

My relatives are waiting: Barriers to tribal enrollment of fostered/adopted American Indians

Ashley L. Landers¹  | Sharon M. Danes² | Amy A. Morgan³  |
Shamora Merritt⁴ | Sandy White Hawk⁵

¹Human Development and Family Science Program, Department of Human Sciences, College of Education and Human Ecology, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

²Department of Family Social Science, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

³Department of Family Science, School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, USA

⁴Department of Human Development and Family Science, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Falls Church, Virginia, USA

⁵First Nations Repatriation Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

Correspondence

Ashley L. Landers, Human Development and Family Science Program, Department of Human Sciences, College of Education and Human Ecology, The Ohio State University, 1787 Neil Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210, USA.

Email: landers.116@osu.edu

Abstract

Objective: The present study fills a literature gap by examining barriers to tribal enrollment for American Indian fostered and adopted individuals.

Background: Systematic child removal has intergenerationally impacted American Indian families. Startling numbers of American Indian children have been removed from their families and tribal communities and placed into foster care or for adoption. Budding research on American Indian fostered and adopted family members illuminates the relationship between reunification and tribal enrollment. However, little is known about what facilitates or impedes the tribal enrollment of previously estranged American Indian fostered and adopted family members.

Method: Guided by place identity theory, this study analyzed survey data from the *Experiences of Adopted and Fostered Individuals Project*. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data from a subsample of American Indian fostered and adopted individuals ($n = 60$) that responded to an open-ended question about the reasons for their lack of tribal enrollment.

Results: The tribal enrollment process is a formalization of the social confirmation of the fostered and adopted American Indian individual's identity; it is a process of mutual verification between the individual and the tribe. Results yielded three major themes describing barriers to enrollment: (1) *personal*, (2) *collective (family and tribe)*, and (3) *institutional*.

Conclusion: Despite high levels of interest in tribal enrollment, many fostered and adopted individuals experience personal, collective, and institutional barriers to tribal enrollment.

KEYWORDS

adoption, American Indian/Alaska Native/First Nations, community participation/action research, foster care, identity, qualitative methodology

INTRODUCTION

Historical waves of separation practices have been documented among American Indian families (e.g., relocation, boarding schools, child welfare removal, adoption era practices) (Red Horse et al., 2000). Between the 1800s and 1970s, the United States federal government endorsed the forced removal of American Indian children who were sent to residential boarding schools under the guise of educational opportunity (Gallegos & Fort, 2018). To enforce this cultural genocide, carefully calculated tactics were used to disrupt American Indian children's emotional and physical connection to their tribe and dismantle their personal identity, so that they identified in the liking of White identity (Shear, 2015). The goal of boarding schools was to sever familial ties, traditions, and connections to tribal land (Shear, 2015).

Later, removal rates of American Indian children resulted in the enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). Although documented removal rates varied, close to 1 in 30 American Indian children were adopted (Indian Child Welfare Act, 1978). As removal tactics varied from state to state, in some places 85%–95% of American Indian children were transracially adopted (Gallegos & Fort, 2018; Indian Child Welfare Act, 1978). In response, the Indian Child Welfare Act aimed to maintain continuity between American Indian children and their culture of origin (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). Specifically, the intention was to prioritize and preserve the very American Indian identity, traditions, and culture that systematic removal efforts egregiously sought to extinguish.

Although large numbers of American Indian children were removed and placed into foster care and/or adopted, many are “finding their way home” (Harness, 2006; Landers et al., 2017). *Finding their way home* is a term used in the American Indian community to describe not only reunifying with family of origin and tribe, but reclaiming homeland as well (i.e., ancestral land and tribal community) (Landers et al., 2015, 2017, 2018). For American Indians who have experienced forceful removal from their families of origin and been through foster care or adoption, *finding their way home* involves a two-step process: (a) reunification with family of origin (e.g., biological family), and (b) reconnecting with tribe, which may also involve pursuit of tribal enrollment. In fact, Landers et al. (2017) found that reunification with family of origin is often a stepping-stone toward tribal enrollment.

The tribal enrollment process is a formalized confirmation of the fostered and adopted American Indian family member's ethnic and cultural identity (Landers et al., 2018). The dual commitment creates a collective identity between the tribe and the enrollee (Pratt, 2003). Tribal enrollment is a process of mutual verification between the individual and the collective tribe; on the part of the tribe, it is a collective invitation to be part of the social dynamics that underpin the culture of their unique group. Additionally, “belonging” to the tribe and experiencing “rootedness” by participation in tribal rituals further cement the individual's personal identity as an American Indian. Enrollment is also recursive in nature; tribal collective identity is shaped by enrolled members.

Research has only scratched the surface of understanding the experiences of connection to tribe among fostered and adopted American Indians (Landers et al., 2015, 2017, 2018). Only one study, to date, has examined the tribal enrollment of fostered and adopted American Indian adults (Landers et al., 2018). This study indicated that 52.7% of formerly fostered and adopted American Indian adults reported being enrolled in their tribe (Landers et al., 2018). However, that study only included American Indian individuals who consistently identified

themselves as American Indian across two race questions. If those authors had opted to explore the enrollment of all those who provided any indication they were American Indian, enrollment would have been substantially less (32.2%). This means that whereas half of fostered and adopted American Indians with salient identities are tribally enrolled, only one-third of those with less salient identities as American Indian are tribally enrolled.

Of the many factors explored that could potentially contribute to tribal enrollment, Landers et al. (2018) found that reunification was the only factor that was significantly associated with an increased likelihood of enrollment. While “reunification” is most often thought to refer to the return of a child in out-of-home placement to their family of origin (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011), recent definitions of reunification have been expanded to refer to the process wherein a separated individual reconnects and rejoins their family of origin (Landers et al., 2015, 2017, 2018). Reunification is not limited to the child welfare context, as reunification can occur in other contexts, such as later in life, particularly in adulthood (Landers et al., 2017).

Despite the finding that reunification increases the likelihood of tribal enrollment, the nuances underpinning the relationship between fostered and adopted individual and tribe are yet to be discovered. This study delves into the complexities surrounding barriers to tribal enrollment. The process of enrollment is arduous (complex and sensitive) but even more so for fostered and adopted persons. Fostered and adopted American Indian individuals have been cut-off from more traditional or normative processes involving parents that for non-adopted American Indians are more easily accessible to achieve tribal enrollment. In this study, through the voices of American Indian adults who experienced foster care and/or adoption as children, we illuminate the challenges they encounter as they reconcile their personal, ethnic identity with their tribal collective, cultural identity in the pursuit of tribal enrollment.

The literature about multiracial theories and intersectional scholarship have recognized the complexity of identity formation through the influence of social processes experienced through sociocultural conditions, family background, and current as well as past experiences. However, they have not, to this date, explored the pursuit of place identity (e.g., *finding their way home*) of fostered and adopted American Indians nor have they documented the challenges faced during the pursuit of that place identity. Documenting the challenges fostered and adopted American Indian adults encounter during the tribal enrollment process is the study purpose.

There are several definitions of “place.” Place is often thought of as home or dwelling, but place is more than a dwelling. Place is a dynamic and interactive perspective about a relational environment that involves social, cultural, and psychological meaning (Hauge, 2007). The particular meanings that are the focus of this study are belongingness and rootedness, a feeling of being home. For American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, *finding their way home* is a process that is nested in both their family of origin and their family of origin’s tribe. Thus, place for American Indians is also a collective of persons with a shared identity.

Hauge (2007) has indicated a need for research that explores place identity. This study does so within a unique race and culture. The study contributes to that gap by grounding it in place identity theory while investigating the challenges of tribal enrollment in adulthood for fostered and adopted American Indians at the personal, collective (family and tribe), and institutional levels. This study also contributes to the foster care and adoption literature by investigating a little researched topic utilizing the voices of those who have experienced processes of family separation, foster care and/or adoption, possibly reunification, and pursuit of tribal enrollment.

Groups define themselves over time through their social interactions, patterns, beliefs, and norms (Hill et al., 2005). Among the many complexities within this study is the definition and relationship of the concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture. The conceptual labels are often used interchangeably but they vary in critical ways, especially in reference to the tribal enrollment process. We borrow from Hill et al. (2005) for our definitions. *Race* broadly refers to the physical features such as skin complexion, hair texture, and facial phenotypes that define people

in particular groups. It is important to note that race is not always connected to cultural values. In contrast to race, *ethnicity* refers to influences of nationality and similar ancestry. Similar to ethnicity, *culture* refers to the intergenerational patterns of communication, interaction, roles, and values within a group. The objective in distinguishing these conceptual labels goes beyond obtaining clarity. It is about the interweaving of the corresponding identities (i.e., racial, ethnic, and cultural) and the varying salience of these identities for fostered and adopted American Indians as they progress through the tribal enrollment process. The salience of each of these identities varies at different points in the *finding their way home* journey. Not only does the salience vary as one progresses through the process, but the variation in salience across identities varies among individuals within a collective of a shared identity. Although this study explores the barriers or challenges encountered when pursuing tribal enrollment, we would be remiss if we did not mention the motivating factors that push fostered and adopted American Indian individuals to seek to enroll. When fostered and adopted individuals are trying to *find their way home*, reunification and the pursuit of enrollment is about the search for their ancestry—their ethnic and cultural identities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Depending on discipline, the definition of identity varies slightly. One that has emerged from multiracial theory is that identity is a sense of self that evolves and changes over a lifetime based on the interaction and changing level of salience of numerous factors (Wijesinghe, 2001). One factor that is often ignored in identity theories, including multiracial theories, is place. Although the framework of intersectionality indicates that theorists should incorporate social identities such as gender, sexual orientation, and class; place is not included. There are a number of definitions of place. One of those definitions is a collective of persons with a shared identity (Hauge, 2007). Within this definition, place identity is comprised of perceptions and comprehensions within a membership group such as a family or tribe (Hauge, 2007). Membership groups define themselves over time through their social interactions, patterns, beliefs, and norms (Hill et al., 2005); the group symbols have meaning and significance to the group. Within place, these symbols create personal and shared memories. The adult fostered and adopted American Indian participants in our study have stolen memories resulting from their removal and separation from their families of origin. Flipping the view from the institutional damage to participants to the introspective view of the participants', those memories are lost memories. Thus, there is a fragmentation within their personal identity that many seek to capture as they reunite with their family of origin and pursue tribal enrollment.

