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Examining the Bicultural Ethnic Identity of Adolescents of a Northeastern Indian Tribe

CARRIE M. BROWN AND KIMBERLY ERETZIAN SMIRLES

American Indians can be considered “bicultural” because they must adapt to two cultures: their Native (tribal) culture and the white, mainstream (nontribal) culture.¹ Most research on the ethnic identity of American Indian adolescents has focused exclusively on tribal identity rather than on nontribal identity. Also, previous research has been based on samples of adolescents who live on tribal reservations, neglecting those who live off reservations or belong to tribes without residential reservation land.² It is important, however, to study adolescents’ nontribal identity and to study those adolescents not living on reservations. Furthermore, studies of western and southern tribal adolescents significantly outweigh those of northeastern tribal adolescents. The history of northeastern tribes differs substantially from that of other tribes, as northeastern tribes have experienced a longer length of contact with settlers and more intermarriage with non-Indians, producing tribal members of various ethnic backgrounds.

The purpose of this study is to achieve an understanding of the bicultural (tribal and nontribal) ethnic identity of northeastern tribal adolescents, highlighting their unique history and experience. Adolescents aged thirteen to seventeen of a northeastern tribe participated in the current study. This particular tribe does not have residential reservation land, so studying this population addresses the issue stated above—the lack of studies concerned with Indians not on reservations. Furthermore, the study examines not

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only tribal identity, as has been typically done in previous studies, but also nontribal identity.

DEFINING ETHNIC IDENTITY

Erikson defines identity as a person's subjective sense of self.³ Both Erikson and Marcia argue that identity formation develops through a process of exploration and commitment that typically begins during adolescence.⁴ An adolescent's ethnicity (family/racial heritage) may be a component of what is explored during the identity-formation process. When an individual consciously declares personal affiliation with an ethnic group, that individual has established an ethnic identity. Part of the individual's identity, or sense of self, is defined by his or her affiliation with the ethnic group. *Ethnic group* can be defined as a group of people sharing a common history and culture who interact with each other, identifying themselves as an ethnic group, often with similar physical characteristics.⁵ Phinney stresses the importance of ethnic identity during adolescence as an aspect of overall identity achievement.⁶ Oetting, Randall, and Chiarella assert that the extent to which an adolescent conforms to the prescribed behaviors of his or her ethnic group depends on the strength of the individual's ethnic identity and his or her level of identification with the culture.⁷ *Culture* is the enduring behaviors, ideas, and traditions of a group of people (in this case, an ethnic group), which are transmitted from generation to generation.⁸

During adolescence racial and ethnic attitudes tend to shift from learning ethnic labels (seen in childhood) to understanding the importance and relativity of group membership.⁹ This exploration process could result in a positive outcome, strengthening adolescents' ethnic identity and self-esteem through connection to a given ethnic group with qualities or a history that they identify with and admire. However, if adolescents encounter negative stereotypes concerning their ethnic group(s), they could internalize them, resulting in shame or a drop in self-esteem. American Indian adolescents face several unique challenges as they attempt to identify themselves, encountering a high prevalence of alcoholism and poverty associated with their ethnic group; such factors may make their search for identification long and difficult.¹⁰ To feel part of a group is not sufficient alone to guarantee a sense of belonging or identity that results in psychological well-being.

Although ethnic identity is commonly viewed as one's sense of affiliation with his or her ethnic group, there is disagreement concerning the components of ethnic identity. More specifically, what elements of a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors contribute to his or her establishment of ethnic identity? Phinney views ethnic identity as having four components: self-identification and ethnicity, ethnic behaviors and practices, affirmation and belonging, and ethnic identity achievement.¹¹ More recently, ethnic identity has been identified as a two-part phenomenon of (1) identification, that is, a sense of belonging and pride in one's ethnic group, and (2) exploration, that is, one's search for identity in his or her ethnic group and participating in the group's practices.¹² This two-component view is

beneficial because it recognizes the relevance both of beliefs and of behaviors to understanding ethnic identity. This is similar to Marcia's dimensions of exploration ("crisis") and commitment (a conscious decision to accept a particular role or identity).¹³ The two-component view addresses an individual's overt participation and activities and his or her active identification with a given ethnic group. Therefore, Spencer et al.'s components of ethnic identity (identification and exploration) were utilized as a theoretical framework for the current study.¹⁴

As stated above, this particular tribe does not have residential reservation land. The tribe does hold annual festivals and reunions, however, as well as monthly cultural events. The tribe also attempts to keep its youth members actively involved through various activities. Tribal dancing, music, and craft classes are frequent, and tribal youth are encouraged to attend. All tribal activities are held in the tribe's northeastern home state. In addition to activities offered, tribal members are also kept informed through newsletters.

