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American Indians without Tribes in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Among American Indians and Alaska Natives, most aspects of ethnicity are tightly associated with the person's tribal origins. Language, history, foods, land, and traditions differ among the hundreds of tribes indigenous to the United States. With this in mind, we ask why almost one million American Indians failed to respond to the tribal affiliation part of the Census 2000 race question. We investigate four hypotheses about why one-third of multiracial American Indians and one-sixth of single-race American Indians did not write any response to the tribal affiliation question: (1) survey item non-response which undermines all fill-in-the-blank questions, (2) a non-salient tribal identity, (3) a genealogy-based affiliation, and (4) a mestizo identity which does not require a tribe. We use multivariate logistic regression models and high-density restricted-use Census 2000 data. We find support for the first two hypotheses and note that predictors differ substantially for single-race versus multiple-race American Indians.

Keywords

ethnic identity; American Indian; US Census; tribe; Census Research Data Center

As the public understanding of “race” becomes more nuanced, and the right to racial self-definition becomes more engrained in American culture, it can be difficult to understand what people intend to communicate when they answer formal or official questions about their race. They may be reporting how they see themselves or how others see them; they may be reporting their most salient heritage or their entire family tree; they may be trying to communicate an identity that does not fit into a listed category; or they may not find the question meaningful at all.

On the US Census and other federal surveys, people who mark “American Indian or Alaska Native” (hereafter shortened to “American Indian”) are asked to provide a bit more information (i.e., tribal affiliation) than are people reporting most other races. Because tribes vary in their cultural practices including historical variation in language, history, and

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customs (and thus fit a definition of “ethnicity” provided by van den Berghe 1967), sociologists have applied the term “ethnicity” to tribal identity. In a descriptive sense, tribal identity among American Indians approximates ethnic identity among immigrants. Yet a significant fraction of people do not report a tribe when specifically asked on the US Census. About 17 per cent of single-race American Indians and about 33 per cent of multiple-race American Indians omitted this information in Census 2000, writing nothing in the fill-in-the-blank response area.¹ In other words, they appear to have racial identities but not ethnic identities.

In this research, we leverage this information (or lack thereof) to gain insight into why some people report a race but not an ethnic group within that race. Our research questions are: (1) why do some American Indians NOT report a tribe? And (2) are the reasons for tribal non-response different for single-race versus multiple-race American Indians?

We see these research questions as significant for several reasons. If tribal non-response is meaningful, we could conclude that a pan-tribal or non-tribal version of ethnic identity has emerged. These changes in ethnic group boundaries (Barth 1969; Cornell and Hartmann 1997) beg investigation. American Indians without tribal affiliation are also likely to be poorly-understood and excluded from relevant policies and programs. And this research also has direct implications for the US Census Bureau because available tribal data may be biased due to selective non-response.

Tribal affiliation

The census measure of tribal affiliation is different from official tribal membership. As sovereign entities, the hundreds of tribal governments in the US have the federally supported right to determine official membership in their tribes and most have strict rules for membership. Many federal and tribe-funded programs for American Indians are only open to people who have attained official tribal membership. Thornton (1997) provides more information about this topic.

In the census, people who mark “American Indian or Alaska Native” as their race are asked to write in their “enrolled or principal tribe.” Because the Census Bureau relies on self-identification on matters of race, the census item simply measures affiliation, not official membership. The census is known to identify many more American Indians than are currently on any tribal membership list (Thornton 1997; Bureau of the Census 2008). However, the census data are used extensively to distribute federal funds and set other race-related policies (Bureau of the Census 2008), so the census responses are far from inconsequential.

The role of ethnicity

Ethnic identity is expected to have personal meaning to individuals (Hale 2004). Race, on the other hand, is generally recognized by physical criteria (van den Berghe 1967) and is

¹This is a relatively high non-response rate. The 1990 Census non-response for this item was about 10 per cent (Liebler 2004). In Census 2000, non-response was 9 per cent for the language of non-English speakers, 10 per cent for place of birth, 4 per cent for residence five years ago, 19 per cent for “ancestry or ethnic origin,” and 10 per cent for occupation.

enforced and imposed by outsiders (Snipp 1989). Members of racial minority groups are usually described as having ethnicity-specific knowledge that they draw upon as they navigate the American social landscape (c.f. Lee and Zhou 2004; Waters 1996) and which is the basis for the group's disadvantage, discrimination, and distinction (Rughini 2011). More psychological understandings of ethnic identity emphasize the vital importance of ethnic group membership to a minority person's healthy self-concept, high self-esteem, and sense of efficacy (Phinney 1992; Stonequist 1961).

Following these arguments, many social researchers expect each racial minority group member to have a specific and meaningful ethnic identity. Thus, they would expect each American Indian to have a tribal affiliation which the person uses in daily life. The United Nations explained this traditional approach in the *Demographic Yearbook* of 1963 (p.39), saying:

Where the investigations have been concerned with more or less endogamous groups which have existed for many generations within a country, each person is usually well aware of the group to which he belongs, and there is little difficulty in obtaining the information. This would apply to responses concerning tribal affiliation and indigenous Indian populations and other aboriginal peoples. In other cases, however, the adequacy of individual responses may be seriously affected by the clarity of the question used and by the explanatory material provided.