Collective identities such as ethnic and cultural identity within place reside in relationships within a membership group. Tribal enrollment, by its very nature, is a social construction between the fostered and adopted individual and the tribe. For the American Indian applicant, it is about sensemaking related to their belonging to the tribe (Landers et al., 2015, 2018). Belonging is a basic and universal human need (Hill, 2006). As stated by Bornholt (2000), it is a key construct of ethnic identity that initiates through reunification with the family of origin and is further cemented by tribal enrollment. Within the development of cultural identity, rootedness has the potential of developing through a social connection with the family's tribe. That social and/or formal connection with tribe may provide a sense of emotional security and meet a relatedness need (Hill, 2006). On the other hand, Hill (2006) indicated that a lack of a sense of belonging and rootedness may result in loneliness and depression.

Place identity becomes a cognitive database against which settings are experienced (Proshansky et al., 1983). As a result, place can be nurturing or challenging in terms of identity development depending on two clusters of perceptions and comprehensions (Hauge, 2007). One cluster is composed of memories, thoughts, values, and settings. Another is the relationships

among different settings, for example the adoptive family, the family of origin, and the family's tribe. These perceptions and comprehensions are generated both internally in the mind and through interaction with the external environments such as the institutions one encounters in the tribal enrollment process (Casey, 2001). Thus, in the journey of developing place identity for the American Indian individuals in this study, challenges could occur on a number of levels: personal, collective (family and tribe), and institutional.

Place identity has five central functions: (a) recognition, (b) meaning, (c) expressive, (d) mediating change, and (e) anxiety and defense function. Through tribal enrollment, the recognition function of place identity is achieved through the formal acknowledgement of their ethnic ancestry. The meaning function is fulfilled through the intergenerational patterns of cultural communication, interaction, roles, and values that the enrollee is now steeped in. Those previous two functions create a relational setting that exhibits belongingness and rootedness that exemplify the expressive function of place identity.

The shared meanings, relationships, and structure entrenched in tribal history and rituals provide fodder to mediate the changes the prospective enrollee is managing as they move through the place identity journey. Thus, contributions are made achieving the place identity function of mediating change. Similarly, there is support from within the family of origin extending to tribal traditions where contributions can be made to address anxiety and defend against the unknown, contributing to the last of the five functions of place identity. Identity communication among these functions occurs both consciously and subconsciously on many levels including personal, collective (family and tribe), and institutional (Hauge, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tribal enrollment

Tribal enrollment has typically been determined by lineal descent or blood quantum (Brownell, 2000; Fletcher, 2012; Gould, 2001; Schmidt, 2011; TallBear, 2003). Still tribes differ in their positions on enrollment eligibility, most agree that blood quantum was not historically the way that American Indian people identified themselves (Spruhan, 2006). Prior to colonization, American Indian tribes established kinship through lineal descent (Schmidt, 2011). Some even view blood quantum as a tool of oppression imposed by the United States during colonization (Spruhan, 2006).

Barriers and facilitators to tribal enrollment

Presently, there is a paucity of research examining patterns and experiences, facilitators and barriers, to tribal enrollment among fostered and adopted American Indian individuals. Previous research has only scratched the surface in shedding light on the reunification (Landers et al., 2015, 2017), social connection to tribe, and enrollment (Landers et al., 2018) of American Indian fostered and adopted individuals. Prior research suggests that reunification serves as a steppingstone toward tribal enrollment, as reunified American Indian fostered and adopted individuals are eight times more likely to be enrolled in their tribe (Landers et al., 2018). Despite research advances, there is a clear absence of research examining the personal, collective (family and tribe), and institutional barriers to enrollment for American Indian fostered and adopted individuals who are interested in pursuing tribal enrollment. This is surprising and unfortunate given the historical and systematic practice of removing American Indian children from their families of origin and placing them into foster care and for adoption.

Personal motivators and barriers

While research outlining the personal factors that serve as motivators or barriers to tribal enrollment is limited, a small body of adoption research outlines the factors that motivate adopted individuals to search for family of origin. Adopted individuals are motivated to search for their family of origin (biological family) for any number of reasons including: (1) their desire for biological and genetic information about their parent(s) and, in turn, themselves; (2) desire for information about their familial and cultural roots; (3) a sense of curiosity; (4) seeking information to share with their own children and future generations; and (5) seeking to establish a relationship with their family of origin (Simpson et al., 1981; Sobol & Cardiff, 1983). The reverse is also true—there are any number of reasons why adopted individuals refrain from searching for their family of origin (i.e., barriers) including fear and satisfaction with their adoptive families (Sobol & Cardiff, 1983). Motivators or facilitators to adopted individuals seeking information about their family of origin can include supportive others (in the family of origin or adoptive family), open-access policies, and resources such as technology and travel funds (Wrobel et al., 2013). In contrast, barriers to seeking information about family of origin among adopted individuals can also include “people, policies, and resources” (Wrobel et al., 2013, p. 442). In particular, non-supportive or discouraging others such as an adoptive parent, policies that prohibit information seeking such as sealed records, and a lack of resources to support information seeking serve as barriers (Wrobel et al., 2013).

Collective (family and tribal) barriers

American Indian adults who were separated from their families of origin during childhood by foster care or adoption often have varied access to information about their American Indian identities. Information about their parents, grandparents, and extended family members, possibly even information about their tribal heritage can be difficult to trace. Of those who have access to information about their families of origin, many American Indian adults report satisfactory reunification experiences (Landers et al., 2015). Despite the complexity of tribal enrollment, many American Indian fostered and adopted individuals are still searching for their families of origin (Landers et al., 2017). Although the exact rates of how many American Indian fostered and adopted individuals search for their families are unknown, at least one study found that nearly 18% of American Indian fostered and adopted were not yet reunified with family of origin. This is not surprising considering one-third of adopted individuals search for their birth parents at least once during their lifetime (Sobol & Cardiff, 1983). The gender of the adopted individual and the birthparent also play a role in the search process. Adopted women are more likely to search than men (Feast & Howe, 1997; Müller & Perry, 2001a) and, while birthmothers are most often sought, birthfathers and other family members are also contacted (Müller et al., 2002; Müller & Perry, 2001b).

Other collective barriers that complicate the collection of information for documentation of American Indian identity are intermarriage and urbanization (Thornton, 1997). Intermarriages between American Indian individuals and non-Indian individuals run the risk of undermining the distinctiveness of the American Indian cultural group (Thornton, 1997). Even when an American Indian individual marries another American Indian individual from a different tribal community, their blood quantum for that particular tribe can wane. Whereas intermarriage does not change an American Indian individual's race, it has ramifications for their children, grandchildren, and future generations with regard to documenting sufficient blood quantum. Along similar lines, urbanization contributes to increased intermarriage, as intermingling among American Indian and non-Indian individuals increases, but also has the potential to reduce the ties of American Indian individuals to specific geographic locations

(Thornton, 1997). Sealed birth and adoption records also hinder that data collection process in that needed information is not accessible.

Institutional barriers

In 1934, the United States Supreme Court voted to give the power of determining tribal membership requirements to American Indian tribes, thereby granting each individual tribe independence in defining membership (Fletcher, 2012). According to the Reorganization Act of 1934, recognized tribes incorporated written constitutions of membership requirements (Thornton, 1997). This act simultaneously provided American Indian tribes with autonomy in defining their relations, albeit also increasing variation in membership requirements. Although many American Indian tribes had the power to self-govern and define their own membership rules, they were not free of Eurocentric influence. American Indian identity was being challenged, defined, and redefined as part of a political agenda. To date, there is no universal definition of American Indian identity (Brownell, 2000).

Though heavily adopted by tribes in the present day, race was not always a mandated criterion for tribal membership (Gould, 2001). Historically, American Indian identity had been defined by descent from a member of a federally recognized tribe including matrilineal and patrilineal descendants (depending on the tribe) who resided within reservation boundaries (Hagan, 1985; Schmidt, 2011). Under the Howard Wheeler Act, tribes were pushed to create membership rolls, which aided in tracing tribal lineage, thereby confirming blood relationship without blood quantum (Schmidt, 2011). Lineage relies more on culturally identifiable patterns and relationships than race (Schmidt, 2011). For American Indians, lineage is a more natural and authentic measurement for tribal affiliation based on their cultural and historical makeup, and opens the path for inclusivity and connection.

The concept of blood relationships gradually became paramount in the authority of membership enrollment and tribes were encouraged to adopt membership rolls that were used to make connections between blood relationships (Schmidt, 2011). As pressure mounted, tribes began to give more weight to blood quantum and the start of the foreign conceptualization of race began to evolve (Schmidt, 2011). Blood quantum is measured by the extent to which a person can prove their relationship to a relative on tribal rolls (Thornton, 1997). Blood quantum has been used as a mechanism to protect a tribe's legal, cultural, and physical authority. Many tribes require a minimum level of blood quantum to determine tribal membership eligibility, ranging from 6.25% to 50% of measurable American Indian blood (Fletcher, 2012). Blood quantum eventually became a heavily adopted measure for four-fifths of federally recognized tribes (Gould, 2001).

Some scholars argue that strict blood quantum requirements could lead to tribal extinction due to the exclusive nature that does not incorporate the diverse composition of American Indian identity (Schmidt, 2011). Some even view blood quantum as a tool of oppression imposed by the United States during colonization (Spruhan, 2006). Tribal enrollment, however, goes beyond a formal accounting of membership in the tribe for the individual and the tribe. The blood quantum requirement creates difficulty for American Indian individuals who are seeking to enroll, as one person may qualify for membership, even though another with the same blood quantum may be denied because percentage of blood quantum differs from tribe to tribe.