MEASURING ETHNIC IDENTITY

The present study utilized a bicultural ethnic identity scale, taking aspects of Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), as well as Moran et al.'s bicultural ethnic identity questionnaire.¹⁵ Phinney's MEIM specifically addresses ethnic identity (not *bicultural* ethnic identity, which will be discussed later); her work will be addressed in this section.

Phinney indicated that numerous measures of ethnic identity have been developed as attempts to measure specific ethnic groups. As a result, most studies of different ethnic groups cannot be validly compared, and generalization of any single study's results to other ethnic groups is not possible. To address this psychometric issue, Phinney developed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. The MEIM is a twenty-item measure with a four-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree), which examines three aspects of ethnic identity: positive attitudes and sense of belonging (five items); ethnic identity achievement, including exploration and resolution of identity issues (seven items); and ethnic behaviors or practices (two items). The measure also includes six items assessing participants' attitudes toward other ethnic groups besides their own.¹⁶

Phinney administered the MEIM to 417 students from an urban high school and 136 students from an urban college. Both high school and college participants were from various ethnic backgrounds.¹⁷ Participants were also administered the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory.¹⁸ College students were found to score higher on ethnic identity achievement than the high school students, possibly because identity achievement often develops with age, as Phinney asserts. Compared to other ethnic groups, white students in both high school and college scored low in ethnic identity. For the minority groups in both high school and college, ethnic identity demonstrated a positive, statistically significant correlation with self-esteem; this correlation was not demonstrated for white college students.¹⁹ There was only one American Indian in this study, so utilizing an adaptation of the MEIM specifically for

tribal adolescents is a new approach. Furthermore, it is beneficial to observe the adolescents' ethnic identity and self-esteem for possible relationships.

Phinney's MEIM has been used in several studies of ethnic identity specifically focusing on adolescents.²⁰ In one study Roberts and Phinney administered the MEIM to 5,423 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders from various ethnic backgrounds in an urban area. The researchers also added six corollary measurements to the survey: self-esteem, coping, optimism, mastery, loneliness, and depression. The researchers found that MEIM scores were associated positively with self-esteem, coping, sense of mastery, and optimism across all ethnic groups. Loneliness and depression were negatively correlated with MEIM scores across all ethnic groups. The results of the study add to the existing literature on ethnic identity by providing evidence that ethnic identity (a) is a sound construct with young adolescents, (b) has an identifiable structure that surfaces during early adolescence, (c) is often positively related to self-esteem, and (d) can be measured reliably across groups.²¹ "American Indian" was not identified as one of the ethnic groups in this study.

Worrell examined the validity of scores on the MEIM in a group of 275 academically talented adolescents aged ten to eighteen. Worrell concluded that complete acceptance of the MEIM is premature and that the measure would benefit from work on its psychometric soundness. However, Worrell's study extends Phinney's MEIM to individuals in early adolescence, suggesting that ethnic identity measured by the MEIM is stable throughout the adolescent years.²²

Phinney asserts that an individual's community setting has an important impact on ethnic identity, with the opportunity to participate in ethnic activities such as festivals, dance, foods, and so forth, potentially enhancing ethnic belonging and attitudes.²³ Phinney's MEIM attempts to address the importance of involvement in social activities with members of one's group and participation in cultural activities, but this issue is only examined through four exploration items—for example, "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs"²⁴—not allowing participants to share specifically how many and what kinds of activities they are involved in. Such specificity may be difficult, as the MEIM is targeted toward examining several ethnic groups. The present study encouraged participants to report their participation in Indian and non-Indian activities through a provided checklist and permitted participants to report any other activities not included in the checklist.

Although the MEIM was developed for interethnic group comparison, it does not encourage subjects to respond as affiliates with multiple ethnic groups; however, many people identify with two or more ethnic groups. Most research has not encouraged reporting more than one category.²⁵ Moran et al. assert that most studies of ethnic identity ignore the variability in the ethnic background of many people, particularly American Indians (also see Collier).²⁶

The United States is gradually recognizing the ethnic variability of its population, as was demonstrated in the 2000 census, which for the first time allowed respondents to identify with more than one racial category. Ethnic

variability is common among many American Indians, as high rates of intertribal and interracial marriages have resulted in many Indian people affiliating with more than one tribe and/or being of mixed-blood lineage.²⁷ Gonzalez and others address the need to represent the heterogeneity and within-group differences among members of ethnic groups, as assessing individuals' multidimensional backgrounds would appear to be critical in understanding identity development.²⁸ This issue was addressed in the current study, as participants were encouraged to report any and all ethnicities.

