific kind of code-switching at the time of the communicative event, the result for the receivers of these interviews now is a kind of null code.

The availability of this null code means that the recorded native vocabulary items were considered important for the recipients of the taped interviews to hear, and were not just used as a way of blocking out meanings from English-speaking receivers. What concerns us here is how and in what contexts this vocabulary is mobilized, what we can glean about the functions and meanings of the indigenous language use in each case, and the relationship of these linguistic events to the production of specific forms of masculinity.

There are several functions and ways of meaning that seem to be represented in these events: the indigenous terms may be mobilized to index solidarity with the interviewer or those expected to hear the interview; they may be mobilized to index distance from the same (or from those referred to in the interview, as we’ll see); they are sometimes intended to index the speaker’s ethnic or cultural identity or authenticity; they are sometimes mobilized for humorous effect or to shift to slang register. But some of these events result from the lack of a corresponding term in English. There are differences by tribal group in the extent to which indigenous language use serves each of these functions.

In some cases, the function is unclear because the indigenous terms remains opaque, not translated by either the interviewer or the interviewee. This might be a kind of purposeful opacity, since the option of turning the tape recorder off is always available.

It is significant here that the status of the native language varies across the four tribal groups. Forty-two percent of Kiowas said they “speak” their native language or “speak it well,” as compared with 19 percent of Comanches, 19 percent of Chickasaws and zero percent of Apaches. When asked if their biological father spoke his native language, 89 percent of Kiowas said yes as compared with 61 percent of Comanches, 58 percent of Chickasaws, and 11 percent of Apaches.

Not surprisingly given the numbers above, there are fewer instances of indigenous language use in the Chickasaw interviews than in the KCA interviews. In 68 interviews with Chickasaw consultants, there were seven uses of indigenous language vocabulary. These were distributed across four of the 68 interviews. Among Comanche interviewees, there were ten occurrences across 18 interviews, but these were concentrated in only three of the 18 interviews. At the time of this analysis, though a small number of interviews had been conducted with Apaches, no recorded interviews with Apaches had been transcribed. Therefore, those interviews will not be cited in the following discussions of language use. In the Kiowa data, there were

66 occurrences of native language use in 48 interviews,⁶ these distributed across 16 interviewees. Thus Kiowas are in our sample about twice as likely as Comanches to use native vocabulary, and about six times as likely as Chickasaw interviewees. When Kiowas use such language they use, on average, about the same number of native terms per interviewee as do Comanches and about twice as many terms as the Chickasaws. What is especially interesting is in response to *which questions* in the interview the use of native language vocabulary occurs in the three groups.

Three out of the seven instances of Chickasaw language use involved use of the word for white person (*naholli*). These all occurred in a section of the second interview on “living in two worlds,” and specifically when interviewees were asked about how comfortable they were communicating with white people. This is interesting, because the occurrences of these words took place in the context of interviewees asserting that they are comfortable communicating with whites. The use of this word, however, might at the same time signal a distance from whites that the subject feels is important. One interviewee, when asked if he likes to tease and joke around with whites, answers: “Yeah, yeah, shoot yeah! With Indians, you know, they *naholli*.”⁷ When the interviewer asks for clarification, the interviewee says, “Them white people, they *naholli*.” Three of the remaining seven Chickasaw utterances were names of types of food or numbers, brought up to illustrate the need for Chickasaw language support outside of the home. The final instance is a word, *nota*, translated by the interviewee as “go to sleep.” The interviewee used this word to illustrate activities that constitute being a good Chickasaw father.