The use of DNA testing has recently been introduced and is quite controversial. As Dr. Kim TallBear, Associate Professor at the University of Alberta states, "People think that there's a DNA test that can prove if somebody is Native American or not. There isn't." (as cited in Geddes, 2014). DNA testing has the potential to undermine tribal sovereignty (i.e., the rights of tribes to govern themselves and to determine their own requirements for membership). TallBear adds, "It's not just a matter of what you claim, but it's a matter of who claims you" (as cited in CBC Radio, 2016), referring to the mutual verification of tribe in

acknowledging an individual as an enrolled member. When a fostered and adopted person is allowed to enroll in their tribe, enrollment itself is mutual verification. Without enrollment, a fostered and adopted person can claim their tribal ancestry, but acknowledgment and affirmation from their tribe is missing.

METHOD

Community-based participatory research

This study utilized data from a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project (as defined by Berge et al., 2009; Mendenhall & Doherty, 2005), which grew from a collaborative partnership to generate new adoptee-centered knowledge between community organizations including *First Nations Repatriation Institute* (FNRI) and *Adoptees Have Answers* (AHA), as well as researchers at the University of Minnesota. This collaborative project, titled the *Experiences of Adopted and Fostered Individuals* Project, investigated experiences of fostered and adopted individuals. In accordance with CBPR, the project was grounded in a collaboration between community members, grassroots community organizations, and researchers across family science and sociology disciplines who came together to co-create a research project aimed at generating new knowledge related to American Indian children and their families (Berge et al., 2009). A number of CBPR practices were implemented throughout the research project including: (1) partnership/collaboration at each stage of research process, (2) sharing a commitment to improving the lives of American Indian families and attending to issues of social injustice, (3) tapping into community resources to identify possible solutions, (4) fostering co-learning and capacity building of all partners, and (5) building a long-term and sustainable partnership (Berge et al., 2009). Community partners at *FNRI* and *AHA* were included as co-investigators on the initial project and played a critical role in the selection of both constructs and measures (Mendenhall & Doherty, 2005).

Procedures

Participants were recruited through targeted purposive sampling via community agencies known to be serving fostered and adopted individuals (i.e., *FNRI*, *AHA*), online listserv distribution, and advertising via tribal and adoption media (e.g., facebook pages, enews). Participants were invited to participate in a self-administered survey online or via paper-pencil between 2012 and 2013. The survey took about 45–75 minutes to complete. The original study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Minnesota (IRB Approval #1202S10147). The secondary data analysis for the present study was conducted as an extension of the original collaboration between a community partners at *FNRI* and researchers at the Virginia Tech (now at The Ohio State University and the University of Maryland) and the University of Minnesota. Our American Indian community partner was a co-investigator on the original research team and identifies as an enrolled member of a tribal community and an American Indian adoptee. IRB approval was obtained for secondary data analysis from Virginia Tech (IRB #17-849). Our community partner provided input and final approval on all research procedures.

Participants

The recruitment process resulted in a sample of 336 respondents. A subsample was drawn from the 336 initial participants who experienced foster care and/or adoption during their childhood.

Participants were asked, "Are you an American Indian/Native American?" We included participants that responded "yes" or "I suspect so." A total of 146 participants from the 336 responded "yes" or "I suspect so" to being American Indian. Next, participants were asked, "Are you enrolled in a tribe?" We included participants who responded "no" or "not sure." A total of 99 from the 146 American Indian participants responded "no" or "not sure" to being enrolled. After determining whether the participant was enrolled, for those not enrolled, an open-ended question queried them about the reasons they were not enrolled. Specifically, participants were asked, "If you are not enrolled, why not?" A total of 60 of the 99 non-enrolled American Indian participants provided an open-ended response to this question of why they were not enrolled. Our analysis was performed with this subsample of American Indian participants who were not enrolled in their tribe ($n = 60$). A larger sample of American Indian participants than is typically feasible in qualitative research was obtained (Toerien & Wilkinson, 2004) because even though the initial recruitment process sought fostered and or adopted individuals of all races, participants were specifically recruited from community organizations serving American Indians.

Table 1 presents the sample demographic characteristics. Participants were asked, "Are you an American Indian/Native American?". The response options were "yes," "I suspect so," "not sure", and "no." The majority of our participants ($n = 43$, 71.7%) responded "yes" to this question, whereas the remainder responded "I suspect so" ($n = 17$, 28.3%). In addition, participants were asked to identify themselves in an open-ended race question. The majority responded by using a term such as American Indian, Native American, First Nations, or Indigenous. The combination of these two questions was used as a validity check. The sample age ranged from 25 to 71 ($M = 50.23$; $SD = 10.07$). Women composed 81.7% of the sample. Less than half (43.3%) had a college degree or higher and few (13.3%) had a personal income below the poverty range of \$10,000. The sample is comprised of American Indian individuals who were primarily raised outside of American Indian culture by foster or adoptive parents of a different race; only 15.0% were raised by foster or adoptive caregivers of the same race. These individuals lacked what is often referred to as racial resemblance (Samuels, 2009). The majority of these non-enrolled American Indians (65.0%) had reunified with at least one person from their biological families of origin.

Thematic data analysis

Participants were asked, "Are you enrolled in a tribe?" The response options included "yes," "no," and "not sure." Individuals who answered "no" or "not sure" were asked the follow-up question, "If you are not enrolled, why not?". All of our participants answered "no" to the question of enrollment and provided an open-ended response to the question of why not.

Thematic analysis was used to inductively identify themes within the data, which consisted of the aforementioned open-ended survey question. Thematic analysis is both an accessible and flexible approach to analyzing textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves searching across texts to find repeated patterns. A six-phase thematic analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied in this study. In phase one, open-ended textual descriptions were read through in their entirety by all research team members prior to coding. The research team was composed of researchers from the family science and sociology disciplines and a community partner from the American Indian community. In phase two, the team generated prospective codes from within the data. In phase three, the research team searched for themes by sorting through prospective codes. A thematic map was developed to represent the emerging codes during research team discussions. All prospective themes were identified and all extracts of data were then coded. Phase four involved the refinement of themes. The team relied heavily on input from fostered and adopted American Indians in refining the thematic map. Phase five involved further refining of the thematic map considering place identity theory (see Figure 1).

TABLE 1 Demographic characteristics ($n = 60$)

	Mean	SD
	<i>n</i>	Percent
Age (25–71)	50.23	10.07
Age placed in foster care or adopted (0–9)	0.80	1.64
Age groupings		
25–44	17	28.33
45–54	23	38.33
55–64	14	23.33
65 and older	6	10.00
Gender		
Men	10	16.70
Women	49	81.70
Unknown	1	1.70
Race		
American Indian	26	43.33
American Indian and White (bi-racial)	31	51.67
American Indian and Black (bi-racial)	3	5.00
Education		
Less than high school	2	3.30
High school diploma or GED	2	3.30
Associates degree or other 2-year degree or certificate	8	13.30
Some college, no degree	19	31.70
Bachelor's degree	12	20.00
More than a bachelor's degree	14	23.30
Unknown	3	5.00
Income		
Less than \$10,000	8	13.30
\$10,000–\$34,999	17	28.30
\$35,000–\$54,999	14	23.30
\$55,000 or more	18	30.00
Unknown	3	5.00
Type of placement		
Foster care only	3	5.00
Adoption only	23	38.33
Foster care and adoption	34	56.67
Foster/adoptive parent race		
Same race as my own	9	15.00
Some overlap in races, but not a complete match	22	36.67
Different from my own race	26	43.33
Unknown	3	5.00
Reunified	39	65.00

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	<i>n</i>	Percent
With whom reunified		
Birthmother	24	40.00
Birthfather	4	6.67
Sibling	27	45.00
Aunt/uncle	20	33.33
Grandparent	7	11.67
Other relative	21	35.00

The codes fell into themes that represented personal, collective, and institutional barriers. In phase six, the final analysis was written as is outlined below, allowing for the presentation of the final themes and associated codes.

The data that were collected and analyzed were presented to American Indian community partners, eliciting their input into the analyses, and fostering a sense of ownership over the results (Mendenhall & Doherty, 2005). Since meaning was inductively generated from within the data, saturation could not be determined in advance of the analyses. Although saturation typically refers to the redundancy of themes (i.e., the point when no new themes manifest in the analyses), the concept of saturation is inconsistent with the assumptions of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Matrix coding procedures

Matrix coding was utilized to explore patterns by comparing the experiences reported by different groups within our data (QSR International, 2020). Given that previous literature suggests that reunification serves as a steppingstone to enrollment (Landers et al., 2018), comparison between reunified and non-reunified subgroups appeared warranted. First, the data were separated into the aforementioned groups. Second, the presence of all codes and themes were verified in both groups. Third, the frequency of codes was examined. Areas of overlap and uniqueness were identified within themes, codes, and supportive quotes.

Validity and trustworthiness

A number of steps were taken to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of our data as suggested by Elliott et al. (1999). First, we situated the sample by providing demographic characteristics to assist the reader in determining the range of individuals to which the findings may be relevant. Second, we grounded our results by providing examples, which allows readers to assess the fit between our data and the findings which we present. Third, although the original survey was anonymous and did not allow for credibility checks with the original participants, we established credibility by checking our findings with community partners and triangulating our results with existing empirical literature. In particular, preliminary and refined findings were shared with fostered and adopted members of the American Indian community via FNRI to ensure the themes resonated with their experiences. After agreeing on a thematic map, authors independently coded and compared findings. When contrasted against one another, the findings indicated independent congruence. Community partners reviewed the final thematic map and provided minor feedback on organization and language. Finally, out of respect for participants statements quotes are presented in their original form as written by the participant.

RESULTS

Three key themes emerged within the final set of findings. The first theme reflects *personal barriers* that hindered pursuit of or application for tribal enrollment. The second theme reflects *collective (family and tribe) barriers* that emanate from participants' connection to and difficulty establishing shared perceptions with their family of origin and tribe. The third theme reflects *institutional barriers* that prevented participants from accessing symbols and signs of identity meaning that communicate the sensemaking of formal membership with the tribe. The themes and associated codes are presented in Figure 1 and are explored below.