The present study's bicultural ethnic identity scale borrowed Phinney's use of personal statements—for example, "I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background"—to examine ethnic identity.²⁹ However, the present researchers created new statements, modifying Phinney's statements. Like Phinney, the bicultural scale also uses a Likert rating (1 = I strongly disagree to 5 = I strongly agree). Modifying Phinney's work, however, the researchers encouraged participants to report specific involvement in Indian and non-Indian activities and to report all ethnic affiliations.

BICULTURAL ETHNIC IDENTITY

Whereas Phinney's MEIM is designed for studying a nonspecific ethnic identity, Moran et al.'s bicultural ethnic identity questionnaire addresses white ethnic identity and Indian ethnic identity or bicultural ethnic identity. The questionnaire poses questions such as, "When you are an adult, will you be a success in: The White or Anglo way of life? The American Indian way of life?"³⁰ Participants respond to the questions on a scale similar to the MEIM. To highlight another example: "In your family, how many of activities or traditions are based on: White culture? Indian culture?"³¹ Moran et al.'s questionnaire contributed to the creation of the present bicultural scale. Like their questionnaire, the present scale is bicultural, asking participants to respond to statements from both Indian and non-Indian perspectives. However, the scale differs in that "white/Anglo" and "Indian" are not used; instead, "[tribe's name]" and "non-[tribe's name]" are used.³² Given the young age of the participants in this study, naming their specific tribe as a reference point may be more salient for them. In addition, using "non-[tribe's name]" allows participants to consider ethnic group(s) other than tribal to which they belong, without making any assumptions.

Moran et al.'s questionnaire is adapted from Oetting and Beauvais's Orthogonal Cultural Identification Scale.³³ However, Moran et al. add additional questions about family, spiritual traditions, and involvement in cultural events.³⁴ While Moran et al.'s questionnaire asks participants to share if they participate in "white" or "Indian" activities, it does not ask for degree of involvement or the specific activities in which the adolescents participate. As stated earlier, the present study asked participants to share involvement in number and types of Indian and non-Indian activities.

Moran et al. administered their bicultural scale to 1,592 high school participants in four Indian reservation communities. The participants were measured on four subscales: bicultural ethnic identity, social competencies,

personal mastery, and self-esteem. The Indian and white scales had reliability coefficients of .91 and .92, respectively. Reliability is the ability of a measure to yield the same or comparable results in future studies. A reliability coefficient close to 1.00 is very good. Participants had significantly equal levels of identification with Indian and white culture, with a mean Indian score of 3.04 (standard deviation = .72) and a mean white score of 2.55 (standard deviation = .90). Standard deviation is a measure of how tightly responses are clustered around the mean. In this case, because the standard deviation values are not very high, the responses are tightly bunched together, and if one were to draw a bell curve of responses, it would be steep. The lowest scores obtained on the four measures of psychological well-being were found for subjects with low identity with both Indian and white cultures. Moderate levels of well-being were found for those with high identity on only Indian or only white measures. The highest scores on well-being were reported by subjects with high identity on both Indian and white measures. Therefore, these results indicate that identifying strongly with both Indian and white culture is related to higher levels of self-esteem, at least for the particular group studied.

To elaborate further on bicultural ethnic identity, Oetting, Randall, and Chiarella's discussion of an orthogonal view of identification should be addressed. According to this view an individual's identification with one culture can be independent of his or her identification with another culture. The individual may identify strongly with more than one group or may identify with only one group.³⁵ Moran et al. state that measuring bicultural ethnic identity among American Indians is very difficult because of the "existence of multiple tribes, distinct cultural areas, different languages, degree of Indian blood lineage, intertribal and interracial marriages, and the experience of living in two worlds."³⁶ The participants in the present study may identify strongly with both their tribal and nontribal groups, identify strongly with one, or identify strongly with neither.

On the whole, previous measures of ethnic identity among American Indian adolescents have had inconsistent results. Lysne and Levy found that American Indian adolescents who attended high school on a reservation had a greater sense of ethnic identity than those who attended an off-reservation high school.³⁷ Spencer et al. concluded that most adolescent participants from monoracial or multiracial backgrounds scored similarly on overall ethnic identity (through use of Phinney's MEIM), while Martinez and Dukes found that white and American Indian adolescents had the lowest ethnic identity of all ethnic groups they measured (also utilizing the MEIM).³⁸

PRESENT RESEARCH

Previous research of American Indian adolescents' bicultural ethnic identity demonstrates that several issues need to be addressed. First, we need to consider adolescents' freedom to share possible multiple-ethnic backgrounds. Second, bicultural ethnic identity needs to be examined, with both tribal and nontribal identities measured independently of one another. Third, the relationship of adolescents' bicultural (tribal and nontribal) identity to

self-esteem should be examined. Fourth, while the exploration of one's ethnic identity (through participating in cultural activities) is an important component to most theories of identity, most research has not directly measured people's participation in specific activities or cultural practices. Therefore, participation in cultural activities should be examined. Finally, there were no relevant studies that included qualitative assessments of participants' ethnic identity. Therefore, participants in this study were asked four open-ended questions, allowing them to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings about their tribal affiliation (see Appendix D).

