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An Ethnographic Study about the Lived Experiences of Transracial Adoption from a Haudenosaunee Adult Adoptee Perspective

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Abstract

Promoting transracial adoptions became common in attempting to assimilate American Indians into European American culture. These adoptions were authorized by the United States Government through the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act. This research focused on how American Indian transracial adoptees developed a Haudenosaunee cultural identity after being adopted by a European American family. The ethnographic study was conducted with Haudenosaunee adult adoptees to explore their lived experiences. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to guide the conversation about the degree to which each participant developed a cultural identity as a Haudenosaunee. Qualitative methods were used for data analysis. The study discovered four themes which were: traumatic beginnings, relationships, identity development, and cultural transcendence. These themes validate the Haudenosaunee adoptee's life experiences. A result of this study a policy change for Indian Child Services Welfare Act (ICWA) is recommended. Also in the field of social work further cultural competence training is recommended especially those involved with transracial adoptions. Lastly, the need for more research about this topic needs to continue to keep expanding the knowledge of how indigenous communities have demonstrated cultural resiliency.

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An Ethnographic Study about the Lived Experiences of Transracial Adoption from a
Haudenosaunee Adult Adoptee Perspective

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
EdD in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my daughter, Mackenzie Mae Lyman, who has loved me unconditionally throughout this doctoral journey. She has demonstrated patience that at times she was going to rely on just me as a single mother to support her. She knew from the beginning that the doctorate was going to impact weekends of my attending her school events and Irish dance fests. When I was doubting my ability to complete this degree, she motivated me to not give up on my dreams.

I also dedicate this to my parents, Joseph Lyman and Louella (George) Lyman. I am thankful for their patience, understanding, and unwavering love. With your support, I have been able to obtain my dream of a doctorate, and Mackenzie has been able to attend her school events, Irish dance competitions, and Irish dance outs performances.

To Kimberly Lyman and Jennifer Lyman, my sisters, I appreciate all the love and support you gave me while I was pursuing my dream. Steven Wright, my brother-in-law, has given me the older brother love and support. Katie, my niece, inspired me and I know you will accomplish your dreams because your family will be there to support you.

To the Extraordinary Eighteen, Cohort #3 at Onondaga County Community College, I believe everything happens for a purpose and to have all of you on this journey was amazing. It was a pleasure having such a fun and insightful group to explore the world of education. We had fun, but stayed on task, and always celebrated accomplishments. I have learned from all of you. I will miss the weekends we have spent together over the last two years. I have 17 colleagues who have made a difference in my life.

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Finally, I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my deceased grandmother, Charlotte Jimmerson, Beaver Clan mother. I wish you were physically here to see what I have accomplished, but I believe you have been giving support and

messages to not give up on my dreams. You are missed every day but I am teaching what you taught me to Mackenzie.

Mackenzie is being taught our ancestors shaped us to defy the odds, and because of them, we know to never give up on our dreams.

Biographical Sketch

Tricia J. Lyman is currently a family counselor at Huntington Family Center, Inc. Ms. Lyman attended the following colleges: Cazenovia College, Cazenovia, NY from 1994-1998, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Human Service in 1993; Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, from 2009-2012, graduating with a Masters in Social Work in 2012 and a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Conflict Resolution from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in 2012. She entered the St. John Fisher College EdD Program in Executive Leadership in 2015 where she pursued her research in Haudenosaunee Transracial Adoption under the direction of Dr. Kimberly Vander Linden and Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, receiving the EdD degree in 2017. Tricia Lyman can be contacted through email at tjl02376@sjfc.edu.

Abstract

Promoting transracial adoptions became common in attempting to assimilate American Indians into European American culture. These adoptions were authorized by the United States Government through the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act. This research focused on how American Indian transracial adoptees developed a Haudenosaunee cultural identity after being adopted by a European American family. The ethnographic study was conducted with Haudenosaunee adult adoptees to explore their lived experiences. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to guide the conversation about the degree to which each participant developed a cultural identity as a Haudenosaunee. Qualitative methods were used for data analysis. The study discovered four themes which were: traumatic beginnings, relationships, identity development, and cultural transcendence. These themes validate the Haudenosaunee adoptee's life experiences. A result of this study a policy change for Indian Child Services Welfare Act (ICWA) is recommended. Also in the field of social work further cultural competence training is recommended especially those involved with transracial adoptions. Lastly, the need for more research about this topic needs to continue to keep expanding the knowledge of how indigenous communities have demonstrated cultural resiliency.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

For over 100 years, government policies and practices have been developed and effected by various philanthropic and religious organizations and every level of government to interfere with the right for tribal groups to raise their own children (Cross, Simmons & Earle, 2000; Frondlike, 2000; Hansen & Simon, 2004; Papke, 2013). The manner in which the policies were carried out was to remove the children from their tribal families and place them in different settings, either in institutions or with unrelated families.

Efforts to assimilate American Indians into the European American culture were carried out through a sort of cultural genocide in which dress, customs, religion, language, and extended family were changed, as well as developing residential boarding schools for American Indian children in the 19th through mid-20th century (Engel, Phillips, & DellaCava, 2012; Harness, 2008; Jones, Tilden, & Gaines-Stoner, 2008; Utter, 2001). The Indian School Boarding School policy was a collaboration of the Christian churches and the federal government (Engel et al., 2012).