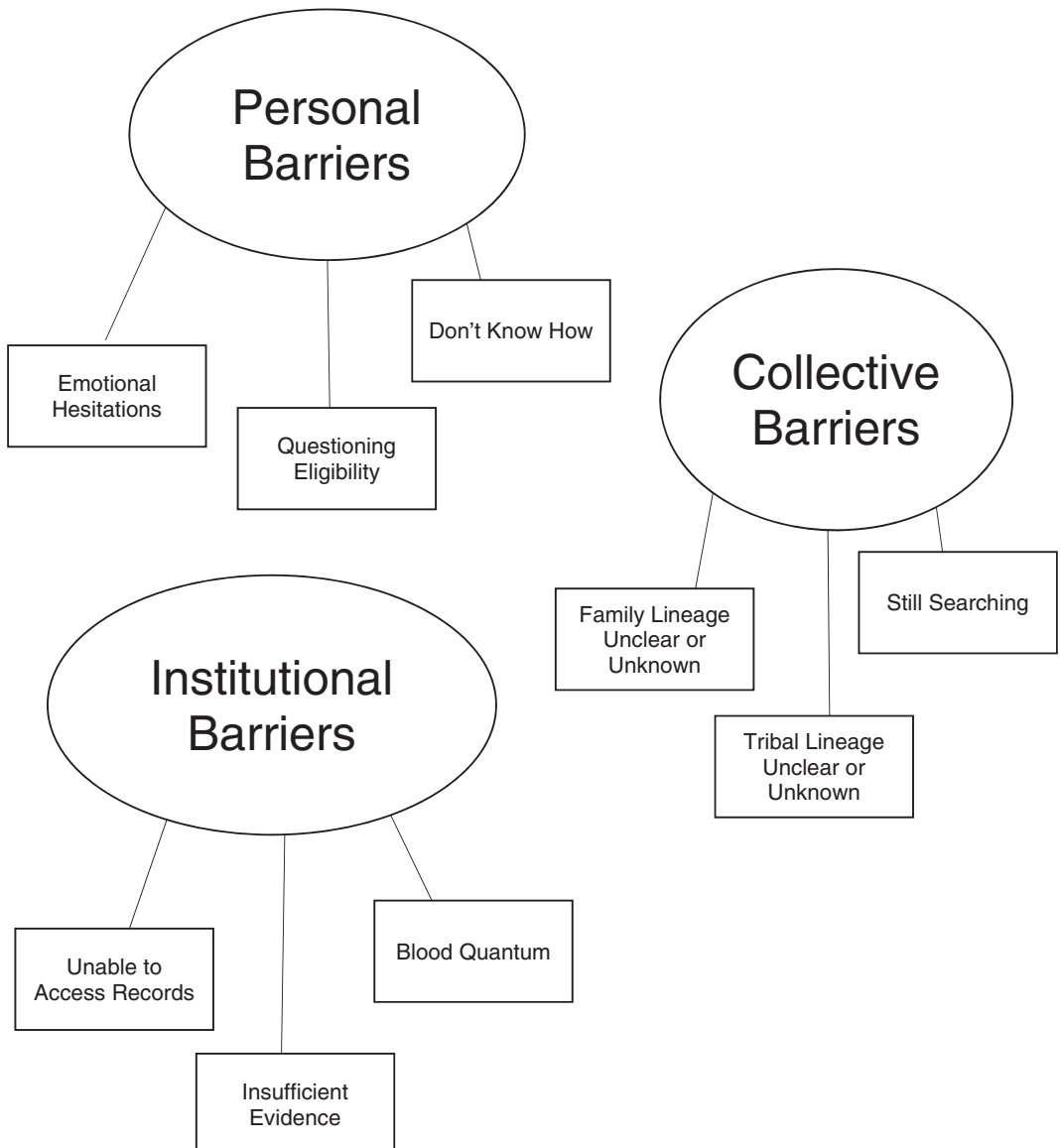


FIGURE 1 Thematic map

Adoption cut-off and motivations to enroll

Whereas the experience of adoption often entails being disconnected or cut off from family of origin, the critical consequence of said disconnection is the tangible losses that result. These individuals experience a sense of loss evolving from the lack of shared memories embedded in a place identity. For example, fostered and adopted individuals lose pertinent information about their identity, familial and tribal relationships, and ancestry. Adoption can prevent American Indian fostered and adopted individuals from accessing collective identity processes (e.g., tribal enrollment). In addition, American Indian fostered and adopted individuals may be cut off from accessing ceremonies that are critical to healing and enculturation (e.g., song, ceremony, traditional healing practices). Through family reunification and tribal enrollment, they seek to fill the fragmented gaps within their personal place identity.

Even though the focus of this paper was to examine barriers experienced among fostered and adopted American Indian individuals who were unable to enroll in their tribal communities, the motivations of these individuals to pursue enrollment are important to note. Such motivations underpin the pursuit of tribal enrollment. The fostered and adopted American Indian individuals in our sample sought to pursue enrollment as part of, or the result of, their search for ancestry, as well as ethnic and cultural place identity. Participants described curiosity, a desire to know their ancestry, and to have their identity legitimately acknowledged by their tribe.

As a 41-year-old participant stated, they were motivated “out of curiosity.” As illustrated in the following quotes, participants were also motivated to pursue enrollment to find their collective (family and tribe). They were seeking the belongingness and rootedness that is the very essence of place identity. These individuals were searching for family and seeking to enroll, not only to find others (family and tribe), but to find aspects of themselves such as heritage and ancestry. For example, one participant age 62 stated, “finding them is the most important part for me” and “the blood that is what is most important to me, and knowing my family, my nation that is what is important to me.” Finding meaning is a function of place identity.

Another participant (age 64) reported, “I’d like a blood card and/or a status card since I have ancestors in both [state] and British Columbia.” Other participants explicitly felt the need to refute the notion that they were motivated by monetary benefits, a sentiment or stigma that is often anecdotally referred to, but poorly researched. One 62-year-old participant stated, “I have told all on the council, I would want nothing. No land. No money.” Yet another participant (age 48) said, “I would love to be registered, be legitimate.” These quotes reflect the recognition function of place identity.

Theme one: Personal barriers

The theme *personal barriers* highlighted the personal reactions, questions, and hesitations that participants expressed that hindered the pursuit of tribal enrollment. The responses included both emotions and cognitions. Personal barriers were reported by 21.7% of the sample as barriers to pursuing tribal enrollment. Within this theme, three codes emerged: (1) emotional hesitations, (2) questioning eligibility, and (3) do not know how.

Emotional hesitations

Participants described their own emotional hesitations to pursuing tribal enrollment. For some, this involved not wanting to be perceived as trying to gain tribal benefits. One participant (age 55) said, “Don’t want other Indians to think I want to get registered just to get free stuff.” Others

described wanting to take the enrollment process slow and to gain more knowledge of their family before pursuing enrollment. For instance, one participant (age 70) stated, "I am just learning about the [tribe] and my Grandmother...I am taking it slow. I want to [know] more before I feel I can take that step." These quotes highlight how, for some, being perceived as knowing enough about their family of origin and "deserving" to be of American Indian status served as prerequisites to tribal enrollment. Interrelating with family members exemplifies the expressive function of place identity in that ethnic meanings are discovered, questioned, and clarified during these interactions.

Other participants described how feeling abandoned during the process of foster care or adoption hindered their ability to pursue tribal enrollment. One participant (age 48) said, "I felt a bit abandoned or estranged, so I never pursued it." Others experienced fear as a barrier and indicated that such fear held them back from pursuing enrollment. One participant (age 56) stated, "working on getting my paperwork together, fear has held me back and my mom just tells my stories and bull to keep me from it so I have to go around her." Although a function of place identity is mediating change, some relationships can hinder that function as indicated by this quote. Seeking a lost place identity involves a dynamic interchange of verifying newly introduced perceptions and comprehensions with current ones. Those interchanges sometimes elicit uncomfortable sensations.

Questioning eligibility

Participants described questioning their eligibility to enroll. Some were unclear about whether they would even be considered American Indian, whereas others questioned if they would be eligible to enroll based on their particular ancestry. For illustration, one participant (age 50) stated, "I'm unclear whether I am even considered American Indian given my connection," and another (age 43) said, "I'm trying to enroll, but don't know if I'm going to be eligible." Some expressed an uncertainty regarding their precise eligibility. For example, "I'm not 100 percent sure of my ancestry because there seems to be some denial by some of my maternal ancestors" (age 51). Still others questioned the information that they were able to obtain and whether it would be sufficient to enroll. For instance, one participant (age 59) said, "I can just go by what the social worker wrote about my family history on the paperwork. My biological mother gave the information and much of it was lies, so who knows what is true. She did say my grandfather was a Chief of a tribe. Who knows." These quotes highlight the participant's questions about their own eligibility to pursue enrollment. These quotes reflect the place identity theory proposition that place identity is generated both internally in the mind and through interaction externally to the participant.

Do not know how

Participants described how overall, they did not know how to pursue tribal enrollment. The process of enrolling was either confusing or unclear for many of the participants. Since the majority of our participants (43.3%) were raised outside of American Indian culture, many were unclear about the rules and process surrounding tribal enrollment. Some indicated they had no idea about how to pursue tribal enrollment, primarily referring to the process being unknown to them. One participant (age 55) stated, "I have no idea how to do that", and another said, "I have no idea how to go about it" (age 54). Others echoed this lack of knowledge or understanding of the process of enrollment or where to start. To illustrate, one 51-year-old participant stated, "don't know what I would need to do... to be able to be enrolled", whereas another (age 55) said, "Don't know how to go about it." Yet another participant stated, "I have

no knowledge of how to” (age 42). In constructing a lost ethnic place identity, identity communication is needed among family of origin members. When that is absent, the unknown creates anxiety.

Theme two: Collective (family and tribe) barriers

The collective nature of this theme is particularly pertinent to place identity development because both the family of origin and the family’s tribe are relational environments that involve social, cultural, and psychological meanings. The themes reflect the two-step process in the construction of an ethnic place identity described as *finding their way home* in indigenous terms. Those steps are belongingness through family reunification and then cementing that belongingness through the rootedness of tribal enrollment.

This theme captures challenges encountered at this juncture of the journey. Over half of the participants (60.0%) expressed challenges associated with documenting their lineage. These challenges ranged from an inability to find their family of origin to being unclear about the particular family and tribal lineage. Many described being in a continuous process of searching for answers, for family, and for tribe.