In order to address these issues, the present study examined a northeastern tribe's adolescents' (aged thirteen to seventeen) (a) bicultural ethnic identity by utilizing aspects of Phinney's MEIM and Moran et al.'s bicultural ethnic identity scale, as previously discussed, (b) self-esteem, utilizing Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Inventory,³⁹ (c) participation in tribal and nontribal activities, and (d) responses to open-ended questions. It was predicted that (a) participants would have equally moderate levels of tribal and nontribal identity, (b) participants' self-esteem would be positively correlated with bicultural (tribal and nontribal scales combined) ethnic identity, and (c) participants' responses on the tribal and nontribal identity scales would be positively correlated with their participation in Indian and non-Indian activities, respectively.

It is important to reiterate here that the bicultural ethnic identity scale measures the two components of ethnic identity as identified by Spencer et al.: identification and exploration.⁴⁰ More will be discussed in the Methods section.

METHODS

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited from the total enrolled, nationwide population of 153 adolescents, aged thirteen to seventeen, of this particular tribe. This group was identified through the records of the tribe's enrollment department. Eighty-six of the adolescents were located in the tribe's home state, sixty-seven outside of the home state. The researchers were granted permission to conduct the study by the tribe's council of elders.⁴¹

Measures

Demographics. Participants were asked to provide their age, sex, state of residence, and ethnicities. They were also asked to share with whom they live, who else in their household is tribal, and from whom they have learned the most about their tribal background.

Ethnic identity scales. The tribal and nontribal identity scales were adaptations of Phinney's MEIM and Moran et al.'s bicultural ethnic identity scale.⁴² The tribal identity scale (see Appendix A) consists of ten statements, reflecting Spencer et al.'s components: identification and exploration.⁴³

Five of the statements refer to identification—for example, “I feel a strong attachment towards my [tribe’s name]⁴⁴ background”—and will be referred to as the *identification subscale*. The other five statements refer to exploration—for example, “I am interested in learning more about my [tribe’s name] culture”—and will be referred to as the *exploration subscale*. The nontribal identity scale (see Appendix B) parallels the questions from the tribal scale, with five statements on the identification subscale and five on the exploration subscale. For the nontribal identity scale, “non-[tribe’s name]” was explained to participants as the ethnicity or ethnicities other than tribal with which they identify. The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree to 5 = I strongly agree). Higher scores reflect a higher level of identity.

Indian and non-Indian activities. In order to assess more formally identity exploration, a list of tribal and nontribal activities was created to observe the adolescents’ level of involvement in Indian activities such as powwows and non-Indian activities such as theater. Participants were asked to check off all activities in which they have participated; they could also write down any other activities not included in the checklist. The list was created by the researchers, basing the Indian activity items on research of what the tribe offers to its adolescent members, as well as typical American Indian activities. The non-Indian activity items were determined through a general knowledge of what schools and communities typically offer adolescents.

Self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory is a global measure of self-esteem (see Appendix C).⁴⁵ It consists of ten statements on a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree). The Rosenberg inventory has been used in numerous studies to measure self-esteem; versions of Rosenberg’s scale were utilized in three ethnic identity studies previously discussed.⁴⁶

Open-ended questions. In order to allow for more elaboration of participants’ tribal identity, four open-ended questions were placed at the end of the survey: (1) How does being a [tribe’s name] influence your life? (2) What does it mean to you to be a [tribe’s name]? (3) What do you like about being a [tribe’s name]? (4) What do you *not* like about being a [tribe’s name], if anything? (see Appendix D).

Procedure

The survey was mailed to the parents/guardians of all potential participants. A letter detailing the study was addressed to the parent/guardian, with a second letter to the adolescent. It was assumed that with consent, parents would detach the letter and survey for the adolescents. Adolescents first answered the demographics and then read instructions about completing the identity scales, with an example given to show them how to indicate responses based on the Likert scale. The adolescents then completed the two identity scales, then the Indian and non-Indian activities checklist, then the self-esteem scale, and, finally, the open-ended questions. Participants returned the completed survey in a stamped envelope that was provided

with the survey. A follow-up reminder postcard was sent out after seven weeks to the adolescents' parents/guardians.

On completion of the research an outline of the results was mailed to all 153 adolescents and parents/guardians. The results were presented to the tribal council, council of elders, and tribal members in an open meeting.