It is interesting that no instances of indigenous language use occur when Chickasaw subjects are asked if they follow the “Indian Way,” because this is overwhelmingly the most common context in which Comanches mobilize an indigenous term, this pattern characterizing six out of ten instances. Their answer thus indexes or models their participation in the Indian Way, which, for these speaking informants, at least, includes language use. Several of these remain untranslated but are contextually linked to the interviewee’s family background. One interviewee counts in Comanche to illustrate both that speaking Comanche is part of the Indian Way and also that few are really able to live up to this ideal. There is an interesting instance here of empathetic language use on the part of the interviewer. One interviewer, who is Indian but not Comanche, uses a native term for white person (*taibo*) to refer to a scholar who has written about Comanche history. This happens when the interviewee notices a book about Comanches on the interviewer’s bookshelf. The interviewer explains that the author is *taibo*, the interviewee says, “That figures,” and they share a laugh. Another interviewer use of indigenous vocabulary occurs when an interviewer tries to draw a parallel between the agricultural and dietary practices of the interviewee and himself, by asking if a particular food is like *kishwa* (a Caddo word for parched corn). Another instance involves the mobilization of indigenous language vocabulary to shift to a more informal register. The subject uses the word *to?i* for pipe, in the context of discussing recreational smoking. One example is brought up to illustrate the

difference between knowing words (as white people do, the implication being that the non-Comanche interviewer has this relationship to his own language as well) and being able to speak. This is one of the few cases where native language use creates distance between interviewer and interviewee rather than solidarity.

Interviewer: Do you think it's important to understand the language to be a good Comanche man?

Answer: Yes. Yes. There's a difference in understanding language. You can understand the words.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: Phrases, perhaps.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: But the...conversation[al] Comanche. . . . *Pámana nekwaru*. That means, "I'm gonna talk to you." Conversation[al] Comanche, conversation[al] Caddo.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: In saying words, the way you're counting . . . [These are] two separate things, you know.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: White people know Comanche. They can say words. But they can't talk.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: You know? Not like my grandma and my grandfather and my dad could. They could sit and . . . all day long and talk Comanche, not say a word of English.

Interviewer: Mm.

Answer: Now that's conversation[al] Comanche. You can't do that. Not as good as they can.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Answer: But I can get by.

And finally, one interviewee uses Comanche to describe a way of assessing the value of a man. When asked what characterizes a good Comanche man, he says: "*Ik'ona pukuya*. We're gonna pick this horse." This metaphor and concept for exemplary masculinity are probably not fully accessible through English, as illustrated by the fact that the interviewee does not elaborate in English beyond giving the translation.

Among the Kiowa interviewees, three areas of questioning stand out for eliciting indigenous language vocabulary. First, nine of the 66 instances occur when interviewees are asked about their tribal identity and whether they follow the "Indian Way." Second, another nine instances occur when interviewees are asked about Kiowa ideals of masculinity. Finally, 23 of the 66 instances occur when interviewees are asked about the cultural resources they have to draw on as men

and as fathers. In this last area, there are 14 references to *Séndé*, the Kiowa culture hero, four terms that refer to Kiowa men's or military societies or roles in them, one that refers to a rite of passage, and five religious terms, some untranslated and some being words from specific prayers. These Kiowa language terms that arise when talking about cultural resources, then, are mobilized because their referents do not have English labels and, beyond this, they do not have European-American social or conceptual parallels. This is thus more reference-driven language use in which indexical and relational effects are less foregrounded than we see in the other sets of interviews.

This difference does not necessarily mean, of course, that Kiowa men and fathers have more native cultural resources to draw on than do Comanches or Chickasaws. Certainly, cultural institutions and practices can be maintained in the face of language shift and/or new ones can emerge to meet social needs. However, having specific linguistic resources with which to discursively engage and produce masculinity is important. Our next area of comparison suggests that there are at least differences in the *types* of cultural resources these groups have available to draw on in the areas of fathering and manhood.

To summarize, Chickasaws are most likely to use an indigenous language term when discussing Indian-white relations, seemingly to assert a non-white identity while expressing ease of communication with whites. Comanches are most likely to use indigenous vocabulary as part of an assertion of their identification with the "Indian Way." Kiowas are most likely to use native terms when describing the cultural resources they have available to support them as men and as fathers. For those Kiowas with some knowledge of their traditional language, then, the Kiowa language is a medium more specifically linked and linkable with their masculinity. For Chickasaws and Comanches, on the other hand, native language use seems to index a more general tribal or Indian identity rather than a specifically masculine one.