Family lineage unclear or unknown

Participants expressed a level of uncertainty about their precise family lineage. In contrast to *questioning eligibility*, in which the legitimacy of one’s overall eligibility was considered, this code represents participant answers that specifically centered on a lack of necessary information regarding the participant’s family of origin. For some, they had information which was speculative, but lacked certainty. To illustrate, one participant (age 57) stated, “The [state] won’t release my original birth certificate so I can’t prove birth heritage. Based upon some preliminary research and reading, I believe I am related to an [tribe] Band Leader with [surname].” Another participant (age 31) stated, “My birth grandfather owned land along the [River] that was part of [tribe] settlement prior to land transfer to [University].” Other participants referred to not just uncertainty, but the absence of information related to their family of origin. For instance, one participant (age 53) stated, “I have no idea who my birth family was.” In addition to references to family of origin and grandparents, participants most often referred to being unable to access information about their birthmothers. One participant stated, “Don’t know my mother’s enrollment number, nor my birth name” (age 73). Another 50-year-old participant stated, “I have no way find information on my mother... The private detective I hired to find my family could only locate her on a 1940 census, otherwise there is no trace of her up to that point.” In addition to birthmothers, a number of participants lacked clarity about their birthfathers. To illustrate, one participant stated, “My birth mother won’t give me any info about my birth father who is Native” (age 51), still another said, “I cannot prove my father’s identity because he used a fake name when he was with my birth mother” (age 70). Collective identities such as ethnic and cultural place identity reside in relationships within a membership group. When those relationships are non-existent or do not function in a supportive manner, the construction of place identity is stalled.

Tribal lineage unclear or unknown

Participants depicted parallel challenges to finding their tribe as they did to finding their family of origin. For some this was about not initially knowing about their American Indian heritage.

A 62-year-old participant stated, "Did not know I was First Nation." For others this involved not knowing which tribe to whom they belonged. One participant stated, "I am not even sure what tribe I am from" (age 54), and another stated, "Do not know what tribe" (age 63). Yet another stated, "Don't know which one to enroll in" (age 58). Others described searching to determine which tribe they were from. For example, "I wanted to find out more about which tribe I should go to" (age 52) and "I still need to find the band, whether I get enroll is up to them, but to me finding them is the most important part for me" (age 69). Others had difficulty documenting their tribal lineage. To illustrate, one participant stated, "No documented evidence I was related to a tribe" (age 53). Another stated, "Because I have NO Indian name" (age 53). Still others were further along in identifying a particular tribe from which they may have descended, but were unable to prove their heritage with certainty. One participant (age 51) stated, "I cannot prove my [tribal] ancestry at this time...still looking for answers. I might also be part [tribe] and am researching this, as well." These quotes reflect the struggles they encountered in the "rootedness" stage of seeking their lost place identity. "Rootedness" is a key construct in their sense-making process to cement the fragmented gaps within their lost place identity.

Still searching

Many participants characterized themselves as still being in the process of searching for family of origin. In particular, some were in the process of searching for their birthfathers. One participant stated, "Still searching for birthfather" (age 61). Another participant (age 72) stated, "Still searching for my birth father. My birth mother suffers from dementia so can't get information from her regarding paternity. Currently trying to locate through DNA testing." Others specifically mentioned searching for family as a means to pursue enrollment. For illustration, "I am in the process of finding my birth mother's name to obtain enrollment" (age 55) and "Still looking for bdad [birthfather] and family to become enrolled" (age 57). Yet others described searching for other relatives. A 57-year-old participant stated, "Still seeking my birth father and relatives", and another said, "I have not found my birth father, he is the one who knows what tribe I am from" (age 32). Given the barriers to tribal enrollment that many participants described, it is possible that participants who are in the process of searching for family of origin may also encounter institutional barriers related to documenting their lineage. These quotes reflect the multilayered characteristic of the construction of a lost place identity for American Indians. The path to the collective in which they seek integration is multilayered (family reunification and tribal enrollment) and, thus, involves a two-step process of establishing belongingness and cementing that belongingness with the rootedness of tribal enrollment.

Theme three: Institutional barriers

The majority of participants ($n = 59, 98.3\%$) expressed a desire to pursue tribal enrollment, yet many encountered institutional barriers that prevented their pursuit of enrollment. Many of our participants needed access to records to verify their connection to tribe. Only one individual denied a desire to enroll. That particular participant (age 50) stated, "I have not chosen to investigate this part of my ancestry." Problems pertaining to finding records that established connection between family of origin and tribe were cited as barriers to pursuing tribal enrollment by 38.3% of our participants. Participants discussed records that would verify their connection to tribe such as state records, adoption agency records, tribal records, or some combination. In some instances, the participants were simply unable to gain access to the records that were necessary to pursue tribal enrollment. In other instances, said records were sealed. When participants were able to gain access to records, many were still left with insufficient evidence to

pursue enrollment. And, in particular, many participants described failing to be able to document sufficient blood quantum as a barrier to becoming enrolled.

Unable to access records

Participants described not having or being unable to access pertinent records that would enable them to pursue enrollment. For instance, a number of participants did not have access to their birth certificates. One participant (age 57) stated, “[The state] won’t release my original birth certificate so I can’t prove birth heritage.” Another stated, “I cannot get my ‘original’ birth certificate with the names” (age 69). Others referred to state records, birth records, enrollment records, and other paperwork that they were unable to access. For illustration, “I can’t get the records from the state to prove my grandmother was from the tribe” (age 52), “Don’t know my mother’s enrollment number, nor my birth name” (age 73), and “I don’t have BIA papers” (age 75). In other instances, the participants were uncertain if records even existed. For illustration, one participant (age 48) stated, “no birth records and the adoption agency and my adopted parents didn’t inform the tribes when I was adopted.” Taken together, these quotes highlight how the inability to access records creates barriers to tribal enrollment. Although denial of access to adoption records is not unique to American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, the necessity of such records to pursue enrollment is unique.

A number of the participants specifically mentioned that records which were closed or sealed were a primary institutional barrier. Sealed records are relatively standard practice in closed adoptions. While societal norms regarding adoption are changing, closed adoptions have historically been prevalent in the United States. Sealed records refer to the practice of destroying or placing a seal on records which prevents the fostered or adopted individual from viewing them without a court order (Kuhns, 1994). Some of our participants described their adoptions as closed. For illustration, one participant (age 75) stated, “I was adopted in [state] which is closed adoption state.” Others specifically reported that their records were sealed. For example, “[my] records are SEALED” (age 63) and “my adoption records are sealed—I don’t have my original birth certificate. Without those, I will not be recognized as his kin” (age 48). Even when records were unsealed, some participants indicated they were potentially falsified. For instance, one 50-year-old participant stated, “I have 3 different birthdates in my documents that I had unsealed. Even my supposed original is x’d out and appears to be changed.” All of these quotes epitomize the perceptions and comprehensions that compose the part of their place identity database that represents their interaction with external environments that deter filling the fragmented gaps in that identity. The quotes represent the part of their place identity database that is internal to their mind.

Insufficient evidence

In other instances, our participants described having insufficient evidence to document their eligibility to enroll. These participants typically used the language of failing to prove they were from a particular tribe. For example, one 71-year-old participant stated, “I was adopted out. It’s hard to prove everything everyone wants.” Others lacked written documentation and could only rely on what was shared with them verbally, which was not sufficient to pursue enrollment. For instance, “I don’t know how to prove where I came from. I only have the information provided to me verbally” (age 40). Another participant (age 53) said, “No documented evidence I was related to a tribe.” The notion of proof was echoed among many of the participants. To illustrate, one 48-year-old participant stated, “I have not been able to prove I am related to my birth father. I have done DNA testing with his mother but the tribe wants me to obtain a court

order to establish paternity with a dead man.” Others described being denied, “I tried, but I was told by the people on [reservation] I didn’t exist because I didn’t know my birth mother’s name” (age 53). These participants are expressing the meanings behind their struggles and perceptions about their inability to obtain institutional evidence that would allow them to formally be recognize for their ethnic place identity.

Blood quantum

Participants also described difficulty being unable to meet expectations of blood quantum in order to enroll. This code was evidenced in participant’s echoed sentiments that they were not of “enough” American Indian blood. For example, one participant (age 56) stated, “not enough proof about the Indian part.” Another said, “not enuff from one rez” (age 45). Another 34-year-old participant stated, “not enough blood percentage”, while a 62-year-old participant said, “I cannot verify tribal affiliation or blood quantum due to no unavailability of information regarding my birth father.”

There are a number of standards involved in verifying place identity for American Indians. The three codes under the institutional barrier theme indicated that the institutional standards that existed and blocked their journey toward formally achieving their ethnic place identity were perplexing, stress-inducing, and relationally conflictive. Not being able to reach those standards became deeply implanted in the minds of the participants’ place identity database but externally their journey in further developing their place identity was blocked.

Matrix coding findings: The relationship between reunification and tribal enrollment

Even though *finding their way home* is a two-step process involving both the family of origin (belongingness) and the tribe (rootedness), those steps are multilayered. For some fostered and adopted American Indian individuals *finding their way home* involves connecting and reunifying with members of their family of origin. For others, the journey may progress to a connection with the family’s tribe consisting of varying levels of emotional and social connection. And for others, who journey through the process even further, this progresses from informal social connections with the tribe to formal enrollment with the tribe. In summary, fostered and adopted American Indian individuals experience multiple ways to cement their place identity along the continuum from reunifying with family of origin, socially connecting with tribe, reunifying with tribe, and pursuing tribal enrollment.

Given that reunification with family of origin facilitates tribal enrollment, matrix coding was used to compare the barriers to tribal enrollment among reunified and non-reunified subgroups. The results of the matrix coding were twofold. First, the presence of all codes and themes were verified in both groups. Indeed, the majority of codes (8 out of 9, 88.9%) were present in both reunified and non-reunified groups. Second, the frequency of codes was examined. The frequencies of codes also did not differ between reunified and non-reunified groups. However, one code (questioning eligibility) was exclusively found in the reunified group.