Throughout the mid-20th century, there were many compulsory removals from birth homes that sent American Indian children to European American foster or adoptive homes under the belief it is was in the children's best interests (Anderson, 2014; Deluzio, 2014; Jacobs, 2013; Jagodinsky, 2013; Spence, Wells, Graham, George, 2016; Stevenson, 2015). Blanchard (1977) stated that the best interests of American Indian children revolved around appreciating the people they were in the holistic context of their lives. While the early intent to mainstream American Indian children may have created

opportunities within the European-American society, it also had negative effects. The policies and practices were to suppress the American Indian culture and identity through assimilation into the European-American society (Hansen & Simon, 2004; Stevenson, 2013). Also, these children were taken away from their nuclear and extended families, which destroyed the tribal communities, a next generation (Deluzio, 2014; Hansen & Simon, 2004).

The American Indian nations' movement to protect the children led to the United States government changing these adoption policies. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 was enacted by Congress in response to the disproportionately high number of American Indian children being removed from their homes and placed in non-Native American foster care or adoptive homes. ICWA was designed to prevent the breakdown of American Indian families, to preserve tribal culture, and to ensure tribal jurisdiction to respect and strengthen tribal sovereignty. ICWA applies only to the following American Indian child custody proceedings: foster care placement, termination of parental rights, pre-adoptive placement, and adoptive placement, for members of a federally-recognized American Indian tribe or are eligible for membership in such a tribe. The ICWA requirements are intended to protect the integrity and future of tribal communities by preserving their children's cultural identity and tribal citizenship (Deluzio, 2014; Engel et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Stevenson, 2013).

However, ICWA is a recent policy change. Many older American Indian adults have experienced boarding schools and transracial adoption. These adoptees struggle with the trauma of separation from biological and extended family depending on their

ages at adoption. The struggles involve adjustments to new social, cultural, and environmental surroundings (Ellis, 2015; Harness, 2008; Hill , 2009; Park Nelson, 2014).

The term *transracial adoption* refers to adoption in which the ethnicity of the adoptive parents differs from that of the adopted child (Lee, 2003; Silverman, 1993; Sinclair, 2007; Stevenson, 2013). Whether adoption occurs domestically or internationally, transracial adoption is the most observable example of adoption due to the differences in physical appearance between child and parent (Hübinette & Arvanitakis, 2012; Lee, 2003; Newman, 2013). Thus, transracial adoption continues to be a controversial form of adoption in the United States primarily due to the higher number of European-American parents who adopt children from ethnic backgrounds different from their own (Hübinette & Arvanitakis, 2012; Lee, 2003; Leslie, Smith, Hrapczynski, & Riley, 2013; Park Nelson, 2014; Vonk, 2001). The controversy is in opposing views as to who gets to decide what is in the “best interest” of children (Fogg-Davis, 2002; Park Nelson, 2014; Raleigh, 2015).

Similar to Indigenous cultures, Creswell (2013) explained that qualitative research embodies certain assumptions and a worldview. It also encompasses the use of a theoretical lens or lenses, a conceptual framework, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to certain social or human situation or problems. The present qualitative ethnographic study is focused on the narratives of transracial adoptees from the Haudenosaunee nations. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is also known as the Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy (George-Kanentiio, 2000) whose nations were Seneca, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Tuscarora, and Cayuga, mostly from the New York State area. Today, the nations are comprised of

one settlement, two territories, and six reservations (National Museum of the American Indian, 2009). The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is part of the federally recognized groups or nations, which now number 565 (National Conference of State Legislators, 2015).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy was founded around 909 A.D. according to tribal anecdotal history (Rossen, 2015). Haudenosaunee can be translated as “the people of the Long House.” In this sovereign confederacy preside 50 clan mothers and 50 chiefs, or sachems (Lyons, 1992; Mann, 2005). Men and women are held as equals in their gender roles (Wagner, 2001). Both male and female leaders used consensus to make their decisions, according to the Great Law of Peace (Mann, 2005). The Thanksgiving Address is used to open formally all meetings in the Great Law of Peace (Mann, 2005; Mohawk, 1996).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy passes property, nationhood, and clan identity matrilineally (Venables, 2004; Waterman & Lindley, 2013). The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is a high context culture that values the group over the individual (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). Decision-making as a cultural norm is called the Haudenosaunee Seventh Generation Philosophy, in which all people must consider how their decisions will affect many generations into the future (Mann, 2005). The seventh-generation philosophy shapes the Haudenosaunee world view and how it differs greatly from European-American society (Mann, 2005).

The Constitution of the Iroquois Nation explains “seventh generation” philosophy as follows:

The thickness of your skin shall be seven spans — which is to say that you shall be proof against anger, offensive actions and criticism. Your heart shall be filled with peace and good will and your mind filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the Confederacy. With endless patience, you shall carry out your duty and your firmness shall be tempered with tenderness for your people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodgement in your mind and all your words and actions shall be marked with calm deliberation. In all of your deliberations in the Confederate Council, in your efforts at law making, in all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast into oblivion. Cast not over your shoulder behind you the warnings of the nephews and nieces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law which is just and right. Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground — the unborn of the future Nation. (Murphy, 2001, p. 6)

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy's seventh generation principle is especially significant regarding children, who are the future of their people.

Arden and Wall (1990) further clarified this tenet: "With every decision we make, we always keep in mind the seventh generation to come. It's our job to see that the people coming ahead, the generations still unborn, have a world no worse than ours—and hopefully, better" (p. 72). Over the past seven generations, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy traditional family structure has been weakened by a history of United States

federal policies that did not understand or recognize the value of how American Indians raised American Indian children (Johansen & Mann, 2000).