RESULTS

Thirty participants (twenty-one females, nine males) returned the survey, a 20 percent return rate, which is acceptable for mail-out survey research.⁴⁷ The participants' average age was 15.57 years (standard deviation = 1.30), with eleven participants residing in the tribe's home state and nineteen residing out of state. All participants reported "Caucasian" as another ethnicity, with 97 percent reporting Caucasian as their only other ethnicity besides tribal. One participant also reported Jewish, and two participants reported another tribal affiliation.

Eighteen (60 percent) participants reported living with both parents, seven (23 percent) with only their mother. The remaining 17 percent lived in joint custody or with extended family, foster parents, or spouse. Sixteen (53 percent) lived with their tribal mother, and ten (33 percent) lived with their tribal father. Sixteen (53 percent) reported living with one tribal sibling, and nine (30 percent) lived with more than one tribal sibling. Three (10 percent) participants did not live with any tribal family members. Most participants (43 percent) learned about their tribal background from their tribal mothers; 37 percent learned from their fathers. Tribal grandfathers were reported to have contributed to the upbringing of 20 percent of the participants, tribal grandmothers to 23 percent. Infrequent responses listed uncles, aunts, step-parents, tribal historians, group leaders, story tellers, tribal friends, and siblings.

All participants completed every piece of the survey, with one exception. One participant did not complete the nontribal identity scale, and this piece was therefore omitted during analysis.

Scale Reliabilities

In order to confirm scale reliabilities, Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each of the scales. Cronbach's alpha is a typical statistical measure to test for a scale's reliability or dependability. A value greater than .70 is considered strong reliability. The standardized alphas were as follows: tribal identity scale (.81), tribal identification subscale (.71), tribal exploration subscale (.79); nontribal identity scale (.78), nontribal identification subscale (.68), nontribal exploration subscale (.48), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (.89).

Hypothesis Testing

In order to test the prediction that the adolescents would have equivalent moderate levels of tribal and nontribal identity, a dependent samples *t*-test was conducted with the tribal and nontribal identity scales. A dependent samples

t-test compares the means of two scales from the same group of participants to see if the mean of one scale significantly differs from the mean of the other scale. Tribal identity (mean = 3.71, standard deviation = .65) was found to be significantly stronger than nontribal identity (mean = 3.33, standard deviation = .65) ($t[28] = 2.12, p = .043$). This finding contradicts the hypothesis of equivalent moderate levels of tribal and nontribal identity. Although both tribal and nontribal scores are moderate, the tribal identity score is significantly greater. (For these analyses, a *p* value less than .05 is considered significant, meaning that we can be 95 percent confident that the difference is significant, or there is less than a 5 percent probability due to chance.)

Testing the hypothesis that participants' bicultural ethnic identity (tribal and nontribal scales combined) would be positively correlated with self-esteem, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was run with the tribal and nontribal identity scales combined and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory. The Pearson correlation measures the correlation, or relationship, between two variables. A correlation value (labeled *r*) that is positive indicates a mutually positive relationship, and a negative *r* indicates an inverse relationship. An *r* of (negative or positive) 0.4 is moderate, and an *r* of (negative or positive) 0.6 is strong. An *r* close to 0 indicates no relationship. There was no significant relationship between bicultural identity (tribal and nontribal scales combined) and self-esteem. The tribal scale was then individually correlated with the self-esteem scale—no significant relationship was found. The nontribal scale was then correlated with self-esteem, and once again, no significant relationship was found.

To test the third hypothesis—that tribal identity would be positively correlated with Indian activities and nontribal identity with non-Indian activities—a Pearson's product-moment correlation was conducted with tribal identity and Indian activities, and nontribal identity and non-Indian activities. Tribal identity was positively correlated with Indian activities, but only on the exploration subscale, and not the identification subscale ($r[29] = .48, p = .01$). Nontribal identity was positively correlated with non-Indian activities, but on the exploration, not identification, subscale ($r[28] = .39, p = .05$) (see tables 1 and 2 for frequencies and percentages). Tribal identity was not correlated with non-Indian activities, and nontribal identity was not correlated with Indian activities.