If this is true, the only reason not to report a tribe would be regular survey item non-response in which information is missing at random (De Leeuw 2001).

However, tribal non-response may be more meaningful than simple survey non-response. Theorists recognize that not everyone has a strong ethnic identity; ethnic identity may be symbolic, optional, situational, or affiliative, among other things (Gans 1979; Jiménez 2010; Okamura 1981; Waters 1990). For example, American whites have been found to have mild attachments to a particularly ethnic form of identity (e.g., Waters 1990; Hout and Goldstein 1994).

Attachment to tribe-level identity can also be weak. American Indians sometimes experience ethnic identity at other levels, such as national or subtribal (Alfred 1995; Biolsi 2005; Goldberg-Ambrose 1994; Nagel 1996). This divergence from tribe-focused identity can be understood in part as a response to laws, policies, and practices of colonizers and the federal government, which have variously imposed tribe-level organization, physical and social segregation, and/or complete assimilation (Cornell 1988; Champagne 2008; Goldberg-Ambrose 1994; Kidwell 2007; Nagel 1996). These experiences have substantially complicated internally-understood and externally-presented identities of American Indians (Garrouette 2003; Lobo 1990:33; Sturm 2002). In this sense, *ethnicity* – as the voluntary maintenance of historic customs – is not synonymous with *tribal identity*, which has been developed in the context of stark power imbalances and devastating colonialism. Although our data does not address these possibilities, the tribal non-response in our study may be a reflection of these social forces.

In the following sections, we use prior research to develop four hypotheses about why tribal non-response was so common in Census 2000 and discuss hypothesized differences between single-race and multiple-race American Indians' non-response. We then estimate logistic regression models predicting tribal non-response among single-race American Indians and (separately) multiple-race American Indians using the restricted-use high-density sample of data from Census 2000.

Literature review and hypotheses

Based on existing research and theory, we identify four hypotheses regarding the high levels of tribal-non-response among American Indians in Census 2000: (1) standard survey item non-response, (2) American Indian identities for which tribal affiliation is not salient or not meaningful, (3) genealogy-based identity, and (4) mestizo identities for which tribal identity is not necessary.

Survey item non-response

Survey item non-response is an issue in all surveys and censuses. Non-response to survey items is especially common for write-in questions.

Some respondents cannot or will not fill in blanks on surveys. People living in metropolitan areas are more likely to skip fill-in-the-blank questions (Goyder 1982). Elderly people have also been found to be less responsive to survey questions (Colsher and Wallace 1989). Similarly, people with low literacy or English language skills may have trouble with the form (Lobo 1990).

Given their demonstrated ability to follow instructions completely, people who utilized the new Census option to mark multiple races may be especially responsive to all survey questions (including tribe). Perhaps tribal non-response among multiple-race American Indians would be even higher without this hypothesized underlying propensity to be responsible survey participants.

Additionally, we highlight respondents who report any West Indian or Asian Indian ancestry because they may have misunderstood the meaning of the term "American Indian" on the race question and may not be indigenous to North America. If that were true, they would have no tribe to report.

Salience and meaning of racial and ethnic identities

A second hypothesis about why some American Indians do not report a tribal affiliation is that their tribe was not among their salient or meaningful identities at the time of the census. Not all identities can be equally salient, and relative salience can change across time and circumstance (Sellers et al. 1998).

People who use tribe-related knowledge in daily life are expected to have salient tribal identities and be very likely to report their tribe to the Census Bureau (Liebler 2004). Languages and homelands are tribally specific and are expected to be especially strong indicators of salience, even if the homeland or language is not affiliated with their own tribe

(Liebler 2010). Salience may also be increased by co-residence with a biological relative (with whom they would share tribal affiliation) or co-residence with another American Indian.

It is necessary to note that the importance of salience does not necessarily imply the importance of tribe. Instead of a tribe-level identity, an American Indian might have a salient pan-Indian identity -- a racial identity that overwhelms or replaces the ethnic identity. Pan-Indian identities can develop for many reasons, including involvement in social movements about cross-tribal issues (Nagel 1994, 1995, 1996). In addition, a broad racial identity is a potential outcome of experience with a society that finds ethnic affiliation meaningless (Alba and Islam 2009). "Tribe" is a concept developed primarily for political reasons (Goldberg-Ambrose 1994; Champagne 2008) and is not always congruent with indigenous definitions of community (Lowery 2010; Sturm 2002). Some people may avoid using tribal affiliations to identify themselves.

Theories of ethnicity cited above suggest that single-race American Indians would have a salient tribal identity because it coincides with their racial identity. Theories have less-clear expectations for salience among multiple-race American Indians, on the other hand.

On the one hand, the fact that multiple-race American Indians bothered to report multiple races when many others of mixed heritage did not do so may indicate that they have a relatively strong attachment to all of their races. Following this logic, the people who reported more than one race could be expected to be more likely to write in their tribal affiliation.

On the other hand, tribal identities may be less salient than competing identities among those who are also members of another socially distinguished racial or ethnic group (e.g., black or Latino) -- identities which may receive more support in interactions with others (Khanna 2004). Black-American Indians are often assumed to be "just black" (c.f., Davis 1991), regardless of their indigenous heritage, thus lowering the salience of their American Indian background. Also, because of home births and poorly marked grave sites, African American families have relatively little available genealogical information (Burroughs 2001) and may be missing information about their tribal origins. People who were born abroad may find their international origins more salient than their tribal origins; they also may be unfamiliar with US concepts of race, ethnicity, and ancestry.