Reunification with family of origin

Previous research suggests that reunification aids in tribal enrollment (Landers et al., 2018), as reunified American Indian fostered and adopted individuals were eight times more likely to be enrolled in their tribe (Landers et al., 2018). It appears that American Indian fostered and

adopted individuals who have reunified with their families of origin likely have greater access or the ability to document their familial lineage. However, this is not always the case, as some fostered and adopted American Indian individuals are only able to reunify with siblings or half-siblings and other relatives, not always with their birthparents. Regardless, once reunified, American Indian individuals are more likely to be enrolled. In essence, finding family of origin leads to finding tribe. In other words, the feeling of belongingness in constructing ethnic place identity often is the springboard for the desire to secure a deeper feeling of rootedness by progressing to the next layer of shared-identity collective for American Indians—the tribal connection.

It is significant to note that the current sample consists of non-enrolled American Indian fostered and adopted individuals. The majority were reunified with their family of origin (65.0%), while the remainder were not (35.0%). However, despite the high percentage of our sample being reunified, these fostered and adopted American Indian individuals were not enrolled. For those who reunified, the experience of reunification with family of origin imprinted on their sense of self. For instance, one participant (age 46) stated, “I felt like a part of me came to life.” Another participant (age 49) stated, “It was amazing all my answers about my life were answered in one day.” Others described how finding their family of origin provided them with a sense of heritage. One 48-year-old participant stated, “I do like knowing my heritage now.” Some described the experience of reunification with family of origin with a feeling of connection. For example, one participant (age 65) said, “How does one describe the feeling of knowing that one is no longer completely alone in the world?” These participants expressed feelings experienced when a fractured gap in their place identity was filled. Their words captured well the expressive function of place identity that emanates from the family of origin relational setting.

Yet others described the experience of reunification with family of origin with a feeling of disconnection. To illustrate, one 25-year-old participant said, “I was an outsider meeting with a group of people who for the first time in my life looked something like me. But I was still that outsider infringing on a large joyful family.” Another 53-year-old participant shared similar sentiments and stated, “feel like outsider still.” Another participant (age 52) described both connection and disconnection, “I felt a strong sense of belonging, but they are complete strangers to me.” Even those who reunified with their family of origin acknowledged desiring the next step of being welcomed by tribe and formally enrolled. To illustrate, one participant (age 64) stated, “The only missing piece: I want to be accepted into my Tribe.”

Participant quotes in the last two paragraphs contribute to the place identity theory proposition that place can be nurturing or challenging depending on two clusters of perception and comprehensions: (a) internally in the mind, and (b) through relational interactions with the collective with whom they have a shared identity. Some participants indicated that the family of origin members helped to mediate change—a function of place identity—while others expressed difficulties either internally within their minds or within the relational interactions.

Connection and reunification with tribe

Our participants reported moderate levels of emotional connection to tribe ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.64$, range 1–5), but lower levels of social connection to tribe ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 1.91$, range 1–5). Only 23.3% of our sample reported they had been or were in the process of reunifying with their tribe. Even participants who reunified with their tribe were unable to enroll and expressed frustration with barriers. They described searching for answers, leads running cold, and still feeling like outsiders. One 55-year-old participant indicated it was “very frustrating with the WAITING answers.” Whereas another participant (age 62) stated, “every time I was close... a person would die and the trail would get cold.” Numerous participants described

finding their way or being *called home*. For some, they felt drawn to their tribe. To illustrate, one 48-year-old participant stated, "I definitely feel drawn to my tribe, to my mother's family, and to the [tribe & related tribe] communities. It is a painful process but it is a journey I plan to continue on until I feel fully integrated." Another (age 56) said, "I FEEL THE PULL VERY STRONGLY." Yet another (age 50) said, "I have had strong feelings that all of my relatives are waiting for me." Others indicated they were learning in the process and felt more connected to their ancestors. For instance, one participant (age 49) stated, "It's a great feeling and I am learning as I go along", another (age 48) said, "It is a privilege and honor to become part of my tribe." And, another (age 63) said, "I walk in the way of my ancestors." These last quotes are reflective of the multilayered two-step process of reclaiming their lost ethnic place identity. As the belongingness of family reunification becomes the cognitive database that accumulates as family relationships deepen, it is the standard that drives them to pursue the rootedness that tribal connection and enrollment would contribute to their ethnic place identity.

DISCUSSION

Previous literature on tribal enrollment has largely focused on definitions and ways of determining tribal enrollment (Fletcher, 2012; Gould, 2001; Thornton, 1997). Little attention has been given to the process of tribal enrollment as experienced by enrollees nor the sensemaking that occurs as they journey through the multilayered progression toward *finding their way home*. The process of discovering their ethnic place identity is filled with personal and intertwined perceptions and comprehensions emanating from the relational settings of family and the collective known as the tribe for American Indians.

A recent study examining family reunification revealed that a substantial portion of American Indian fostered and adopted individuals remain unenrolled (Landers et al., 2018). Barriers to the tribal enrollment of American Indian fostered and adopted individuals have not been explored. This study contributed to that literature gap by investigating barriers to tribal enrollment for American Indian fostered and adopted individuals who were not currently enrolled in their tribe. Tribal enrollment is the formalized social confirmation of a fostered or adopted American Indian individual's place identity. Tribal enrollment is also a process of mutual verification between the individual and the tribe. Our findings revealed three themes of barriers to enrollment including *personal barriers*, *collective barriers*, and *institutional barriers*.

Interest in pursuing tribal enrollment

The first major finding of this study was that our participants expressed high levels of interest in tribal enrollment. Interestingly, only one participant ($n = 1, 1.7\%$) reported a lack of interest in pursuing tribal enrollment. This finding is important as it is the first to underscore that many fostered and adopted American Indians may indeed be interested in enrolling, but experience barriers in the tribal enrollment process. The belongingness experienced through family reunification is a stimulus for pursuing the rootedness that the next step in capturing their lost ethnic place identity provides—tribal connection and/or enrollment.

Personal barriers

The second major finding relates to the personal barriers that interfere in the pursuit of tribal enrollment. The findings reflect personal perceptions and comprehensions which undergird the essence of place identity for individuals. Our participants highlighted the complex fears that

fostered and adopted American Indian individuals have about their place within their tribal communities. Discovering elements and/or symbols of their stolen memories may elicit emotional pain, as well as bring joy and comfort. It is not uncommon for fostered and adopted individuals to feel as if they do not belong within their family of origin or even their larger communities. The emotional hesitations experienced by adopted individuals as they consider reunifying with families of origin (Boettcher, 2013) appear to parallel the hesitations they experience with pursuing tribal enrollment. Even though fostered and adopted individuals desire to experience their place in the world, they may also feel nervous and uncertain about what they might learn (Boettcher, 2013).

The complex myriad of emotions while *finding their way home* is further complicated for those American Indians who have experienced foster care or adoption. Adoption is an experience marked with rejection regardless of how they are received by their tribe. The pursuit of tribal enrollment might potentially increase the risk of further rejection. It is not surprising that some of our participants questioned their eligibility for tribal enrollment. This thinking was captured in participant's questions about if they were "Native enough" to enroll. Enrollment is the mutual verification of an American Indian fostered and adopted individual's place identity. Some participants spoke about how tribal enrollment would legitimize their American Indian place identity and that without the tribe's social confirmation or mutual verification of their identity, they were somehow less legitimate. As such, it makes sense that some participants experienced emotional hesitations that blocked them from pursuing tribal enrollment. For example, if the emotional hesitations were grounded in a fear of rejection, being denied tribal enrollment could be perceived as a painful denial of one's American Indian ethnic identity. The sensemaking process behind filling the fragmented gaps in their ethnic place identity is multifaceted, emotionally complex, and collectively relational.

Collective (family and tribe) barriers

The third major finding delineated the collective barriers experienced by American Indian fostered and adoptive study participants. Ethnic and cultural aspects of place identity are grounded in the family of origin and the family's tribe for American Indians. It is through social interactions with these membership groups that information is garnered (or not) that connect the complex puzzle pieces of ethnic and cultural aspects of place identity. Place identity is created internally within one's personhood as explicated in the personal barriers expressed by participants. Place identity is also created through the person's interactions with the outside world starting with family of origin and tribe. The collective barriers reflected two parallel methods of tracing the fostered and adopted individual's ancestral history—family of origin and tribe. Those barriers indicated either an absence of or a lack of certainty in the information that was needed to move forward in the journey toward tribal enrollment.

Institutional barriers

The fourth major finding of this study was that beyond collective barriers, our participants also experienced institutional barriers such as being unable to access records, encountering sealed records, having insufficient evidence, and failing to meet expectations of blood quantum. These institutional barriers to enrollment were structural in nature and outside of the participant's control, yet these barriers from the external environment had much influence over all five functions of place identity; recognition, meaning, expressive, mediating change, and anxiety defense. The most prominent barrier to tribal enrollment was the inability to access records pertaining to their adoption that would provide evidence of their familial and tribal lineage (recognition

and meaning). Participants described frustrations with encountering missing, sealed, or falsified records that prevented them from pursuing tribal enrollment (anxiety producing).

Records play a critical role in both the pursuit of reunification and tribal enrollment, as they serve as key pieces of evidence to support eligibility for tribal enrollment. Access to records is not a unique issue to American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, as sealed orders prevent other adoptees from accessing their original documents (Kuhns, 1994); these records are the essence for mediating the desired change. However, the connection between records and the ability to pursue tribal enrollment is unique to fostered and adopted individuals of American Indian descent. The inability to access records can be retraumatizing for American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, who are being denied access to a central aspect of their collective place identity, by the very systems that were also responsible for targeted systematic removal efforts; this conundrum creates a maelstrom of emotions for which our participants may or may not have an expressive outlet. The inability to access records and sealed records prevents and even robs American Indian fostered and adopted individuals of chances to potentially enroll. Given the critical role that records play in tribal enrollment, policies are needed to increase access to records and even unseal records in cases of foster care and adoption of American Indian children.