Table 1
Reported Indian Activities

Activity	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Powwows	15	50
Indian crafts	8	27
Indian dance	8	27
Tribal youth group	8	27

Table 2
Reported Non-Indian Activities

Activity	<i>N</i>	Percentage
School club(s)	19	63
Sports team(s)	18	60
Church/Religious group(s)	14	47
Dance (ballet, jazz, etc.)	12	40
Music lessons	12	40
Theater	10	33
School band	6	20
Other (not specified)	13	43

Supplemental Analyses

A series of supplemental analyses were run to observe the data more closely. This tribe is based in a northeastern state, and since identity can be experienced contextually—that is, who we are and how we express ourselves is impacted by a given social context⁴⁸—it is possible that adolescents residing in the tribal state have a stronger tribal identity than adolescents living in other states. To test this, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted with participants' residence (tribal state vs. other U.S. states) and the tribal identity scale. Like the dependent samples *t*-test, the independent samples *t*-test compares the means of two scales, but the independent test compares two different groups of participants. Participants from the tribe's state were found to have a significantly higher tribal identity (mean = 4.06, standard deviation = .61, $n = 11$) than participants in other states (mean = 3.51, standard deviation = .58, $n = 19$) ($t[28] = 2.47, p = .02$). However, the groups did not differ on the identification subscale but the exploration subscale (mean = 3.80, standard deviation = .92; mean = 3.22, standard deviation = .62, respectively) ($t[28] = 2.08, p = .047$).

Participants in the tribal state were not found to have a significantly higher nontribal identity than participants in other states. Furthermore, participants outside the tribal state did not have a significantly higher nontribal identity than participants in the tribal state. The two groups also did not differ on bicultural identity (tribal and nontribal scales combined).

Since geographical location may additionally affect participation in cultural activities, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted with participants' residence (tribal state and other states) and number of activities (Indian and non-Indian). Participants in the tribal state were found to participate in more Indian activities (mean = 2.18, standard deviation = 1.17) than participants from other states (mean = .79, standard deviation = 1.40) ($t[28] = 2.78, p = .01$). Participants living outside the tribal state reported participating in more non-Indian activities (mean = 3.79, standard deviation = 2.10) than participants in the tribal state (mean = 1.73, standard deviation = 1.85) ($t[28] = 2.71, p = .01$).

Although differences were found between participants in the tribal state and those out of state, it is important to consider that because this is a northeastern tribe, and surrounding states are within a few hours of each other, participants living in a northeastern state may still participate in Indian activities and share an identity similar to that of participants in the tribal state. Participants were divided into two groups: northeastern states ($n = 14$) and other states ($n = 16$). The analyses mentioned above were run again, this time with the two new groups. The two groups were found not to differ on bicultural identity (tribal and nontribal scales combined). Furthermore, the two groups did not differ on tribal or nontribal identity separately. There were no correlations between tribal and nontribal identity and Indian and non-Indian activities. There were no differences in level of participation in Indian and non-Indian activities between the two groups.

To test for a positive relationship between the number of tribal members in participants' households and the tribal identity scale, a Pearson's correlation was run. There was not a significant correlation. A Pearson's correlation was then run for the question, "From whom did you learn the most about your (tribal) background?" and the tribal identity scale. A significant positive correlation was found. The number of people a participant reported having learned from was related to the strength of his or her tribal identity ($r[29] = .59; p = .001$). The correlation is positive and significant on both the exploration subscale ($r[29] = .44; p = .01$) and the identification subscale ($r[29] = .57; p = .001$).

Participants' responses to the open-ended questions were examined. A total of 13 percent ($n = 4$) of the participants noted their sense of pride in their tribal background, and 36 percent ($n = 11$) liked everything about being a member of the tribe. Thirty-six percent ($n = 11$) of the participants said that they enjoy being a member of the tribe, mentioning the importance of culture, heritage, and/or traditions, and 63 percent ($n = 19$) mentioned feelings of belonging and/or identity through being part of a tribal group.

Of the participants living outside the tribal state, 20 percent ($n = 6$) expressed (a) difficulties with living far away from the tribe, (b) wishes to live in the tribal state, (c) unfamiliarity with the tribe, and/or (d) desire to learn more about their culture. These factors may contribute to the higher return rate among participants located outside the tribal state (28 percent) compared to the response rate of participants located in the tribal state (13 percent).

DISCUSSION

Several factors may account for participants' significantly higher tribal identity than nontribal identity. One-third of the participants were located in the tribal state and, therefore, may have had more access to tribal activities and resources, which may have strengthened their tribal identity. Participants in the tribal state were found to participate in more Indian activities than participants in other states. Also, the tribe actively keeps all of its members informed and involved through activities and newsletters, potentially affecting the participants' ability to explore and thus establish their tribal identity. Although participants living in the tribal state were found to have a significantly higher tribal identity than

those living outside the tribal state, the difference was found on the exploration, not identification, subscale. This suggests that participants located outside the tribal state may have an equal identification toward their tribal background as do participants living in the tribal state, but their tribal identity may not be as strong because of their inability to explore their tribal culture. As Collier and Thomas state, "Cultural identity is dynamic and fluid because it is constituted and rendered in interaction."⁴⁹

The analyses show that there are differences between participants in the tribal state and those out of state but not when participants are divided into northeastern states and other states. This demonstrates the importance the tribe holds for adolescents living in the tribal state. Living in a northeastern state may not hold as much influence on tribal identity as actually living in the tribal state itself, where tribal identity may be more salient. Participants did not significantly differ in their bicultural ethnic identity, with moderate levels of tribal and nontribal scores—the only difference found was for participants in the tribal state, with a stronger tribal identification. From this we take that these adolescents nationwide are bicultural, and assert feelings of being bicultural, but for those in the tribal state there is a stronger tribal identification.