Genealogy-based identification

A third hypothesis is that many of the people who first racially identified as American Indian in 2000 have recently (re)discovered their American Indian heritage, or (relatedly) have recently enhanced their ancestral knowledge. We hypothesize that some racially-identified American Indians have Native identities which are based on genealogical research or family stories rather than on personal experiences. This racially American Indian identity may be symbolic in that it does not guide the details of daily life (Gans 1979), or situational (Yancey et al. 1976) such that it is used only on occasion (Khanna 2004).

American Indians who discovered this racial identity through genealogical research may be particularly interested in this identity and thus willing respondents to census questions about race. We predict that people who have done genealogical research will be more likely to report a tribe because tribal information is sought after in genealogical studies, and erroneous or incomplete tribal information can be entered on the census form without penalty.

Those most strongly socialized to study their genealogy – and thus perhaps especially likely to report a tribal affiliation – include women, middle-aged people, elders, and relatively educated people. Because of their traditional roles as kin-keepers (Reiss and Oliveri 1983), women are encouraged to take an interest in family, and women are substantially more likely than men to note American Indian ancestries on federal surveys (Liebler and Zacher 2010). Middle-aged and older Americans are normatively engaged in preserving family history. Elders probably witnessed dramatic changes in government policies towards their tribe, and may feel a special attachment to the tribe's history and collective memory. Higher education, especially college, could encourage increased emphasis on a minority identity as a reaction to outside influence or in response to college classes focused on diversity (Khanna and Johnson 2010). Cynics may see this heightened minority identity as also driven by interest in scholarships and other education-related benefits earmarked for minorities (Khanna and Johnson 2010). Most of these causal mechanisms would act to increase the likelihood that the person would report a tribal or ethnic identity.

Mestizo identity among multiracial Latino American Indians

People from Mexico, Central America, and South America often embrace a “mestizo” identity, which explicitly melds European, African, and indigenous heritages but does not emphasize tribal identity in the North American sense (Lobo 1990; Miller 2004). Our fourth hypothesis is that some American Indians who did not report a tribe are, in fact, Latinos who are aiming to report a mestizo identity on the census form which does not have a more direct way to indicate this. A person reporting a mestizo identity would, theoretically, mark three races (American Indian, white, and black) and would report Latino in the separate Hispanic origin question. Because many groups indigenous to Latin America never developed tribe-level names or identities, a tribal response would not necessarily be part of this complex response pattern.

Multiracial American Indians in comparison

The number of American Indians counted in 2000 – about 4 million – was almost twice as large as the number of American Indians counted in 1990. Much of this tremendous increase was due to the new race question, which allowed multiple race responses in 2000 and drew American Indian responses from mixed-heritage people who were previously forced to choose one race. The strength of racial identity for those who first reported American Indian race in 2000 may be relatively modest, especially among those who do not report their tribe (Liebler 2004).

One major aim in this research is to better understand whether the multiple-race American Indians are fundamentally similar to single-race American Indians such that the same factors

predict tribal non-response with the same power in both populations. If the factors predicting tribal non-response are similar in the two groups, then the higher rate of non-response among multiple-race American Indians is precipitated by a higher prevalence of predictive factors in the multiracial group.

On the other hand, American Indians who mark multiple races might fundamentally differ from American Indians who only report one race. These respondents might be especially attuned to their heritage and eager to report all parts of it; they might have developed a pan-tribal identity as part of their multiracial identity; and/or they might be Latinos who finally have a way to report their mestizo identity. Additionally, some research results indicate that multiracial American Indians' racial identity varies considerably across time and circumstance. Specifically, like the fluctuating ethnic responses given by whites (Waters 1990), part-American Indian teens have been shown to be quite inconsistent in their race responses (Doyle and Kao 2007; Harris and Sim 2002).

Data, sample selection, method, and measures

Data

We use restricted census data from Census 2000, available through the Census Research Data Center network. Public-use versions of the data do not provide any tribal information for American Indians who report multiple races. The restricted data also provide a high-density sample (a 1-in-6 sample) and thus the number of cases available for analyses is quite large. To ensure respondent confidentiality when using these restricted-use data, we round our Ns to the nearest 100.

Sample selection

The Census 2000 question on race, shown in Figure 1, asked "What is person X's race? Mark one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be." We start building our sample by selecting individuals who marked "American Indian or Alaska Native," either alone or in combination with other races. Of this group, 17 per cent of single-race and 33 per cent of multiple-race American Indians did not answer the tribal affiliation question. Including all American Indians/Alaska Natives, there are about 456,600 single-race cases and about 289,000 multi-racial cases in the restricted use data from Census 2000.² Note that not all people with American Indian heritage report this as a race; many millions report it as an ancestry only and are not covered by this research.

In order to increase the likelihood that each member of our sample marked his or her own race on the census form, we restrict our analytic sample to "householders."³ There are 144,400 single-race and 100,700 multiple-race American Indian householders in the restricted-use Census 2000 data.⁴ Though it excludes many cases, this sample restriction has

²All case counts in this section represent the unweighted number of cases in the data.