Fischler (1985) noted that in American Indian tribal cultures, the child is highly valued and occupies a central place within the family. The traditional American Indian family ideally includes a broad network of grandparents, aunts, and uncles, all of whom participate in the important task of raising a child. When children cannot be cared for by the biological parents, the extended family steps in to protect the children. In current day society, for many American Indian families, the extended family has broken down and traditional child-rearing practices are no longer operational (EchoHawk, 2001). Thus, many children have been removed from their birth homes and communities, which have severed the children's familial ties with their parents, siblings, and extended family and kinship networks.

Problem Statement

The losses experienced by American Indian transracial adoptees have been conceptualized as a collective grief (Cuthbert & Quartly, 2013; Lejnawearer, 2013; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). American Indians transracial adoptees experience loss from being separated from biological and extended family networks depending on their age at their adoption as well as from adjustment difficulties within new social, cultural, and environmental contexts (Cuthbert & Quartly, 2013; Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009; Lee, 2003; Lejnawearer, 2013; Perry, 2014; Raleigh, 2015). The American Indian transracial adoptees' grief issues are related to the loss of familial, spiritual, and cultural connections (Cuthbert & Quartly, 2013; Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009; Lee, 2003; Lejnawearer, 2013). Also, issues arise related to developing a

sense of identity and belonging as the adoptees try to fit into and find acceptance in two different worlds (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009; Lee, 2003).

A gap exists in the literature on the lived experiences of adult American Indian adoptees that were removed from their familiar and environmental contexts and reared in European American families and communities. This study addressed the lack of information in the literature available on culture resilience and identity formation across the life span for American Indian adults who were transracially adopted as children (Baden, Treweeke, & Ahluwalia, 2012; Ellis, 2015; Hubinette & Arvanitaki, 2012; Ryant, 1984). Further, there is a lack of knowledge about how these adults demonstrated culture resilience and development of identity formation as Haudenosaunee in later - years (Ahluwalia, 2012; Baden, Treweeke, & Ellis, 2015; Harness, 2008; Sinclair, 2007; Spence, Wells, Graham, & George, 2016). This study acknowledged and validated Haudenosaunee adoptees' life experiences and allowed for the collection of rich and detailed information from the perspectives of this group.

Theoretical Rationale

This qualitative ethnographic study uses a theoretical framework of cultural resilience. Strand and Peacock (2003) defined cultural resilience for American Indians as the incorporation of traditional practices and ways of thinking to overcome oppression and other negative obstacles such a population faces. Crane (2010) defined cultural resilience as being able to maintain a lifestyle that fulfills human needs both morally and materially “in the face of major stresses and shocks” whether economic, political, or otherwise (p. 19). While cultural resilience involves personal values and behavior, it recognizes the meaningfulness of the individual's life (Crane, 2010). HeavyRunner and

Marshall (2003) referred to American Indian cultural factors as cultural resilience and defined them as factors that support, nurture, and encourage American Indian youth, families, and communities.

Utilizing the framework of HeavyRunner and Marshall's (2003) theory of cultural resilience; the objective of this study is to explore what cultural factors are perceived as effective in assisting American Indian transracial adoptees. It can serve to verify the effectiveness of cultural resilience as culturally appropriate tools for the enhancement of storytelling among American Indian adult adoptees raised, for the most part, in a European American family and community.

Statement of Purpose

Using a theoretical framework of cultural resilience, the purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study was to explore and understand the American Indian transracial adoptees' narratives regarding their experiences being raised apart from their birth families and communities. However, adoptees are missing this oral tradition in their first years, when it matters most. Thus, American Indian transracial adoptee was enabled, through this study, to initiate an oral tradition documenting their personal life experiences. The study focused on researching the experiences of one group, the Haudenosaunee.

Research Question

This qualitative study explored transracial adoption of Haudenosaunee children placed for adoption in European-American homes. In this study, the researcher sought to understand the culture resilience and identity formation from the perspective of the adult Haudenosaunee adoptee. The research question was: How do Haudenosaunee transracial

adoptees demonstrate cultural resilience in the context of having been adopted by European American families?

Potential Significance of the Study

Most academic research about transracial adoptions focus on adoptive parents' perspectives, youth perspectives, and the long-term effects that include lower self-esteem, distorted self-concepts, and heightened stress levels of transracial adopted children. Researchers have found adoptees do recount positive and traumatic adoption experiences when they were in their teenage years and in young adulthood. It is also found that adoptees who choose to acculturate to their birth culture find needed belonging and cultural validation. The researcher conducting this study particularly sought to discover and understand cultural resilience and understand how it was formed during the lives of American Indian older adults who had been raised in non-biological households. Applying a qualitative approach, the study provided in-depth information to assist American Indian communities addressing the child welfare system and strive for American Indian children to remain with their families of origin.

Definitions of Terms

Adoption: The act by which an adult formally becomes the guardian of a child and incurs the rights and responsibilities of a parent.

American Indian/Alaskan Native: According to the United States Department of Justice (2014): American Indians are those are federally recognized as Indians and who have some degree of Indian ancestry. There is no one criterion, whether tribal or governmental that gives individuals American Indian identity. Criteria differ depending on the government agency deciding if one is eligible for services or programs.

Clan mothers: Clan mothers inherit their status and are responsible for their clan's interests and well-being. The clan mother is the namer of children and is able to remove a sachem as well as appoint him and put him into office (Porter, 2008).

Cultural Sovereignty: Using songs, anecdotes, and spiritual beliefs, American Indians transfer knowledge of their traditional cultures (Tsosie, 2010).

Culture: Culture comprises passed down concepts expressed symbolically to transmit concepts to extend knowledge about what are acceptable attitudes and norms in a group context (Taylor, 1991).