Ninety-seven percent of participants reported Caucasian as their only other ethnicity. Because of this we know that when participants responded to the nontribal scale, they were not referring to ethnicities other than Caucasian. This reinforces the previous discussion of American Indians' biculturalism, balancing white and Indian cultures. However, for these adolescents it is about balancing the two ethnicities and races, as they are both white and Indian. For adolescents of non-northeastern tribes, where interracial (white) marriages have not been as frequent, the balance of Indian and white may relate to managing being Indian while trying to incorporate the white culture into their identity. Only three participants reported additional ethnicities (Jewish, other tribal affiliation), so it is not possible to observe differences in identity between this small group and the other participants.

The nontribal exploration subscale had a low reliability (.48), which may be due to the vagueness of the term *nontribal* when addressing cultural exploration. Whereas the tribal identity scale is specific, with little room for interpretation, we do not know if participants responded to the nontribal exploration statements with ethnicity in mind. For example, when responding to the statement, "I would enjoy participating in more non-[tribe's name] activities," participants may have focused on nontribal activities that are not cultural in nature. Participants outside the tribal state did not have a significantly higher nontribal identity than participants in the tribal state, although they participated in more non-Indian activities. This may be because the non-Indian activities are not cultural in nature and therefore do not have an effect on the adolescents' nontribal ethnic identity.

The greater return rate among participants located outside the tribal state than participants in the tribal state may be due to those living outside the tribal state having the desire to have more contact with the tribe and, therefore, being more willing to complete and return the survey. In the open-ended questions, 20 percent of the participants located outside of the

tribal state shared their desire to learn more about their tribe's culture and to live in the tribal state. Interestingly, no participants located in the tribal state mentioned a desire to know more about their tribal background, which may demonstrate the impact that location has on the ethnic exploration and satisfaction with ethnic identity.

No correlations were found between bicultural identity (tribal and nontribal scales combined) and self-esteem. There was also no correlation found with the tribal scale alone and self-esteem or with the nontribal scale alone and self-esteem. This may be due to the self-esteem scale utilized. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory is a global measure of self-esteem, and ethnic identity is only one domain in the larger sense of self. The study may have benefited from a more domain-specific, cultural measure, such as the Collective Esteem Scale (CES), which focuses on self-esteem derived from one's social identity and in-group associations.⁵⁰

Although no correlation was found between the number of tribal family members in the household and tribal identity, there was a positive correlation between the number of tribal "teachers" and tribal identity. This may demonstrate that the number of tribal family members with whom an adolescent lives does not affect the strength of his or her tribal identity—these family members may not be active in the tribe and may not teach tribal ways to the adolescent. However, the number of tribal members from whom an adolescent learns about the tribe does affect the strength of the adolescent's tribal identity (on both the identification and exploration subscales). This sheds light on the importance of several tribal members being active in the education and encouragement of tribal youth.

The survey was kept at a length that was deemed reasonable for a thirteen-year-old to seventeen-year-old to complete. It may be beneficial to add more measures to provide a more detailed examination of adolescents' identity and experiences. However, any alterations to the survey must be weighed against the likelihood that a participant would be willing to take the time to complete it.

The return rate of the survey was 20 percent, which may appear small. However, return rates on mail-out surveys are typically well below 30 percent.⁵¹ We must also remember that the sample represents almost 20 percent of the entire population of the adolescents of this particular tribe. However, it is unclear whether those who chose to respond are in some ways different from those who did not. Future research should offer incentives to encourage participation, which was deemed in this study as impossible without compromising confidentiality.

The findings of this study should not be generalized to all American Indian adolescents. As Moran et al. assert, there is a great deal of variation between many American Indian tribes in ethnic origin and cultural practices.⁵² Therefore, no study should relate findings to all American Indians, particularly a study such as this one, which examined a northeastern tribe. Historical and cultural differences between tribes of different locations make generalization almost impossible. This particular survey may be more applicable to eastern, or northeastern, tribal adolescents.