Oral Traditions

One of the questions interviewees were asked about cultural resources was: "Are there cultural stories or oral histories that teach you how to be a good man and a good father?" A real divergence appears among the three groups in their responses to this question. Of the 48 Kiowa interviewees, the vast majority said that they did have resources of this type to draw on, and 14 out of 48 specifically mentioned stories about the culture hero *Séndé* (also spelled *Saynday* or *Say-n-day*). In the Chickasaw interviews, approximately one third acknowledged having such stories to draw on, but of those very few had any specifics. In the Comanche interviews, approximately half the interviewees said there were such stories, but again, few were specific.

So who is this Kiowa *Séndé* who appears to have no Chickasaw or Comanche equivalent? One account of *Séndé* goes as follows:

Saynday was the one, they say, who got lots of things in our world started and going. Some of them were good, and some of them were bad, but all of them were things that make the world the way it is.

Saynday is gone now. He lived a long time ago, and all these things happened a long way back. When he was here on the earth, he was a funny-looking man. He was tall and thin, and he had a little thin mustache that drooped down over his mouth. The muscles of his arms and legs bulged out big and then pulled in tight, as if somebody had tied strings around them. He had a funny, high, whiny voice, and he talked his own language. His language was enough like other people's so they could understand it, but it was his own way of talking, too (Marriott 1963:1).

Kiowa poet and ethnographer Gus Palmer has suggested, however, that this portrayal of *Séndé* stories is too cute and mild. In his informative work on Kiowa storytelling, Palmer argues that

true Kiowa *Séndé* stories treat the kind of subjects found in the Star or the National Enquirer Magazine. Sex, bestiality, adultery, fornication, and lying are no unfamiliar subject of a *Séndé* story. He will assume any form he wants so he can play tricks on people and animals, 'and is [even] the victim of tricks; he is amoral and has strong appetites . . . is footloose, irresponsible and callous' (Palmer 2001:9)⁸

It is also significant, given that the topic of masculinity provided the context for these interviews, that *Séndé* is seen as having androgynous qualities (Palmer 2001:8). *Séndé* may be more of an anti-example than an example of proper manhood.

These Kiowa lessons about manhood are funny, and always serve as a point of engagement with the interviewer. Those interviewees who know about *Séndé*, know about him in considerable detail which they freely draw upon in the interview context.

The *Séndé* stories fall into three main categories, represented by the following illustrations. Some of the stories emphasize *Séndé*'s trickster nature, some portray him as something of a buffoon, and a third group uses *Séndé*'s actions to map out the unthinkable. The first quote, from a 79 year old Kiowa man, exemplifies *Séndé* as trickster.

White man was coming along on horseback and he run across *Séndé*, you know. And he said "*Séndé*, I heard about you. You always fool people. Can you fool me?" *Séndé* said, "Uh, not, not right now. I can't fool you because my medicine . . . see that mountain over there? My medicine's over there." And then he said, that white man says, "Would you go get it?" "Well, it's too far," he said. "If you loan me your horse, I'll go get it." White man says, "All right." So he loaned him his horse and . . . *Séndé* got on that horse, you know. And he started out and pulled the reins on that horse you know, and that horse backed up and won't ho, you know. And the white man says, "What's the matter?" He said . . . "He doesn't think I'm you." He

said to him, “If you loan me your clothes he might think I’m you and he’ll go.” So the white man, “All right,” he said. He took his clothes off and give them to *Séndé*. He put them on, put his hat on. He got on the horse and the horse went, boy! He came up just a little ways and stopped. “White man, I already fooled you. I got your horse and clothes.” And he rode off. And the white man was standing there naked (*both laugh*). So, I don’t know what the moral of the story is. I guess never trust anybody, I guess (*both laugh*). I guess *Séndé* can really fool you.