Culture identity: Cultural identity is group or individual distinctiveness influenced by living as a member of particular groups or cultures (McLean, 1998).

Egalitarian: aiming for equal wealth, status for all people (Wagner, 2001).

European American: Having origins from original European ancestors makes U.S. residents or citizens European-Americans (Silverman, 1993).

Federally recognized Indian tribes or groups: A total of 566 groups or tribes are officially recognized by the United States government. Those groups are then eligible to be funded for various services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (NCSL, 2015).

Haudenosaunee: The "people of the Longhouse," which is the name the people gave themselves because of the type of longhouse dwelling they lived in prior to colonization (Zinn & Damon, 1998).

Haudenosaunee Confederacy: The six nations that make up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy are as follows: the Mohawk (Kanien'kehaka) are the keepers of the eastern door and are also known as the flint people; the Oneida (Onayotekaono) are the people of the standing stone; the Onondaga (Onundagaono) are known to dwell in the hills and

keep the central fire; the Cayuga (Guyohkohnyoh) are the people of the great swamp; the Seneca (Onondowahgah) are the great hill people; they also keep the western door; and the Tuscarora (Skaruhreh) are the shirt-wearing people (NMAI, 2009).

Indians: Indians is a U.S. government word used to describe one from an American Indian Nations. Although the United States first saw the American Indian nations as sovereign, policy and power shifts changed the term to “Indian” as the norm to describe American Indians in general (United States Department of Justice, 2014).

Longhouse: Before they were colonized, Haudenosaunee homes were longhouses built from tree bark. Each longhouse is built with an eastern door, a western one, and a fire pit centered in the dwelling. Bunk beds were built on the sides (NMAI, 2009).

Opening Address (Thanksgiving Address): The Thanksgiving Address is recited orally whenever the Haudenosaunee people gather formally for ceremonies or meetings with the purpose of thanking the Creator for the gifts bestowed to the Haudenosaunee people as well as for centering on the caretaking of Mother Earth (Mann, 2005).

Reservation: Reservations are lands given back by the U.S. government for American Indian peoples to live on (Webster Dictionary, 2016).

Sovereignty: Sovereignty bestows rights to people to self-determine, self-educate, and self-govern (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. 9).

Territory: A territory is a land area that the U.S. government gave to American Indians for purposes of relocation from original lands to which they held title (Webster Dictionary, 2016).

Transracial adoption: When the ethnicity of the adoptive parents is different from that of the child (Sinclair, 2007).

Wampum: Wampum is made from the white and purple quahog clam and conch shells native to New York. The beads are strung together for oral history purposes in the form of belts or strings (Johansen, 1982).

Chapter Summary

The United States government encouraged transracial adoption of American Indian children to promote assimilation into the European-American culture during the mid-20th century. As of 2012, transracial adoptions of American Indians were being executed at the rate of 2% per year despite the research showing that it negatively impacts the lives of the adoptees (United States Department of Health & Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2016).

Chapter 2 of this study explores the review of theoretical literature about transracial adoptions. Following this review of literature, research design and methodology are discussed in Chapter 3. The results of the research are examined in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and recommendations based on the analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This section reviews the literature available on transracial adoption. Transracial adoptions can include international and domestic and for the purposes of this study American Indian adoptees. The chapter examines the various issues that affect transracial adoptees that are international, domestic, and American Indian. The reviews continue with discussions on cultural socialization and feelings by the adopted children toward their own race. Information regarding the adoptee parents' commitment levels to expose the adoptee children to their biological culture was also addressed. The adjustment of internationally and transracially adopted children and their families has been an important area of academic study, particularly in the fields of psychology and social work (Bartholet, 2005).

Cultural Identity

The challenges for American Indian adoptees are intensified because the adoptive parents may lack knowledge of the children's culture and what challenges arise when society segregates and discriminates based on race (Hill & Edwards, 2009; Song & Lee, 2009). American Indian adoptees experience confusion between having two separate cultures to learn and navigate, adding stress to the already complex process of individual identity development (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009). In addition, research has documented that individual identity development—combined with the expected additional challenges of placement in an adoptive home—is adversely affecting adoptees. Researchers have also studied how transracial adoptions negatively impact American

Indian adoptees' young adulthood and their own potential capacities as parents (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009).

The first formal documentation of transracial adoption in the United States occurred in the late 1950s with American Indian children (Harness, 2008). During that decade, adoptions of American Indian children by European-American families were encouraged by the United States Government, as an effort to mainstream the American Indian children into the dominant European-American culture. The theory behind this policy was to ensure American Indian children would have greater access to more opportunities; thus, American Indian families were looked at from a deficit point of view or European-American colonization point of view (Harness, 2008). By the 1970s, correspondingly, the adoption rate for American Indian children was 8.4 times greater than for that of non-American Indian children (Harness, 2008).

The most seminal study on transracial adoption was done by Fanshel (1972) regarding the American Indian Adoption Project from 1958 through 1967. There were many families during this time who had adopted American Indian children through this project. Fanshel revealed that most of the adopters and adoptees made good adjustments. This descriptive study involved five series of interviews over 5 years. Several of the children in the study were less than 2 years of age when they were adopted but had not reached adolescence at the end of the study (Fanshel, 1972). There was a complete absence of regular observations of the adoptees either by clinicians or researchers. Both adoptive parents from each family were interviewed together in the first interview, which reviewed the context of the adoptions and how the adoptive parents saw their children's

Native ancestry. Also explored was how the children adjusted to their new circumstances (Fanshel, 1972).