Reunification

The fifth major finding from this study relates to the results of the matrix coding, which provided a nuanced understanding of differences between those who were reunified and those who were not reunified. Only the participants who had reunified were at the stage where they could legitimately question their eligibility for tribal enrollment. For those who had not reunified, the search for and reconnection with family was still underway. While non-reunified individuals questioned if their unknown lineage would allow them to enroll, they were still early in the process of pursuing tribal enrollment. It appeared that after an individual reunified and had more specificity around their family lineage, they could more carefully consider and question if they would be eligible to enroll. For those who had not reunified, this question was still too vague (e.g., I do not know how or my family lineage is unknown), whereas individuals who had reunified were better able to question their eligibility and if they had sufficient documentation to support tribal enrollment. In other words, reunified individuals were proximally closer to knowledge about enrollment and, therefore, in a better position to reflect on their level of interest and question their eligibility to enroll. Whereas participants who were not reunified were likely to be at an earlier stage in the process, as they were still gathering the necessary information that precedes questioning their eligibility. In summary, reunification is often an instrumental step toward tribal enrollment, wherein a fostered and adopted individual's identity is affirmed and verified by their family of origin, which, in turn, supports their pursuit of tribal enrollment. Not only have instrumental needs been acquired during reunification, but the fulfillment of the functions of place identity—recognition, meaning, expression, mediating change, anxiety defense—gained momentum partially filling the fragmented gaps within their place identity. Doing so creates enthusiasm and psychic energy to progress to the next step in the development of their place identity.

Given that reunification is a gateway to tribal enrollment, targeted tribal efforts to facilitate the reunification process for American Indian fostered and adopted individuals are beneficial. Tribal efforts to *welcome home* separated American Indian fostered and adopted individuals serve to reduce personal barriers such as the emotional hesitations of fear and anticipated rejection. Just as the family of origin plays a crucial role in the process of reunification (Landers et al., 2015), tribe also plays a crucial role in both facilitating reunification and tribal enrollment. Collective tribal efforts to carve out a space for displaced or separated fostered and

adopted American Indian individuals act to counter the effects of systematic practices of child removal by reclaiming fostered and adopted American Indian relatives as part of American Indian communities. At present, cultural practices and traditions such as the use of song and ceremony are being used across American Indian communities to formally *welcome home* fostered and adopted relatives. American Indian communities have the resources within themselves to provide healing to their fostered and adopted relatives.

The present study offers several contributions to the literature. To begin, this study was the first of its kind to use a CBPR approach to provide a critical and important analysis of open-ended survey data on barriers to tribal enrollment for fostered and adopted American Indian individuals emanating from their own voices. The use of CBPR was particularly salient to facilitating the bridge from “research to practice” and tapping into existing resources within the American Indian community (Berge et al., 2009, p. 484). Fostering trusted relationships between researchers and community partners is essential to investigating family and tribal matters among American Indian fostered and adopted individuals. This study provides compelling support for a future in-depth study that is needed to unpack dimensions of place identity and focus more deeply on people who are in varied stages of searching for their families of origin. Another contribution of this study was its utilization of survey data to conduct analyses on a moderate sample size, which was larger than is typically obtained in qualitative research. The voices of 60 American Indian fostered and adopted individuals illuminated the challenges they encountered in the journey to reconcile their personal, ethnic identity with their tribal collective, cultural identity in the pursuit of tribal enrollment. Lastly, through its grounding in place identity theory (Hauge, 2007), this study documented the personal, collective, and institutional barriers that American Indian individuals encountered in the journey of developing place identity.

Implications

This study has a number of implications for the broader family science literature focusing on family separation and reunification. Regardless of the context, family separation is often distressful and the psychological toll can detrimentally impact family members' health (Arenas et al., 2021; Letiecq et al., 2014; Silver, 2011; Solheim & Ballard, 2016). Greater understanding of the impact of family separation across varying contexts including foster care and adoption is needed. While research related to the impact of family separation in the adoptive context is limited, research from other separated family groups (e.g., immigrant families) may offer insight for comparison. For example, fostered and adopted American Indian individuals may experience similar uncertainty to the uncertainty experienced by immigrant families who are left to wonder if and when they may reunite with loved ones (Vesely et al., 2017). However, the separation experiences of American Indian fostered and adopted individuals are also unique and potentially distinct from immigration experiences. For instance, fostered and adopted American Indian individuals may have been too young to be involved in the decision-making that resulted in their separation from family of origin and may lack access to information that enables them to contemplate their desires to reconnect with either or both their family of origin and tribal community. In another parallel fashion, similar to immigrant families, many fostered and adopted individuals eagerly await reunification and anticipate that it will bring resolution to their experiences of ambiguous loss (Solheim & Ballard, 2016). However, both the ambiguity of the potential reunification and the reunification itself can be distressing. It is critical that family science practitioners be cognizant of this anticipated distress and assist family members in preparing for reunification including both the excitements and disappointments that can lie within. Despite the abundance of reunification research, little is known about the process of reunification for families or the outcomes that follow reunification, which makes it challenging for family practitioners to know how to best support families during reunification. More research is simply needed.

This study specifically explored the pursuit of place identity (e.g., *finding their way home*) of fostered and adopted American Indians. Our findings suggest the need to incorporate place identity into research on fostered and adopted individuals, particularly those who identify as American Indian. Place identity theory provides a framework for understanding aspects of identity and group membership. Fostered and adopted individuals have perceptions of group membership associated with family of origin and with their tribal community. Since separation is often distressing for family members regardless of the context, we anticipate similar findings among other separated groups. Although the distress of family separation is similar across contexts such as immigration, incarceration, and deployment, there are some unique nuances to family separation via foster care and/or adoption. For instance, the majority of fostered and adopted individuals experience separation from their family of origin during infancy and early childhood, fewer during adolescence. Most fostered and adopted individuals do not consent to be separated from their families of origin. Many may have few (if any) memories of their family of origin. This experience may differ in terms of ambiguity and loss from those who were of greater developmental age and intellectual capacity when they were separated. When immigrant families are separated, family members often recite similar sentiments about leaving behind loved ones to build “a better life.” Similar statements are made within adoptive families (e.g., the adoptive family could give the child a better life). However, embedded in the experience of the systematic removal of American Indian children is the notion that a better life meant “a White life” (Cross, 2014, p. 2257). Given that the systematic removal of American Indian children intended to destroy American Indian families and communities has been regarded as cultural genocide (Cross, 2014; Kingston, 2015), future research should explore the connection between governmental and institutional practices of systematic child removal and the manifestation of historical trauma within American Indian communities. At the very least, many fostered and adopted American Indian children wrestle with being raised in a transracial context and are all too often isolated from access to connection to their tribal roots.

Length of separation is another factor that has some parallels to other separated family groups, yet clear distinctions for family members separated by foster care and adoption in comparison to immigration. In the context of adoption, the length of separation is typically expected to be lifelong, while it can range from temporary to lifelong in the context of immigration. Other differences center around contact during separation and the expectation of the pursuit of reunification, as most immigrant families presume they will eventually be together again (even temporarily for visits), whereas the expectation in adoption has historically been to sever ties, although this is changing in the landscape of open adoptions. Policies and practices that support the maintenance of family and tribal ties of American Indian individuals who have been separated by foster care and adoption are needed.

This study also yielded several implications for family scientists and policymakers related to adoption practices. Historically, closed adoption practices were a central barrier for adopted individuals who sought to reunify with family of origin. Reunification often serves as a critical step toward tribal enrollment (Landers et al., 2018), which aids in the identity affirmation process that many adopted individuals seek. However, both reunification and enrollment are only possible when records are accessible. The accessibility of records is particularly salient for American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, both past and present, who may be denied access to their collective identity if they are unable to access records.

For American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, *finding their way home* is about more than just tracing the roots of one’s family of origin. It is also about connecting with tribe and the pursuit of tribal enrollment which serves to affirm the American Indian fostered and adopted individual’s collective identity. Fostered and adopted American Indian individuals often yearn for access to not just their family of origin, but to their tribal communities, culture, and spirituality. There is a reciprocal nature to finding oneself and finding others. Fostered and adopted individuals are searching for both themselves and for others (i.e., family of origin, tribe), often pursuing reunification and tribal enrollment as a means of identity affirmation.

While many of our participants described searching for their birthfathers, it is significant to note that only 6.67% of our participants reunified with their birthfathers. This finding may be unique to our sample which consisted of non-enrolled American Indian fostered and adopted individuals, or may highlight that birthfathers are an all-too-often missing link to the connection to heritage and tribal enrollment. Birthfathers have long been neglected in adoption research. This warrants additional exploration in future research.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, we relied on purposeful sampling, which limits the extent to which these findings are generalizable to all American Indian fostered and adopted individuals. Participants who opted to participate in this study may differ from those who qualified to participate but opted out. Second, our sample was fairly heterogenous. Although the sample was diverse in age range and in the identified non-enrolled tribal affiliations of the participants, since age varied widely, the participants may have had different experiences of foster care and adoption. These differences are important as our older participants were more likely to have closed adoptions, while our younger participants may have experienced increased access to their records based on recent shifts toward open adoption practices. It is important to note that the majority of our participants (90.0%) were aged 40 and older, and would likely have experienced closed adoptions based on the historical context of adoption during that time. Furthermore, the large age range in our sample likely means our participants were at varied developmental stages of identity work. In addition, we did not ask our participants about whether their adoption was formalized or legalized, but rather if they experienced adoption. Different types of adoption (formalized/legalized or not, open vs. closed) may be associated with different experiences and varied access to information about an individual's familial and tribal lineage.

Our findings are further limited by use of an open-ended survey question, rather than an in-depth qualitative study. As a result, we were unable to ask clarifying or follow-up questions. The opportunity to ask follow-up questions would likely have yielded rich information about the tribal enrollment experiences of American Indian fostered and adopted individuals. Furthermore, this study was a critical analysis of survey data. Our findings provide support for an in-depth study examining dimensions of identity among people in various stages of searching for family of origin and tribe. Future research is needed to shed light on facilitators, rather than barriers, to tribal enrollment across the personal, collective (family and tribe), and institutional level. In addition, future research is needed to explore the role that acceptance by and reunification with tribe plays in shaping American Indian fostered and adopted individual's identity development.

CONCLUSION

The present study was the first of its kind to examine personal, collective (family and tribe), and institutional barriers to the tribal enrollment of fostered and adopted American Indian individuals. Tribal enrollment plays an important role in the identity verification process for American Indian fostered and adopted adults. Fostered and adopted individuals are seeking to find themselves and their collective identity when they are searching for their tribe. Finding others (family and tribe) plays a critical role in finding oneself. In turn, tribal enrollment affirms the fostered and adopted individual's sense of American Indian identity.