In the second category of stories, exemplified in the example that follows, rather than outsmarting unwitting victims, *Séndé* is himself the butt of the jokes.

Séndé come on a riverbank and he’d seen a bird fly up from [a] tree and dive into . . . the river was ice. And he’d go right through that ice and come up with a fish, you know. *Séndé* kept watching, wondering if he couldn’t do that. And pretty soon he asked that bird, he said . . . “How do you do that?” He said, “You gotta have good medicine.” He said, “When you dive, you have to have good medicine to go right through that ice so you won’t hurt yourself.” And *Séndé* said, “Can you give me that medicine so I can do that? I want fish to eat.” And he, that guy, that bird, kind of hesitates, says he heard about *Séndé*, you know, so . . . He said, “No, I don’t think I’ll give you that medicine. You might hurt yourself.” (*Interviewer chuckles*) And *Séndé* says, “No, no. I want to do that, do what you’re doing.” So, so he—the bird—finally consented. He said, “Well, all right. I’ll give you my medicine. But when you dive, I don’t want you to open your eyes. The trick of this is: close your eyes and you’ll go right through the ice.” So, he gave him that medicine and *Séndé* got to wondering. He said, “I don’t know why he told me that. He’s . . . I bet if I opened my eyes I still could go through that ice.” So he’s going to disobey that bird, you know. So he dove and as he got closer to that ice he opened his eyes. And BAM, he hit that ice and it didn’t break. He splattered that blood all over his face (*both laugh*). And that bird said, “I told you not to open your eyes!” he said (*both laugh*). Yeah.

This third example, from a 56 year old Kiowa man, exemplifies *Séndé* as a figure who illustrates the limits of acceptable human behavior.

The one I remember the most is the one about . . . where *Séndé* was having dinner [. . .] Somebody asked him ‘Where’s that uh.’ –oh, they were all eating. See, they were all commenting on how good the meal was, and someone asked *Séndé*, ‘Where’s that, uh . . .?’ meaning the youngest child. They hadn’t seen him around in a while. *Séndé* says, ‘We’re eating him.’ (*interviewer laughing*) ‘That’s why it’s a good dinner.’ I remember that one. I thought, ‘Man, you don’t do that.’

Many of the interviewees, even though they do not actually tell stories themselves, nevertheless offer general comments about the role of *Séndé* stories in Kiowa socialization. A 63-year old Kiowa man said, “The old folks, they didn’t have a harsh punishment. They [would say] ‘don’t be like *Séndé*—don’t be [a] bad person,’ like *Séndé*.”

Another male Kiowa interviewee suggested, “You know a lot of the *Séndé* stories have to do with greed, so what it does it teaches us how to be generous and not greedy.” A 35-year old man said, laughing, “*Séndé* stories are about how not to do things.” One interviewer suggested that *Séndé* was good. He was quickly corrected by the interviewee, “Yeah, he was good and bad. I don’t know.”

Comanches responded differently when asked about oral traditions that serve as instructive narratives on how to be a good man or a good father. They generally recounted personal life stories, especially from grandfathers. One 61 year old man said,

I think there are fables that are probably more joking . . . than myth, or laughter and for entertainment, not as opposed to any moral teachings. Comanches pretty much were, in describing things, they pretty much laid it on the table. This is what you look like. This is what you smell like. This is what you are. This is what you dress like. You know. And they’d just outright tell you.

Another man, 33, said, “[My grandfather] just always told me you’re gonna be working for the rest of your life, so . . . (*chuckles*).” The interviewer, also laughing, asked, “So, get used to it?” The interviewee responded, still laughing, “Get used to it.”

The Chickasaws who said that there were stories teaching good masculine and paternal values most often said these stories came from the Bible. One specifically said that stories teaching about being a good man and father come from the Bible, and *not* from Chickasaw tradition. It was fascinating to note, however, that not one of them offered an illustration. The opaque reference to the Bible never serves as a point of engagement with the interviewer, who never presses for an example, but moves on to the next topic.