Adoptive mothers alone took part in the second interview. Its purpose was to keep track of the children's problems, development, behaviors, degree of security, disposition of child-rearing disposition, and how they got along and interacted with other family members in the new placements. The second interview also focused on how the mothers saw their adopted children as well as more about the family, lifestyle, child, reactions of the surrounding community, and political and social points of view (Fanshel, 1972).

Like the second interview, the third interview was conducted with only one parent—this time the fathers of the adoptees with similar questions. The last interview was like the second interview, conducted only with adoptive mothers. The topics for this interview encompassed major life events that occurred during the last year, how the adoptees were progressing developmentally and their experiences in preschool, their health, and how they got along with others. The impressions of the researcher and parental responses were turned into a child adjustment rating measure used to analyze how the children were adjusting, overall, to their adoptions (Fanshel, 1972).

As stated, some of the questions referred to how adoptive parents viewed their children's ethnicity. Fanshel (1972) found that the parents positively viewed their children's ethnic features and felt comfortable with the differences. The parents had positive attitudes overall toward their adopted children and were "delighted" with them (Fanshel, 1972, p. 339). Almost 50% of the parents were proactive in teaching their adopted children about their child's Native American heritage and encouraging their interest; they integrated this philosophy into goals for the children's future. Still, a fifth of

the parents revealed they would dismiss, to a degree, their children's ethnicity, though no one went as far as denying their Native ties (Fanshel, 1972).

Cultural socialization includes the process by which cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors are transmitted to the child, how parents address and communicate about ethnic and cultural issues, as well as how the child internalizes these messages and develops skills to function within ethnically and culturally diverse settings (Lee, 2003). For transracial adoptees, the emphasis is placed on *their* birth culture, and not the *parents'* birth culture, which is understood and carried out differently, depending on the parents' own background and beliefs about race and culture.

Lee (2003) conducted an integrative review of transracial adoptions. The purpose of the review was to address some of the cultural questions raised by the transracial adoption paradox. According to the "transracial adoption paradox" (Lee, 2003), transracial adoptees children are often treated as members of the majority cultures by family members but are treated as racial/ethnic minorities in society. Lee addressed the number of transracial adoptions in the United States, particularly international adoptions. The outcome is that cultural socialization is the process of learning about a certain culture and how to live within the culture. As Lee stated, cultural socialization is, the transmission of cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors from parents, family, friends, and community to children that foster racial and ethnic identity development, equip children with coping strategies to deal with racism and discrimination, and encourage pro-social behavior and appropriate participation in society (p. 720).

Carriere (2007) stated that one of the benefits of tribal identity is that knowledge of oneself and one's existence with others gives meaning to being part of a larger

community and of knowing oneself; connectedness enhances our sense of who we are. This perspective of tribal identity was supported by several adoptees who participated in Carriere's study. The 18 study participants stated that identity and loss were the main issues with which they struggled. Loss became the core category in the study; it was expressed to some degree by each of the adoptees and often was manifested in their health, which for this study was organized into physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

Kim, Reichwald, and Lee's (2012) study explored the ways in which transracial, transnational adoptive families discuss race and ethnicity and how these family discussions compare to self-reports from adoptive parents and adolescents regarding the level of parental engagement in cultural socialization. Thirty families participated with at least one adolescent-aged child who was adopted from South Korea. There were nine families that acknowledged racial and ethnic differences, six rejected racial and ethnic differences, and fifteen held a different of opinions with acknowledging racial and ethnical difference.

Also, the parents reported significantly greater engagement in cultural socialization compared to that revealed in adolescents' reports of parental engagement. Kim et al. (2012) encouraged parents to involve their child in decisions about the amount of socialization based on their developmental stage. Cultural activities and events look different as a child progresses through life stages.

Research documents that transracial adoptees also experience a loss of visual connectedness to the biological culture and therefore a loss of an opportunity to develop that cultural identity (Hill & Edwards, 2009; Lemon, D'Andrade, & Austin, 2005). The

transracial adoptees struggle with the fact that they do not physically look like the other members of their adoptive families (Hill & Edwards, 2009; Lemon et al., 2005). Even if they adapt well inside the family, they will always stand out outside of it.

Racial Identity

Recent research on transracial adoptions revealed that children adopted into ethnically different homes share similar experiences regardless of race or ethnicity because of being adopted. Cross (1991) examined 45 transracial adoption studies of African American racial identity conducted from 1937 to 1987. Results indicated that 36% of the studies reported a significant positive relationship between racial identity and self-esteem, while 64% of the studies reported no relationship. Thirty four of forty-five studies reviewed by Cross consisted of children and adolescents as participants. Of the 11 remaining studies with adults as participants, three studies suggested a positive relationship between racial identity and self-esteem (Cross, 1991). For those who believed that self-esteem and racial identity are inexorably linked, the results of studies on transracial adoption have been both contradictory and confusing, “with some studies claiming no overall ill effects for Black children raised by White parents and other studies suggesting possible damage and pathology” (Cross, 1991, p. 110).

In 2003, de Haymes and Simon conducted a qualitative study exploring many transracial placements and adoptions, with the goal of identifying, from the perspective of the families interviewed, the types of services that would be most useful to these placements. The researchers interviewed 20 children between the ages of 8 and 14 and their parents. De Haymes and Simon found that children in transracial adoption and foster homes felt that society forced them to choose a racial identity. The children surveyed

expressed both ambivalence and negative responses to their racial identity. The parents in the study identified areas in which they struggled with their foster or adoptive child. De Haymes and Simon used the results of the survey to illustrate the necessity of cultural competence for foster or adoptive parents.