³If the respondents followed the directions, the householder is listed first on the census form. Therefore, the Census Bureau gives the "householder" title to the first person listed on the form.

⁴Householders are not exactly like non-householders who otherwise fit the sample selection criteria. Among men, householders have more education, are more likely to be married, are older, and are less likely to speak an American Indian language. Among women, householders are slightly more educated, represent a wider range of marital statuses than non-householders, and are older.

three main benefits. First, in many households, one person (likely, the “householder”) fills out the census form for everyone in the home, and may project his or her own beliefs onto other household members. Thus the householder is the person most likely to be self-reporting his or her race. Second, this ensures that only one case from any particular household is analyzed; within-household correlations are very high (Liebler 2004). And third, group quarters – where the person filling out the census form may barely know the residents – are eliminated from the sample.

We impose two additional sample restrictions. We require a minimum age of 25 for sample membership to guarantee the relevance of the education and income measures. This restriction excludes 9,600 single-race and 6,200 multiple race American Indian householders. We also exclude about 1,800 single-race and 1,000 multiracial American Indian householders over age 25 whose race(s) were imputed by the Census Bureau. Races are imputed for a variety of reasons, including cases where the respondent left the race question blank or wrote an uncodable “race.” A race that has been imputed cannot be assumed to reflect the respondent's identity. All remaining American Indians were included in this study. The final sample size is 133,000 single-race cases and 93,500 multiple-race cases. We can generalize our weighted results to all householders ages 25 and older in the US in 2000 who reported American Indian as their race or as one of their races – about 698,900 and 592,000 people, respectively.

Method

We first divide the sample into: (a) single-race American Indians and (b) multiple-race American Indians. We estimate a sequence of logistic regression models to address the four hypotheses separately. We end with logistic regression models that include all variables because all hypothesized processes could be simultaneously at work.

Dependent variable: Tribal non-response

On the Census 2000 form, a write-in box immediately following the bubble for American Indian or Alaska Native race asked people to “Print name of enrolled or principal tribe” (see Figure 1). The Census Bureau coded up to two tribes for each person. Our dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether or not the person *wrote any response at all* in this section of the race question.

Independent variables

The census data include many measures related to at least one of our four primary hypotheses about tribal non-response. We display descriptive information for single-race and multiple-race American Indians in Table 1, including the approximate number of cases in the category and the percent of respondents in the category who did not report a tribe.

Age—We use a three-category measure of age: 25 to 44, 45 to 75, and older than 75. Although multiracial people in general are a young group, our multiple-race sample members are householders and are slightly older, on average, than the single-race householders. Age shows little relationship to tribal non-response except that more than 40 per cent of multiracial people in the oldest group did not report their tribe.

Gender—The bivariate differences between men's and women's tribal non-response are minimal; a slightly higher percent of female multiracial American Indian householders than males omitted their tribal information.

Education—We measure education as: (1) less than high school, (2) high school graduate or GED, (3) some college or an associate's degree, and (4) bachelor's degree or more. Compared to the single-race people in our sample, a higher proportion of multiple-race American Indians have completed college. The least educated people in both samples have relatively high tribal non-response rates while a relatively low proportion of the more educated people neglect to report their tribe.

English ability—Respondents who speak a non-English language were asked a follow-up question: “How well do you speak English?” Our bivariate measure denotes whether or not the person reported speaking English “not well” or “not at all,” as opposed to “well” or “very well.” People who speak English poorly have much higher tribal non-response rates.

Language in home—We code households according to whether or not anyone in the home speaks an American Indian language. Almost all single-race American Indians (93 per cent) who live with someone who speaks an American Indian language do report a tribal affiliation.

Ancestry—Respondents were asked “What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?” and up to two responses were provided in the data. We created four mutually exclusive categories: (1) American Indian in any part of the ancestry question, (2) West Indian or Asian Indian ancestry, but not American Indian ancestry, (3) any other ancestry response, or (4) ancestry not reported.

Most people who report American Indian in both the race and the ancestry questions also report their tribal affiliation. Conversely, many people who did not respond to the ancestry question also did not respond to the tribal affiliation question. For example, 45 per cent of multiracial people in our sample who left the ancestry question blank also left the tribal affiliation question blank.

Latino origin—About 10 per cent of people in our samples also reported that they are of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin (a bivariate measure). Relatively few single-race Latino American Indians reported a tribe.

Black/African-American race—About 20 per cent of American Indians in our multiple-race sample also reported that they are racially black/African-American. Almost half of black-American Indians (46 per cent) left the tribal affiliation sub-question blank.

Birthplace—We coded whether a person was: (1) born in the US, (2) born in Mexico or Central/South America, or (3) born abroad elsewhere. Tribal response is much more common among those born in the US than those born anywhere else.

Living with biological family—This indicator denotes whether a person lives with at least one biological relative (a parent, grandparent, sibling, or birth child) of any race, as opposed to living alone or with any other set of people. More than half of our sample members live with a relative. This measure does not show a clear bivariate relationship to tribal non-response.

Living with other American Indians—We measure whether the respondent lives with anyone who reported American Indian race. Note that co-residence with a relative and co-residence with an American Indian have a correlation near 0.5. Sample members who live with another American Indian more commonly report their tribe compared to people who live alone or with only non-Indians.