The second most commonly identified potential source of life lessons for Chickasaws is the historical Trail of Tears, the forced removal of Chickasaws from their homeland in the Southeast to Indian Territory. Like the stories told and alluded to by Comanches, this is a personal/historical one, but it is on a larger scale. One interviewee offered the gruesome story of an elderly friend or relative who had been on this bitter journey.

He’d seen people die. They said they was gonna bury them and they wouldn’t bury them, so more come along and see them, where the wolves been eating on them and stuff like that. Try to feed them spoiled meat or weevils in their meal and stuff like that. And they’d drive them like driving cattle? That was way back there when they moved from the East up here.

We encounter several different types of narratives, then, across these groups. Many Kiowas tell stories about a trickster—a kind of man, non-man, and anti-man all at the same time. Comanches talk about the lessons offered by everyday life and by the experiences of themselves and their relatives. Chickasaws allude to,

but don't tell, Christian narratives. The stories they do tell are of a cataclysmic, genocidal historical event. As resources, then, the told stories offer in one case a model of how not to be, in the second case a model of what presumably is ("real life"), and in the third case a model of what can be overcome. The time perspective in each case is, respectively, mythic, current, and historic.

In talking about narratives that inform their lives as men and fathers, why do Christian interviewees not tell Bible stories? That is, why is the telling of stories from the Bible not seen as desirably performative in the interview context? Why would this not be an effective way of demonstrating something about oneself to the interviewer in the same way that telling *Séndé* stories is? Perhaps it is because Biblical narratives are not seen as distinguishing members of these communities from members of the dominant society, but as performances that would suggest a shared culture. Or perhaps it was assumed that the interviewer and future readers of the interview would know such stories, that they constitute a set of shared, presupposed reference points that do not need to be articulated.

Institutional Resources

For the KCAs, and the Kiowas particularly, the themes of the interviews frequently elicited discussion related to war and warrior societies. Among Chickasaws, discussion of fatherhood and masculinity often led to the topic of the Chickasaw Nation as a supportive cultural institution and resource. The following discussion will draw only on Kiowa and Chickasaw interviews.

Kiowas were especially likely to talk about war or military service when asked about men they thought were examples of good fathers or good men or when asked what a good father should be like. One was asked: "What is the most important gift a Kiowa father can give to his child?" He responded:

I guess it would be a legacy. You know, when you think about the experiences that you've had, the experiences that I've had, to us it doesn't mean anything. But to your children it means a lot. You know, things like serving in the military during war time or a conflict. To you and I it was just a job, but to our children it's something I guess, that has a positive influence on the way [they] feel about us. Because we were able to make sacrifices, in my way of thinking. . . . It was for them, too. And even though, collectively, it was for all of our countrymen, it was for our family too.

When asked about the traditional roles of Kiowa fathers, one interviewee offered a window onto how men prepared their sons to be warriors:

Those Kiowa fathers. They don't want their children to work. I don't know why, but I've heard some older people say, "Don't work my son. He might exert himself too much," or something like that, you know. But times are changed, you know. You don't keep your children from working now. Maybe it was necessary way back there when they was warriors, you know. All they did was fight.

Another said, when asked who he thought was a good Kiowa man:

He was [a] great Kiowa man. . . . That was my hero, one of my heroes when I was growing up, because he went to war. And I remember him going whenever . . . a song, certain songs, would come up in our family—whether they were [Black Leggings] songs or whether they were Kiowa hymns.

Warrior societies, especially the Black Leggings Society, were mentioned as being important sources of support for adult men and for youth learning how to be men as well. One interviewee was asked, “You know if your community has a ceremony that initiates a boy into adulthood?” He responded,

The only thing that I know, with like the Black Leggings, the men initiate two boys into the society as young boys, and they took care of their needs, on, on war party raids, like taking care of the horses and . . . things like that. Gathering wood for fire and, preparing, you know, some type of meal or something. But I don’t know if it totally initiates them into a manhood type thing. But I think it gives them the encouragement or it gives them the backing, you know, that “We chose you boys for a reason,” you know. You’re upright and good standing young men, so . . . I mean obviously they’re not gonna pick some little kid who’s . . . always running around tearing it or something, you know.