ORCID

Ashley L. Landers  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8692-5060>

Amy A. Morgan  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1983-1088>

REFERENCES

- Arenas, E., Yahirun, J., Teruel, G., Rubalcava, L., & Gaitán-Rossi, P. (2021). Gender, family separation, and negative emotional well-being among recent Mexican migrants. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12776>
- Berge, J. M., Mendenhall, T. J., & Doherty, W. J. (2009). Using community-based participatory research (CBPR) to target health disparities in families. *Family Relations*, 58(4), 475–488. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2009.00567.x>
- Boettcher, D. K. (2013). *Adult adoptees' experiences during the decision making process for birth parent reunification* (Publication No. 3599595) [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <http://login.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/docview/1461770693?accountid=14826>
- Bornholt, L. J. (2000). Social and personal aspects of self knowledge: A balance of individuality and belonging. *Learning and Instruction*, 10(5), 415–429. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752\(00\)00006-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(00)00006-2)
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1704846>
- Brownell, M. S. (2000). Who is an Indian – Searching for an answer to the question at the core of federal Indian law. *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, 34, 275–320. Retrieved from. <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjlr/vol34/iss1/8>
- Casey, E. S. (2001). Body, self and landscape: A geographical inquiry into the place-world. In P. C. Adams, S. Hoelscher, & K. E. Tills (Eds.), *Textures of place* (pp. 403–425). University of Minnesota Press.
- CBC Radio. (2016, November 4). Sorry, that DNA test doesn't make you Indigenous. *The 180*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/the180/least-important-election-the-case-to-stop-changing-the-clocks-and-the-problem-of-dna-as-proof-of-culture-1.3834912/sorry-that-dna-test-doesn-t-make-you-indigenous-1.3835210>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2011). *Family reunification: What the evidence shows*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.
- Crofoot, T. L., & Harris, M. S. (2012). An Indian child welfare perspective on disproportionality in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 1667–1674. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.04.028>
- Cross, T. L. (2014). Child welfare in Indian country: A story of painful removals. *Health Affairs*, 33(12), 2256–2259.
- Elliott, R., Fischer, C. T., & Rennie, D. L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38, 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466599162782>
- Feast, J., & Howe, D. (1997). Adopted adults who search for background information and contact with birth relatives. *Adoption & Fostering*, 21, 8–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030857599702100204>
- Fletcher, M. L. (2012). Tribal membership and Indian nationhood. *American Indian Law Review*, 37, 1–17. Retrieved from. <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/ailr/vol37/iss1/1>
- Gallegos, J., & Fort, K. (2018). Protecting the public health of Indian tribes: The Indian Child Welfare Act. *Harvard Public Health Review*, 12, 1–4. Retrieved from. <http://harvardpublichealthreview.org/protecting-the-public-health-of-indian-tribes-the-indian-child-welfare-act/>
- Geddes, L. (2014, February 5). There is no DNA test to prove you're Native American. *New Scientist*. Retrieved from <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22129554-400-there-is-no-dna-test-to-prove-youre-native-american/>
- Gould, L. S. (2001). Mixing bodies and beliefs: The predicament of tribes. *Columbia Law Review*, 101, 702–772. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1123684>
- Hagan, W. T. (1985). Full blood, mixed blood, generic, and ersatz: The problem of Indian identity. *Arizona and the West*, 27, 309–326. Retrieved from. www.jstor.org/stable/40169479
- Harness, S. D. (2006). *After the Indian adoption project: A search for identity* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Colorado State University, Colorado.
- Hauge, A. L. (2007). Identity and place: A critical comparison of three identity theories. *Architectural Science Review*, 50(1), 44–51. <https://doi.org/10.3763/asre.2007.5007>
- Hill, D. L. (2006). Sense of belonging as connectedness, American Indian worldview, and mental health. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 20, 210–216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2006.04.003>
- Hill, N. E., Murry, V. M., & Anderson, V. D. (2005). Sociocultural contexts of African American families. In V. C. McLoyd, N. E. Hill, & K. A. Dodge (Eds.), *Diversity in African American family life: context, adaptation, and policy* (pp. 21–44). Guilford Press.
- Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. (1978). Hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, House of Representatives; Ninety-fifth Congress, second session; on S. 1214; hearings held in Washington, D.C.; February 9 and March 9, 1978.
- Kington, L. (2015). The destruction of identity: Cultural genocide and indigenous peoples. *Journal of Human Rights*, 14(1), 63–83.

- Kuhns, J. (1994). The sealed adoption records controversy: Breaking down the walls of secrecy. *Golden Gate University Law Review*, 24, 259–297. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/ggulrev/vol24/iss1/9>
- Landers, A. L., Danes, S. M., Harstad, J., & White Hawk, S. (2017). Finding their way home: Factors associated with reunification for American Indian and White adults. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 82, 359–364. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2017.09.002>
- Landers, A. L., Danes, S. M., & White Hawk, S. (2015). Finding their way home: The reunification of first nations adoptees. *First People's Child & Family Review*, 10, 18–30. Retrieved from <https://fp CFR.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/267>
- Landers, A. L., Morgan, A. A., Danes, S. M., & White Hawk, S. (2018). Does reunification matter? Differences in the social connection to tribe and tribal enrollment of American Indian fostered and adopted adults. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 94, 347–353. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2018.09.019>
- Leticq, B. L., Grzywacz, J. G., Gray, K. M., & Eudave, Y. M. (2014). Depression among Mexican men on the migration frontier: The role of family separation and other structural and situational stressors. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 16(6), 1193–1200.
- Mendenhall, T. J., & Doherty, W. J. (2005). Action research methods in family therapy. In F. Piercy & D. Sprenkle (Eds.), *Research methods in family therapy* (2nd ed., pp. 100–118). Guilford Press.
- Müller, U., Gibbs, P., & Ariely, S. G. (2002). Predictors of psychological functioning and adoption experience in adults searching for their birthparents. *Adoption Quarterly*, 5, 25–53. https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v05n03_03
- Müller, U., & Perry, B. (2001a). Adopted persons' search for and contact with their birth parents I: Who searches and why? *Adoption Quarterly*, 4, 5–37. https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v04n03_02
- Müller, U., & Perry, B. (2001b). Adopted persons' search for and contact with their birth parents II: Adoptee-birth parent contact. *Adoption Quarterly*, 4, 39–62. https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v04n03_03
- Pratt, M. G. (2003). Disentangling collective identities. In J. Polzer, E. Manniz, & M. Neale (Eds.), *Identity issues in groups*, 5 (pp. 161–188). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1534-0856\(02\)05007-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1534-0856(02)05007-7)
- Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 3(1), 57–83. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(83\)80021-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(83)80021-8)
- QSR International. (2020, May 30). *Run a matrix coding query*. Retrieved from http://help-nv11.qsrinternational.com/desktop/procedures/run_a_matrix_coding_query.htm
- Red Horse, J. G., Martinez, C., Day, P., Day, D., Poupart, J., & Scharnberg, D. (2000). Family preservation: Concepts in American Indian communities. *Casey Family Programs*. Retrieved from http://www.kscourts.org/court-administration/Legal_Institute_on_Adverse_Childhood_Exp/American%20Indian%20FamilyPreservation.pdf
- Samuels, G. M. (2009). “Being raised by White people”: Navigating racial difference among adopted multiracial adults. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71(1), 80–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00581.x>
- Schmidt, R. W. (2011). American Indian identity and blood quantum in the 21st century: A critical review. *Journal of Anthropology*, 2011, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2011/549521>
- Shear, S. B. (2015). Cultural genocide masked as education: Analyzing U.S. history textbooks' inadequate coverage of Indian education policies. In P. Chandler & T. Hawley (Eds.), *Doing race in social studies: critical perspectives* (pp. 13–40). Information Age Publishing.
- Silver, A. (2011). Families across borders: The emotional impacts of migration on origin families. *International Migration*, 52(3), 194–221. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.146802435.2010.00672.x>
- Simpson, M., Timm, H., & McCubbin, H. I. (1981). Adoptees in search of their past: Policy induced strain on adoptive families and birth parents. *Family Relations*, 30(3), 427–434. <https://doi.org/10.2307/584038>
- Sobol, M. P., & Cardiff, J. (1983). A sociopsychological investigation of adult adoptees' search for birth parents. *Family Relations*, 32(4), 477–483. <https://doi.org/10.2307/583686>
- Solheim, C. A., & Ballard, J. (2016). Ambiguous loss due to separation in voluntary transnational families. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 8(3), 341–359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12160>
- Spruhan, P. (2006). A legal history of blood quantum in federal Indian law to 1935. *South Dakota Law Review*, 51, 1–50.
- TallBear, K. (2003). DNA, blood, and racializing the tribe. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 18, 81–107. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.2003.0008>
- Thornton, R. (1997). Tribal membership requirements and the demography of 'old' and 'new' Native Americans. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 16, 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005776628534>
- Toerien, M., & Wilkinson, S. (2004). Exploring the depilation norm: A qualitative questionnaire study of women's body hair removal. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1, 69–92. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088704qp0060a>
- Vesely, C. K., Leticq, B. L., & Goodman, R. D. (2017). Immigrant family resilience in context: Using a community-based approach to build a new conceptual model. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(1), 93–110.
- Wijesinghe, C. (2001). The intersectional model of multiracial identity: Integrating multiracial identity theories and intersectional perspectives on social identity. In C. Wijesinghe & B. W. Jackson (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology* (pp. 81–107). NYU Press.

Wrobel, G. M., Grotevant, H. D., Samek, D. R., & Von Korff, L. (2013). Adoptees' curiosity and information-seeking about birth parents in emerging adulthood: Context, motivation, and behavior. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 37*(5), 441–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025413486420>

How to cite this article: Landers, A. L., Danes, S. M., Morgan, A. A., Merritt, S., & White Hawk, S. (2021). My relatives are waiting: Barriers to tribal enrollment of fostered/adopted American Indians. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 1–28*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12797>