Residence in an urban area—We utilized a Census Bureau-created indicator which designates all locations as urban or non-urban. Urban areas include all intersecting census blocks and block groups with population densities of at least 1,000 people per square mile, as well as adjacent census blocks which together house at least 50,000 people (Bureau of the Census 1999). The bulk of our sample members live in urban areas. Almost 90 per cent of single-race American Indians living outside urban areas did report their tribe.

Residence in a homeland area—We measure residence in a homeland area using a bivariate indicator created by the Census Bureau for the 2000 Census (Bureau of the Census 2002). The measure tells whether a household is in a legally⁵ or statistically⁶ defined homeland area. About one-third of single-race sample members and about 7 per cent of multiple-race sample members live in a homeland – almost all of these people reported a tribal affiliation.

Results

Survey non-response

Some single-race American Indian people did not report their tribal affiliations because of basic survey item non-response; see Table 2. Whether single-race or multiracial, people with poor English skills or very low education have substantially lower odds of reporting a tribe. Similarly, people who do not answer the ancestry question (and are perhaps predisposed to leaving all fill-in-the-blank questions empty) also have relatively low odds of reporting a tribe. Survey non-response has been demonstrated in earlier research to be more common among people living in urban areas; this bears out in our results.

As suggested by prior research, the oldest group in our multiracial sample had lower odds of reporting a tribe. However, single-race people over age 75 do not follow this pattern. Those elders who are most closely connected to their American Indian heritage may choose to

⁵Legally defined areas are: federal- and state-recognized American Indian reservations, off-reservation trust land areas, tribal subdivisions which may divide these areas, Alaska Native Regional Corporations, and Hawaiian homelands. We exclude Hawaiian homelands from our measure because we do not expect them to have an effect on American Indian identity that is parallel to the effect of an American Indian area.

⁶Statistically defined homelands are state designated (esp. Oklahoma), tribally designated, and Alaska Native village statistical areas.

identify as single-race American Indian and also to make the extra effort to report their tribal affiliation, which could counteract the propensity to leave parts of the survey blank.

Salience of American Indian tribal identity

Measures of the salience of racial and ethnic identities are powerful predictors of tribal response and non-response, as shown in Table 3. Tribal non-response is rare among people who report American Indian ancestry, who live with another American Indian, and/or who live in a census-defined homeland area. Tribal affiliation is less commonly reported by multiracial part-black American Indians; perhaps this is because of societal assumptions (Davis 1991) and limitations to genealogical research (Burroughs 2001). People born anywhere outside the US have substantially lower odds of reporting a tribe, compared to people born in the US. Their identities as immigrants and the process of adjusting to the American race system may overpower their tribal identities.

In two situations, our hypotheses are supported among single-race American Indians but not in the multiracial group. First, coresidence with a Native language speaker is associated with reporting a tribe – but only among single-race American Indians. A multiple-race American Indian who lives with a Native language speaker is actually less likely to report a tribe. Second, Latino American Indians are relatively unlikely to report a tribe, but only if they are single-race American Indian. Multiple-race American Indians who are Latino are instead among the *most* likely to report their tribal affiliation. Qualitative interviews are required to explain these results.

Genealogically-based identity

As hypothesized, we found that middle-aged people and more educated people do indeed have significantly higher odds of reporting a tribe (i.e., lower odds of tribal non-response), whether they are single-race or multiple-race; see Table 4.

Two elements of Table 4 are notable, however. First, the women in our sample do not have lower odds of tribal non-response than do the men in our sample. We attribute this result to the fact that we have restricted the sample to householders, who are traditionally men. The women in the sample, therefore, may be unusual (see footnote 4). Second, although the measures are statistically significant, they provide very poor model fit. Thus we do not consider genealogical research to be a major cause of tribal response.

Mestizo identity

We hypothesize some people are working to report a mestizo identity by reporting themselves as white (Spanish), black (African-origin slaves), and indigenous without specific tribal heritage (Miller 2004). To test for this in our analyses, we include indicators of whether the person reports Latino heritage and whether the person was born in Mexico, Central America, or South America. As in all analyses, we predict tribal non-response separately for multiple-race American Indians (for whom mestizo identity is a viable hypothesis) and single-race American Indians (to whom this hypothesis does not apply).

Our results, provided in Table 5, do not provide support for this interpretation of non-response. While we do find that multiracial Latino American Indians (whether US-born or born in Latin America) are unlikely to report a tribe, we also find that *single*-race Latino American Indians have much higher odds of tribal non-response.

Full model

In order to adjust for simultaneous effects, our final models, shown in Table 6, include all of the above measures aimed at predicting tribal non-response.

Among single-race American Indians in our sample, people with the following characteristics show high odds of tribal non-response: young or elderly adult, woman, low education, poor English skills, Latino, or living in an urban area. Those who *do* report their tribe are more likely found among single-race respondents with at least some college education, who live with another American Indian or someone who speaks an American Indian language, who report American Indian ancestry, or who live in a homeland area. Most of these results are consistent with our hypotheses related to survey non-response and salience of identity. This model has substantial power to predict which single-race American Indians in our sample did not report a tribal affiliation.