A study done by Lee and Quintana (2005) investigated the benefits of cultural exposure for transracially adopted Korean children's development. The purpose of this study was to examine some of the benefits of cultural exposure for transracial adoptees. The results of the study found a positive relationship between cultural socialization and self-esteem, which was mediated by a feeling of belonging-ness, which was one aspect of ethnic identification among Asian-born international adoptees.

Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, and Petrill (2007) found that European American adoptive mothers' psychological connection to Asian American children was positively related to participation in cultural socialization. Specifically, when adoptive mothers of Asian transracial adoptees expressed attachment to and more strongly identified with Asian Americans, they also were more likely to engage in cultural socialization practices. It is possible that when parents feel connected to the child's race and birth culture, they are more likely to seek out opportunities to integrate these elements into their families. This could also mean that participation in cultural socialization techniques, possibly both before and after adoption, helps produce feelings of connection and identification with that culture. It seems that cultural socialization practices and family beliefs about race and culture both contribute to how transracial adoptees experience ethnic/cultural differences and negotiate their own identity (Johnston et al., 2007).

Twenty-one transracial adoption studies underwent analysis from 1995-2007 by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute (2008). Included in this research were samples of adoptees and foster children; the adoptees were inter- and intranational. More than 50% of the research involved international transracial adoptee samples. The themes that emerged in the final analysis were the following: (a) an important skill against discrimination is for these adoptees is being able to cope with it; (b) racial/identity problems may be a struggle for transracial adoptees; and (c) it is the parents' perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes that can be a negative or positive factor in the children's development of identity and overall adjustment (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008).

For transracial American Indian adoptees, the lack of cultural identity and a dark-race inferiority complex may lead to further loss of American Indian culture, indigenous language, tribal affiliation, and extended biological family relationships (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009). When transracial American Indian adoptees reach puberty, the full impact of the lost biological cultural heritage is realized by the adoptee (harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009). In addition, feelings of isolation have grown strong because the dominant European-American society in which transracial American Indian adoptees are raised can discourage the transracial adoptee from having close relationships with fair-skinned children (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009). The transracial American Indian adoptees are not raised in isolation but in a society, that sends European-American physical images consistently through various media, which can reinforce negative self-images. Therefore, seeing such representations might lead to long-

term psychological problems for the transracial American Indian adoptee (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009).

Psychological and Behavioral Effects

In one of the most extensive longitudinal studies of the effects of transracial adoption on self-esteem, Silverman and Feigelman (1981) studied 153 European American households, 56 of which adopted African American children and 97 of which adopted European American children. The questions focused on parental judgments regarding the adopted child's overall adjustment, the frequency with which the adopted child encountered physical or emotional problems, the family's opposition to the adoption, pre-adoptive experiences of the child, and the child's age at adoption.

Silverman and Feigelman (1981) found that, after controlling for the age at which a child was adopted, there was no difference in the reported incidence of maladjustment between the two groups of children. Findings indicated African American children adopted into European American families exhibited more maladjustment problems than European American children adopted into European American families. Transracially adopted African American children were often older than comparable European American adopted children. Also, African American children were more likely to be adopted after infancy and were often exposed to hostile pre-adoptive environments, and adjustment of all adopted children declined as the children grew older. The conclusion is that the age of a child at adoption has more impact on adjustment than does transracial adoption. The implication is that transracial adoption at an early age remains a viable option for the placement of black children (Silverman & Feigelman, 1981).

In a follow-up study conducted when these children were adolescents, the same results were found (Feigelman & Silverman 1981). Feigelman and Silverman (1981) based their research on a national survey of 372 adoptive families. The researchers compared the long-term adjustments of Colombian, Korean, and African-American transracial adoptees with those of non-transracial adoption. After adoptees had been in their adoptive homes for at least 6 years, the adolescent and school-aged transracial adoptees were no more poorly adjusted than they're in-rationally adopted counterparts. This study provided additional confirmation of the benefit of transracial placement as an effective policy option for minority children.

Locust (2000) studied the impact of transracial adoption by gathering and analyzing personal testimonies of Native American adult adoptees who volunteered to participate in the study. In total, 20 personal testimonies were randomly selected for review and inclusion in the research. Through the research, Locust developed what is known as the Split Feather Syndrome to describe the psychological trauma experienced by American Indian adoptees that were raised in non-Native homes.

Findings from Locust's (2000) study revealed that nearly all the research participants who were transracially adopted ($n = 19$) experienced moderate to severe psychological problems and all the participants expressed difficulties with intimate relationships. Over half of the participants ($n = 13$) used drugs or alcohol as a way of dealing with their emotional pain and struggles with identity-related issues, over half of the participants were in remedial educational programs despite describing themselves as intellectually average or above average, and all the participants expressed negative feelings about being different from their adoptive families (Locust, 2000).

The impact of adjustment for American Indian adoptees was the subject of a study conducted by Locust (2000). The research sought personal narratives of adult adoptee volunteers and a total of 20 of these testimonies made it into the final study, selected randomly. Locust used the term *Split Feather Syndrome* to frame the context of being raised in non-Native homes; it was used to reveal their psychological trauma.

Almost all the participants in Locust's (2000) study were transracial adoptees ($n = 19$), who reported moderate to severe psychological issues; every adoptee was not able to fully engage in intimate relations. More than 50% of them ($n = 13$) were drug or alcohol users to cope with their identity problems and emotional pain. Further, more than 50% described themselves as average to above average in intelligence, yet they were still placed in remedial education in school. Finally, 100% of the participants felt negatively about their ethnic differences from their adoptive families (Locust, 2000).