In the Chickasaw interviews, it is not warrior societies but the Chickasaw Nation itself that serves as a presupposed background social force affecting the quality and expression of everything in social life, including fatherhood and masculinity. The Chickasaw Nation is most explicitly connected with masculine role models and with fathering in the person of Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby. This may seem surprising until one realizes how all-encompassing the Chickasaw Nation is as social network and support.

One interviewee was asked, “Think of someone you think is a good Chickasaw man, and what is he like?” He answered, “I’d say the Governor.” Then asked to describe Governor Anoatubby, he said, “He’s honest and he, you know, he speaks the truth, and he’s fair, you know, he’s fair to all race[s]. He’s a very good, you know, very good leader.”

Asked to name a good Chickasaw man, another interviewee said,

Governor. I think that he is an awesome, awesome man. I think that he is, the respect that he has, the leadership that he has within the community, the love that he has of his children and his grandchildren are awesome. And, people can see that. And this man is a man that is a leader of the Chickasaw people, you know, does that make sense?

Note the interviewee’s use of “Governor” as a proper name for the Governor, parallel to the use of a kin term like “Grandfather” when used as a term of address.

When asked about who was a good father, another interviewee said:

They don't go around with any, quote, look who I've been and what I am and what I've done. They just know who they are. They're not looking for their identity; they know their identity. Governor Anoatubby is the same way. He knows his identity he doesn't need anybody to tell him what's he's done. And he doesn't go around really parading it. He just, if you ever, if you've ever been around Governor Anoatubby whenever he is at a public gathering, he just goes around and says "I'm Governor Anoatubby." (*laughs*)

Another was asked: 'What's the most important gift that a Chickasaw father can give to his child?'

The most important gift? I would say, uh, the certainty that a child was loved by their father. Everything else aside, if the child knows that the father loved him and cared for him and was willing to be there for him. You know, love has many different forms and words but if the child understands that and knows that and accepts it, you know, that's the best gift of all is when . . . they honor their father. And to have honor you have to have trust and respect. [It] goes both ways. So I know like in the case of, this case like Governor Anoatubby's son, he really does that with his dad. He really respects, trusts, and loves his dad and there's no doubt that Governor Anoatubby loves his sons. There's just, there's no doubt. (*laughs*)

The same interviewee was asked, "What are the most important values that a Chickasaw father should try and teach his child?" He said,

The phrase that Governor Anoatubby always says that goes back to, relates to the Chickasaw is the unconquered, unconquerable spirit. . . . And it's a development of an attitude that says, I want to be here because I do not want to be enslaved, I want to be free. I want to be like the picture up there. I want to be able to soar like an eagle. I want to be able to be free to not be in somebody else's box.

For these interviewees, Governor Anoatubby has come to embody the masculine ideals associated with the Chickasaw Nation. But it is also clear from the interviews that the Nation itself is central to many Chickasaw men's sense of self, of community, and of identity. When asked if he participates in activities that are part of the Indian Way, one interviewee answered, "Well . . . I've been an active participant in the tribal political process. Far as voting." Several talked about their pride in the accomplishments of the Nation. One father discussed sharing this pride with his children:

I always try to tell my kids it doesn't matter, you know, what color that you are. But, you know, that you always should be proud of being American Indian. . . . [He explains how people who didn't self-identify as Chickasaw in the past do so now.] So I guess you can say the Chickasaw Nation, you know, we've come a long ways.