Tribal non-response among multiple-race American Indians in our sample is about twice as common as among the single-race sample. Multiple-race respondents who have high odds of *not* reporting a tribe are the oldest group, people with low education, those who did not respond to the ancestry question, people born outside the US, and those who are part-black. Multiracial American Indians with high odds of *reporting* their tribal affiliation have more education, report an American Indian ancestry, are Latino, live with another American Indian, and/or live in a homeland area. It is notable that predictors of tribal non-response are substantially less powerful for the multiple-race individuals, and also that reasons for tribal non-response are not uniformly the same for the single-race group as for the multiple-race group.

Discussion

In this research, we have sought to understand why some American Indians report no tribal (i.e., ethnic) identity. We found evidence of three main reasons that some people do not report their tribes. First, some of the tribal non-response comes from people who are generally unresponsive survey participants -- they did not answer the ancestry question, they have low educational attainment, and/or they have poor English skills. In this case, the fact that their ethnicity information is missing probably does not reflect on their ethnic identities. The Census Bureau could decrease this non-response through improved community involvement and/or advertising.

Second, some people -- specifically single-race "American Indians" with Asian Indian or West Indian ancestry -- probably did not understand the meaning of the question. Again, this is not reflective of their ethnic identities. Changes in the question format might eliminate these misunderstandings.

Third, a substantial number of tribal non-respondents have other salient racial or ethnic heritages (Latino, multiracial black, and/or foreign-born). In these cases, the missing tribal response may be indicative of a different type of ethnic identity. Tribal identity is full of detail and nuance; perhaps it cannot prevail when other identities are vying for dominance. Or it could be that family heritage information is incomplete. Or perhaps the specific tribe is simply not seen as relevant, for example, among those with mestizo identities or those whose indigenous identity is more closely related to family, clan, or place. Changes in Census advertising are unlikely to affect non-response in these situations. In fact, decreased non-response may not be a viable or appropriate goal. The American Indian community and the Census Bureau would do well to consider how these groups fit in to the political, social, and cultural groups encompassed by the term “American Indian.” Parallel reflections about Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Latinos who do not report their specific origins would also be beneficial.

We also identify common characteristics of American Indians who *do* report their tribal affiliation. Those who live in a homeland area, who live with someone who speaks an American Indian language, who report their ancestry as American Indian, and/or who are more educated are especially likely to report their tribe as well as their race. Because languages and homelands are tribe-specific and are two of our most powerful predictors of tribal response, we see evidence that direct experiences with a tribe heighten the odds of reporting tribal affiliation. All of these factors point to the importance of salience as a powerful force in identity maintenance.

Importantly, we find that single-race American Indians and multiple-race American Indians show differences in their patterns of tribal response in 2000: the models fit differently in the two groups and the primary predictive factors are different. The full set of predictors available in the data is much more effective in predicting non-response among single-race American Indians than among multiracial American Indians. Much of the non-response among single-race American Indians was from people who seemed to not understand the question (i.e., Asian Indians and West Indians who seem to have mistakenly marked the wrong category), those who lived in an urban area, and Latino American Indians. Multiple-race non-respondents were more often elderly, people with poor English skills, foreign-born respondents, and black American Indians. These differences in predictive factors underscore the importance of examining the experiences of multiracial American Indians separately from single-race American Indians, instead of analyzing them together or assuming that the same processes will be in action among both groups.

Conclusions and implications

The existence and prevalence of minorities without strong ethnic affiliation has broad implications. Even within this residentially segregated and economically oppressed minority group with hundreds of tribal governments and thousands of tribe-specific laws and policies, our results add to evidence that pan-tribal or non-tribal versions of American Indian ethnic identity may exist (c.f., Alfred 1995; Cornell 1988; Goldberg-Ambrose 1994; Nagel 1994, 1995, 1996). These nuances in ethnic group boundaries (Barth 1969; Cornell and Hartmann 2007) and racial formations (Omi and Winant 1994) beg investigation.

The missing ethnicity data for American Indians is not a small issue; one-sixth of single-race American Indians and one-third of multiple-race American Indians did not report a tribe in Census 2000. Our results have implications for theoretical understandings of ethnicity, for policies and programs, and for census methodology.

Theories and research about formation of race boundaries should take note of two of our findings. First, we find that pan-tribal identity seems to be more common among people with multiple heritages. People with ties to multiple groups have different actions and interests than those with ties to a single group, and these differences must be attended to. Second, tribal identification (or the lack thereof) seems to be as much a *result of* day-to-day actions (i.e., speaking a language or living near other culturally active American Indians) as it is a *contributor to* day-to-day actions (as is usually the focus). Thus, ethnic identity and life circumstances are inextricably related. Further research on this topic would do well to use qualitative methods.

Tribes and federal entities (e.g., the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service) use census-generated tribe-specific information to plan and implement policies. Many of the most strongly identified American Indians are among those who did report a tribe, but non-tribal people are often left out. This group is less educated, more urban, and more likely to have an additional racial or ethnic identity than other American Indians. If those who do not report tribal affiliation are also without tribal enrollment, then they are also disqualified from tribal or federal financial or service support. People who do not report a tribe due to confusion (West Indian or Asian Indian) may be excluded from policy analysis without concern.