Locust (2000) stressed that psychological breakdown results when people are not allowed their original culture and heritage; this denial hurts one's self esteem, self-respect, concept of self, and self-confidence. Those who undergo the Split Feather Syndrome (a) lose their identity as American Indians; (b) they feel like outsiders; (c) they lose many important things including their heritage, their language, their spirituality, their ceremonial customs, their family, and their tribal connections; (d) they learn differently in school; and (e) the mainstream culture discriminates against them (Locust, 2000).

Waldman, Weinberg, van Dulmen, and Scarr (1994) conducted the Minnesota Transracial Adoption study. The hypothesis that black and interracial children reared by European American families perform on IQ and school achievement tests as well as other adoptees because they are reared in the culture of the tests and the schools. Of the 176

adopted children, 130 were African American. The sample also included 143 biological children of the adoptive parents. Among the adoptees, 111 of them were adopted within the first year of their life and the other 65 after 12 months of age. The outcome was all the African American children that had been adopted scored above the average of the European American population for the respected region that they were in, they were also performing well in school.

In a follow-up study to the Minnesota Transracial Adoption Study, Weinberg, Waldman, van Dulmen, and Scarr (2004) interviewed 91 adoptive parents to explore various levels in psychological adjustment among same race adoptees, transracial adoptees, and their siblings, the latter of whom were not adopted and that individual differences were important for adjusting psychologically. Weinberg et al. found that the majority of adoptees had not adjusted poorly, and it was essential to take individual differences into account. They also found that the adoptees studied had a greater chance of externalizing behavior issues when contrasted to their peers from birth families.

Juffer and van Ijzendoorn (2005) reviewed studies on adoption between 1950 and 2005 with the purpose of estimating how international adoptees experienced mental health referrals and behavioral issues. Examined in this review were longitudinal studies in which each adoptee appeared only one time in the important meta-analyses. Juffer and van Ijzendoorn also included the Child Behavior Checklist and related instruments to measure behavior problems.

The outcomes found no difference in self-esteem between adoptees ($N = 10,977$) and non-adopted comparisons ($N = 33,862$) across 88 studies, which was equally true for international, domestic, and transracial adoptees. Across 18 studies including 2,198

adoptees, no differences in self-esteem were found between transracial and same-race adoptees. In contrast, in a small set of 3 studies ($N = 300$), adoptees showed higher levels of self-esteem than did non-adopted institutionalized children. The authors' findings may be explained by adoptees' resilience to overcome early adversity, supported by the large investment of adoptive families. According to the authors, adoption can be an effective intervention, leading to normative self-esteem (Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2005).

Jewell, Brown, Smith, and Thompson's (2010) study is the first one to examine the influence of caregiver race/ethnicity on youth in a residential treatment setting. The researchers hypothesized that African American children in transracial out of home placements would exhibit significantly more internalizing and externalizing behavior problems compared to either Caucasian children in transracial out of home placements, or African American or Caucasian children placed with the same race caregivers. Results provided support for hypotheses related to some youth externalizing behaviors are problem behaviors that are directed toward the external environment examples are fighting, cursing, and not following rules. While hypotheses regarding youth internalizing behaviors, will keep their problems to themselves, were not supported. The researchers recommended the need to consider the ethnicity congruence between out of home placement caregivers and youth. Additionally, the results of this study reflected the need for caregiver training in multicultural competence.

A study conducted by Samuels (2010), using a web-based survey design with a sample of 100 internationally transracial adopted Asian adolescent and young adults, focused on how feelings of marginality mediate the relationship between ethnic and racial socialization and psychological well-being among Asian adoptees. The adolescent

adoptees from an ethnic minority background different from that of their adoptive parents can face unique challenges to their psychosocial adjustment that may include, for some, a sense of marginality and low self-esteem. Samuels found that if adoptees underwent racial socialization, they felt less marginalized, which increased their self-esteem. Further, the results showed that supports for racial socialization decreased adoptees' feeling of marginality, and thereby increased their positive sense of self.

Resilience

American Indian perspectives and approach to resilience in children involve balancing the four domains of life: spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual. The medicine wheel is one of many traditional ways used to teach and convey this concept as well as the idea that all races are equal and each brings its unique gifts to the world. American Indian people believe that all their children are born with a natural capacity or resilience in these areas. Therefore, one cultural strategy is to help children to recognize when they are out of balance and to understand what caused the imbalance and how to regain it (HeavyRunner & Sebastian Morris, 1997). In the case of adopted children, however they may not have the opportunity experience this cultural strategy.

HeavyRunner and Sebastian Morris (1997) offered a variety of cultural ways to help children regain balance by teaching them the philosophy of the “good way of life” (p.62). This path includes “traditional languages, ceremonies, dances, blood/clan systems, music/arts, medicine, foods, clothing, and more” (p. 62). American Indian children’s cultural strength or resilience can also be fostered by the oral tradition of storytelling, where children learn to listen with patience and respect. Such a holistic perspective is quite different from seeing the lack of resilience as stemming from problematic bonding

with parents, particularly mothers, as Western psychological or therapeutic perspectives on children and resilience often does (Gone, 2004).

Brendron and Larson (2006) explained that resilience is a normal trait and not a rare personality trait found only in few “invulnerable” super kids. American Indian perspectives on resiliency imply that innate resolve is not the only element that constitutes resilient strength. Richardson and Wade’s (2008) research on risk and safety with children and adults who have been abused explained that children demonstrate resilience because the child resist the abused and demonstrated their strong spirit of not letting this act define who they are. The researchers saw resilience as a group project, not something that an individual does on his or her own. American Indian perspectives on belonging, spirituality, and cultural identity all play a role in fostering resiliency and supporting American Indian people to overcome oppression and harsh realities, demonstrating their spirit.