It is especially interesting that even those who expressed some dissatisfaction with the Chickasaw Nation or the Governor still seemed to suggest that the Nation

and Governor *should be* a major social resource for them. General questions about being Indian move inexorably back to a discussion of the Nation. For example, when one interviewee is asked, “How sure are you that you can get along with Indian people?” his answer equated “Indian people” with the Chickasaw Nation. “I don’t know,” he answered, and proceeded to tell a story about being unable to get a job with the Chickasaw Nation. Another, when asked how involved he was with “Indian ideas and issues,” answered:

Indian ideas and issues. I got a lot of ideas, but I never have spoken mine, up on that . . . let them know what I had to say about it. [. . .] I mean, Chickasaw Nation.

For this interviewee, “Indian ideas and issues” relate exclusively to Chickasaw National politics. Whereas for Kiowa men participating in these interviews, then, questions relating to identity and ultimately to fatherhood and masculinity are bound up discursively with cultural values and institutions related to warfare and warriors, for Chickasaw men these phenomena are embedded in a discourse of National identification and growth.

Conclusion

The uses in the interviews of these three media—native language, oral narrative, and iconic institutions—is informative, especially when considered together. Differences between the Kiowas and the Chickasaws are particularly striking. For Kiowas, native language terms point to specific cultural resources that have been available to generations of men and fathers. Many of the stories that come to mind are of a specifically Kiowa mythic personality. And the institutions that serve as and provide models of Kiowa manhood are the warrior societies that have cross-cut Kiowa society in the past as well as in the present. In talking about fatherhood and masculinity, then, many Kiowa interviewees mobilize and bring into present-day relevance resources that they characterize as traditionally Kiowa. This ideology of continuity is an important part of how Kiowa masculinity is conceptualized and expressed.

Many of the Chickasaw interviewees, on the other hand, express connections among masculinity, adaptability, transformation and overcoming. Some interviewees use the native term for ‘white person’ to show that they maintain their Chickasaw identity *in spite of* a close relationship to whites. The stories some tell demonstrate that they have survived *in spite of* the forced removal. They have taken a model of bureaucratic social organization that certainly resonates with the dominant society and transformed it into a model of proper Chickasaw masculinity. It is important to recognize that, like the expression of masculinity reflected in the Kiowa interviews, this expression of masculinity and the practices associated with it are conceptualized as aspects of Indian identity and behavior by the interviewees. Learning how these expressions of masculinity articulate with the larger social and cultural contexts in

each case will help us to better understand the complex nature of masculinities. Such research will, it is hoped, be useful to the communities themselves and to those who work with them to meet the needs of men and fathers.

Notes

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2. For more detail on Kiowa, Comanche and Apache culture and history, see, e.g.: Foster 1991; Harris 2000; Lassiter 2001, 2002; Marriott 1945; Meadows 1999; Mihesuah 2002.

3. For a classic perspective on Chickasaw culture and history, see Cushman and Debo 1999.

4. Cultural contrasts between KCAs and Chickasaws are not simple or absolute. Women play strong roles in the Plains communities as well as among the Chickasaws (e.g., see Harris 2000); Christianity has developed into a “traditional” religion with cultural specificity among all these groups (e.g., see Lassiter 2001; Lassiter, Ellis and Kotay 2002). We often found differences between the Kiowas and Comanches that were just as significant as those between the Kiowas and Chickasaws. The historical differences between these two larger groupings thus provide a starting point for our comparison, not an end point.

5. Both the discussion of language use and that of the narratives that follow are preliminary, based only on the material that was transcribed as of 2002, approximately 50%. Interestingly, in both cases, I found that the results broke down along tribal lines, rather than regional.

6. Fourteen of the 66 instances of indigenous language use in the 48 Kiowa interviews involve naming of the Kiowa trickster *Séndé*. If occurrences of that proper name are excluded, there are 52 instances of indigenous language use in the 48 interviews.

7. Spellings of native words are generally those of the transcribers, who consulted with the interviewers and other community members to arrive at preferred spellings.

8. At the end of this quote, Palmer is himself quoting scholar Alan Velie.

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