Our work also has implications for the Census Bureau as it continues to aim for full response to all questions. Some non-response is inevitable, but selective non-response may be biasing the available tribal data. We recommend that the Census Bureau always actively encourage tribal response when advertising the census or related surveys to Native communities to minimize tribal non-response among people who know and prioritize their tribal affiliation. Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Latinos who do not report their specific origins may benefit from parallel changes to the census form and advertising strategies.⁷

As more and more people racially identify as American Indian (Passel 1997), one scholar predicts that “A Native American population comprising primarily ‘old’ Native Americans strongly attached to their tribes will change to a population dominated by ‘new’ Native American individuals who may or may not have tribal attachments or even tribal identities” (Thornton 1997:39). Our evidence lends support to this prediction and provides evidence about this new group.

⁷9.3 per cent of “Other Asians” and 32 per cent of “Other Pacific Islanders” did not report a specific group in their fill-in-the-blank area of the Census 2000 race question. 57 per cent of people who marked “other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino” did not write in a country of origin.

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6 What is Person 1's race? Mark (X) one or more boxes.

☐ White

☐ Black, African Am., or Negro

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ↘

☐ Asian Indian

☐ Chinese

☐ Filipino

☐ Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.* ↘

☐ Japanese

☐ Korean

☐ Vietnamese

☐ Native Hawaiian

☐ Guamanian or Chamorro

☐ Samoan

☐ Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.* ↘

☐ Some other race — *Print race.* ↘

Figure 1.
Census race question

Table 1

Characteristics of American Indian householders in Census 2000, by number of races and whether they reported a tribal affiliation

	Single-race AI		Multiple-race AI	
	<u>weighted total N</u>	<u>% no tribe</u>	<u>weighted total N</u>	<u>% no tribe</u>
Unweighted number of cases	133,000	14.11%	93,500	29.84%
Weighted number of cases	698,900	16.95%	592,000	30.62%
<i>Age</i>				
25 to 44 years old	356,400	17.52%	279,500	30.16%
45 to 75 years old	314,400	16.14%	282,300	30.04%
76 years old or older	28,100	18.83%	30,300	40.27%
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	415,400	16.93%	357,700	29.93%
Female	283,500	16.98%	234,300	31.68%
<i>Completed Education</i>				
12th grade or less (no degree)	194,300	20.55%	117,700	36.29%
HS graduate or GED	193,600	16.68%	144,600	30.10%
Some college or assoc. degree	221,300	14.82%	213,400	28.51%
Bachelor degree or above	89,800	14.99%	116,300	29.42%
<i>Ability to speak English</i>				
English: "very well" or "well" or only	669,800	16.74%	576,900	30.26%
English: "not well" or "not at all"	29,100	21.82%	15,100	44.47%
<i>Languages in household</i>				
AI language spoken in home	180,300	7.49%	46,900	30.06%
AI language not spoken in home	518,600	20.24%	545,100	30.67%
<i>Ancestry reports</i>				
Any Am. Ind. Anc. reported	526,800	11.76%	297,700	23.50%
West Ind. or Asian Ind. Anc	1,300	30.06%	3,300	29.60%
Any other ancestry report, not AI	88,100	37.00%	213,100	35.17%
Ancestry not reported	82,800	28.47%	78,000	45.44%
<i>Hispanic origin</i>				
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish	76,200	36.78%	57,700	33.76%
Non-Hispanic	622,700	14.52%	534,300	30.28%
<i>Birthplace</i>				
Born in US	657,900	15.71%	549,500	29.46%
Born in Mexico or Cent./S. America	33,300	39.29%	26,500	33.64%
Born abroad elsewhere	7,800	26.53%	16,000	65.44%
<i>Black or African-American race also</i>				
Multiracial part black	--	--	112,900	46.03%
Multiracial not part black	--	--	479,100	26.99%
<i>Living with biological family</i>				
Householder lives alone	147,200	19.17%	156,400	31.87%

	Single-race AI		Multiple-race AI	
	<u>weighted total N</u>	<u>% no tribe</u>	<u>weighted total N</u>	<u>% no tribe</u>
Lives with any bio. family	442,000	15.99%	322,600	30.78%
Lives with others but not bio. family	109,700	17.82%	113,000	28.45%
<i>Living with other American Indians</i>				
Lives with another Amer. Indian	496,500	14.99%	339,200	29.92%
Does not live with another Am. Ind.	202,400	21.76%	252,900	31.57%
<i>Location</i>				
In an urban/metropolitan area	430,800	21.20%	462,900	31.59%
In a suburban or non-urban area	268,100	10.13%	129,100	27.16%
In a Homeland area	238,300	6.17%	41,600	14.41%
Not in a Homeland area	460,600	22.53%	550,400	31.85%

Table 2

Logistic regression models predicting tribal non-response among single-race and multiple-race American Indians: Survey item non-response

	Single-race AI		Multiple-race AI	
	<u>odds ratio</u>	<u>z-score</u>	<u>odds ratio</u>	<u>z-score</u>
76 years old or older	0.99	<i>-0.49</i>	1.31	<i>21.75***</i>
12th grade or less (no degree)	1.46	<i>51.85***</i>	1.25	<i>30.87***</i>
English: "not well" or "not at all"	1.25	<i>14.42***</i>	1.69	<i>30.78***</i>
West Ind. or Asian Ind. Anc	1.99	<i>11.01***</i>	1.01	<i>0.21</i>
Ancestry not reported	2.17	<i>89.26***</i>	2.06	<i>91.16***</i>
In an urban/metropolitan area	2.49	<i>121.45***</i>	1.29	<i>35.96***</i>
pseudo R ²	0.0418		0.0179	
df	6		6	
weighted N	698,900		592,000	

Comparison categories are: younger than 76 years old; high school or more education; American Indian or any other ancestry reported; speaks English only or well or very well; and lives outside an urban area.