There are many possible advantages and practical applications to this type of research. Adolescence can be a challenging period, and verbally discussing feelings may be difficult during this time; a survey might be a more comfortable way for adolescents to express personal feelings about their ethnic identity. Participants may be reassured to know that other tribal youth feel similarly about their own ethnic identity. Sharing the results of this study with the parents of these participants might contribute to the parents' understanding of their tribal children; this information may aid them in knowing how to help their children grow in cultural awareness and tribal identification. The results of this study could also help tribal leaders initiate and/or improve programs intended to help tribal youth better understand their ethnic identity. Such knowledge could strengthen not only the adolescents' tribal affiliations but also their overall sense of well-being. Research has demonstrated that a greater sense of ethnic identity relates to higher self-esteem, purpose in life, and self-confidence.⁵³

There are three directions that future research could take, particularly in the Northeast. First, other tribes could utilize the survey with their tribal adolescents to determine their bicultural ethnic identity and also see in what areas the tribes may need to support their young members. Second, adolescents of multiple northeastern tribes could be recruited to examine similarities and differences among the groups in their bicultural ethnic identity, participation in activities, and feelings about their tribal affiliation. Third, bicultural ethnic identity could be studied through the life span. Both generational differences and developmental changes over time could be invaluable to our understanding of bicultural ethnic identity and its role in overall self-concept and psychological well-being.

APPENDIX A TRIBAL IDENTITY SCALE

These first ten statements refer to your [tribe's name] background, so please think about your [tribe's name] background as you respond to each statement. Please be sure to follow the numbers below when responding to the statements.

- 1 = I strongly disagree
- 2 = I somewhat disagree
- 3 = I am not sure
- 4 = I somewhat agree
- 5 = I strongly agree

- 1) I expect to be involved in _____ traditions as an adult. (E)*
- 2) My _____ background is an important part of who I am. (I)
- 3) I am interested in learning more about my _____ culture. (E)
- 4) I feel a strong attachment towards my _____ background. (I)
- 5) I try to talk to others about being _____. (E)

- 6) I have a strong sense of belonging to my _____ background. (I)
- 7) I would enjoy participating in more _____ activities. (E)
- 8) I expect to be successful as a _____ adult. (I)
- 9) I am active in groups or clubs that include _____. (E)
- 10) I think about how my life will be affected by being a _____. (I)

(E) Indicates an exploration-related statement and was not shown in the actual survey.

(I) Indicates an identification-related statement and was not shown in the actual survey.

*Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are presented to the right of each statement.

APPENDIX B NONTRIBAL IDENTITY SCALE

These second ten statements refer to your non-[tribe's name] background. Non-[tribe's name] refers to the choice(s) you checked off for the question "Besides being [tribe's name], what are your other ethnic backgrounds (that you are aware of)?" Please think about your non-[tribe's name] background as you respond to each statement. Please be sure to follow the numbers below when responding to the statements.

- 1 = I strongly disagree
- 2 = I somewhat disagree
- 3 = I am not sure
- 4 = I somewhat agree
- 5 = I strongly agree

- 1) I expect to be involved in non-_____ traditions as an adult. (E)*
- 2) My non-_____ background is an important part of who I am. (I)
- 3) I am interested in learning more about my non-_____ culture. (E)
- 4) I feel a strong attachment towards my non-_____ background. (I)
- 5) I try to talk to others about being non-_____. (E)
- 6) I have a strong sense of belonging to my non-_____ background. (I)
- 7) I would enjoy participating in more non-_____ activities. (E)
- 8) I expect to be a successful non-_____ adult. (I)
- 9) I am active in groups or clubs that include non-_____. (E)
- 10) I think about how my life will be affected by being a non-_____. (I)

(E) Indicates an exploration-related statement and was not shown in the actual survey.

(I) Indicates an identification-related statement and was not shown in the actual survey.

*Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are presented to the right of each statement.

APPENDIX C
ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM INVENTORY

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following ten statements using the following scale:

1—I strongly agree 2—I agree 3—I disagree 4—I strongly disagree

- 1) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others. ____
- 2) I feel that I have a number of good qualities. _____
- 3) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. _____
- 4) I am able to do things as well as most other people. _____
- 5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of. _____
- 6) I take a positive attitude toward myself. _____
- 7) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. _____
- 8) I wish I could have more respect for myself. _____
- 9) I certainly feel useless at times. _____
- 10) Sometimes I think I am no good at all. _____

APPENDIX D
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Please respond to the following questions. If you need more space to write, feel free to use the back of this page.

How does being a _____ influence your life?*

What does it mean to you to be a _____?

What do you like about being a _____, if anything?

What do you not like about being a _____, if anything?

*The tribe's name was inserted in the blank space.

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NOTES

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41. The complete survey is available from the researchers on request.
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