* significant at p .05

** significant at p .01

*** significant at p .001.

Table 3

Logistic regression models predicting tribal non-response among single-race and multiple-race American Indians: Salience of racial and ethnic identities

	Single-race AI		Multiple-race AI	
	odds ratio	z-score	odds ratio	z-score
Any Am. Indian ancestry reported	0.38	<i>-129.82***</i>	0.54	<i>-103.20***</i>
Lives with any bio. family	1.01	<i>0.74</i>	1.06	<i>8.37**</i>
Lives with another Amer. Indian	0.89	<i>-13.67***</i>	0.92	<i>-12.87***</i>
AI language spoken in home	0.57	<i>-53.99***</i>	1.07	<i>6.01***</i>
In a Homeland area	0.33	<i>-114.22***</i>	0.42	<i>-60.45***</i>
Hispanic/Latino	1.48	<i>37.76***</i>	0.80	<i>-20.50***</i>
Born outside the USA	1.03	<i>2.55^c</i>	1.79	<i>50.28***</i>
Multiracial part black	<i>omitted</i>		2.19	<i>112.60***</i>
pseudo R ²	0.1063		0.0484	
df	7		8	
weighted N	698,900		592,000	

Comparison categories are: only non-American Indian ancestry reported or no ancestry reported; lives alone or with only non-biological family; lives alone or with only non-American Indians; lives outside of a Homeland area; born in the USA; not racially identified as black.

* significant at p .05

** significant at p .01

*** significant at p .001.

Table 4

Logistic regression models predicting tribal non-response among single-race and multiple-race American Indians: Genealogy-based identification

	Single-race AI		Multiple-race AI	
	<u>odds ratio</u>	<u>z-score</u>	<u>odds ratio</u>	<u>z-score</u>
Female	1.00	0.43	1.09	14.72***
45 to 75 years old	0.89	-17.25***	0.95	-8.93***
Some college or assoc. degree	0.76	-38.39***	0.81	-32.88***
Bachelor degree or above	0.77	-25.08***	0.85	-20.74***
pseudo R ²	0.0032		0.0020	
df	4		4	
weighted N	698,900		592,000	

Comparison categories are: male; 25-44 or 76-110 years old; high school education or less.

* significant at p .05

** significant at p .01

*** significant at p .001.

Table 5

Logistic regression models predicting tribal non-response among single-race and multiple-race American Indians: Mestizo identity among Latino American Indians

	<u>Single-race AI</u>		<u>Multiple-race AI</u>	
	<u>odds ratio</u>	<u>z-score</u>	<u>odds ratio</u>	<u>z-score</u>
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish	2.97	108.03***	1.16	13.45***
Born in Mexico or Cent./S. America	1.44	25.59***	1.04	2.25*
pseudo R ²	0.0322		0.0004	
df	2		2	
weighted N	698,900		592,000	

Comparison categories are: Non-Hispanic/Latino/Spanish; born in USA or born abroad elsewhere.

* significant at p .05

** significant at p .01

*** significant at p .001.

Table 6

Logistic regression models predicting tribal non-response among single-race and multiple-race American Indians in 2000

	Single-race AI		Multiple-race AI	
	odds ratio	z-score	odds ratio	z-score
Age (comparison: 45-75 years old)				
25 to 44 years old	1.07	9.68***	1.03	5.50***
76 years old or older	1.14	7.45***	1.32	21.05***
Gender (comparison: Male)				
Female	1.12	16.46***	0.99	-2.24 [†]
Education (comparison: High School Graduate or GED)				
12th grade or less (no degree)	1.22	21.96***	1.18	19.05***
Some college or assoc. degree	0.78	-27.64***	0.86	-19.43***
Bachelor degree or above	0.71	-29.64***	0.83	-20.38***
English ability (comparison: English only or speaks English well or very well)				
English: "not well" or "not at all"	0.76	-14.64***	1.05	2.63**
Languages in Household				
AI language spoken in home	0.57	-54.11***	1.06	5.15***
Ancestry (comparison: any other ancestry report)				
West Ind. or Asian Ind. Ancestry	0.80	-3.53***	0.55	-14.79***
Any Am. Indian ancestry reported	0.38	-95.48***	0.62	-70.87***
Ancestry not reported	0.99	-0.49	1.66	56.52***
Other race and ethnicity reports				
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish	1.42	31.39***	0.82	-17.75***
Multiracial part black	omitted		2.32	116.92***
Birthplace (comparison: Born in the USA)				
Born outside the USA	1.02	1.37	1.85	48.04***
Coresidence				
Lives with any bio. family	1.00	-0.50	1.08	11.52***
Lives with another Amer. Indian	0.87	-15.65***	0.91	-14.35***
Location of household				
In an urban/metropolitan area	1.19	20.11***	0.98	-2.36 [†]
In a Homeland area	0.33	-102.81***	0.38	-65.51***
pseudo R ²	0.1132		0.0584	
df	17		18	
weighted N	698,900		592,000	

* significant at p .05

** significant at p .01

*** significant at p .001.