International adoptees not only have to adjust to a new family, but also overcome language barriers in their path to resilience. Rakhlin et al. (2015) studied how such adoptees differed from their peers who were born in the United States to biological parents between their cognitive abilities and learning to speak English. The researchers also compared the two points from the first institutionalization to the actual adoption of children who averaged 2.4 years of age. They discovered a negative relationship between the outcomes for the children and the time in the institution. Rakhlin et al. emphasized that adoptees have the capacity for much resiliency in acquiring English. Variations in this capacity lie mostly in length of institutionalization. Rakhlin et al. also noted that the children were particularly strong in receptive and expressive language even though they

may have had negative experiences as toddlers and had to completely change one language for another.

Schofield and Beek (2014) developed further the secure base model that can be applied to children of all ages who are adoptees or in foster care. The results are secure, resilient children who feel nurtured by their families despite past trauma, abuse, and neglect. The parents or caregivers must be aware of five qualities that connect and interlock: (a) being emotionally and physically available; (b) assisting children with managing hurtful, bewildering feelings; (c) helping their children to develop self-esteem by fully accepting them; (d) expecting to be tested by the children, who often find it difficult to accept that the newly secure environment will last, but reassuring them it will; and (e) feeling that the new secure base is permanent, children will feel fully accepted both by the family and the community (Schofield & Beek, 2014).

Chapter Summary

The literature review confirmed the importance of cultural identity, racial identity, and psychological effects in supporting resiliency and well-being among American Indian children and youth adopted in a non-Native American family. Richardson and Wade (2008) defined resilience as a group project; planning resilience for children is a process that must be family led.

In summary, many of the studies on transracial adoption suggest that identity development may be fluid and developed over the life span. Also, if the adoptee's cultural socialization is understood, then there may be a clearer understanding of what promotes or hinders identity development. The issue of identity has been discussed as a prevalent

issue in cross cultural and American Indian adoption literature and is a theme to be studied.

It is important for researchers to understand how American Indian children adoptees form tribal identity. It is equally important for them to explore the impact of separation or disconnection from tribal knowledge and connection may have on American Indian children adoptees. Furthermore, the literature review exposes a gap in research about how transracial adoptions have affected American Indian adult adoptees. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology, participants, data collection, and data analysis for the current study.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

An ethnographic research design was chosen due to the researcher seeking to gain knowledge and understanding of a culture-sharing group (Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008). The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore and understand the American Indian transracial adoptees' narratives regarding their experiences being raised apart from their birth families and community. Ethnography, as a qualitative methodology, offered an opportunity to engage in an in-depth examination of a person's lived experience in a natural setting (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Kellehear, 1993; Spradley, 1979; Yeh & Inman, 2007). The ethnographical study provided a holistic insight into peoples' understanding and behaviors within a social-cultural context through observations and interviews (Reeves et al., 2008).

In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, interviews were conducted with three participants. The semi structured interviews offered an opportunity to engage in a comprehensive study of participants' racial awareness, beliefs, and attitudes (Sandelowski, 2010; Spradley, 1979). When transracial adoptees tell their personal stories, they to meaning and coherence by emphasizing important lifetime lessons, themes, experiences, and issues (Levi-Strauss, 1963). Etherington (2009) emphasized the importance of aiding people to tell their narratives; the create voices of experience and lead to authority and power. This study explored the following research question: How do Haudenosaunee transracial adoptees demonstrate cultural resilience in the context of having been adopted by European American families?

Bruner (1991) noted that stories have meaning. The transracial adoptees' narratives shape and define who they are or how they came to be who they are and the development to their biological culture identity (Bruner, 1997; Wingard & Lester 2001). Polkinghorne (1991) pointed out that identity formation is often an unconscious process and, through narration, individuals incorporate events into stories that serve to represent themselves and ultimately to answer the question. "Who am I?" In-depth interviewing, which is also known as unstructured interviewing, is often used to obtain a holistic understanding of the participant's experiences providing the opportunity for thick description on the research topic that quantitative methods do not provide (Berry, 1999; Bruner, 1991).

Research Context

The study took place with adult adoptees who reside at a Haudenosaunee Territory in New York States. The Haudenosaunee Territories are Oneida Nations and Seneca Nations.

The Oneida Indian Nation is located in Central New York. The Oneida are known as the "people of the standing stone." The Oneida Nation of Indians consists of approximately 1,000 enrolled members, about half of whom still live on territory (Oneida Indian Nation, 2016).

The Seneca Indian Nation is located in Western New York. The Seneca are known as the People of the Hill, also as the "Keeper of the Western Door," for the Seneca are the westernmost of the Haudenosaunee Territories. The Seneca Indian of Nations has a population of over 8,000 enrolled members (Seneca Nation of Indians, 2017).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy regards itself as a sovereign nation living within the United States of America population, and gaining further legal recognition of that status is a major objective of the Confederacy (Johansen & Mann, 2000). The importance of this recognition has been asserted in many ways. An important value of the Haudenosaunee people, known as the seventh-generation principle, states that in every decision, whether personal, governmental or corporate, humans must consider how it would affect our descendants seven generations into the future (Merrell, 2012).

The Haudenosaunee have been willing to adapt to the changing world. However, they have resisted efforts to substitute a European American culture for their own cultural heritage (Merrell, 2012). The placement of Haudenosaunee adoptees into homes with European-American parents is an important topic because the Haudenosaunee communities are affected by the loss of the children in reverse relationship to the seventh-generation principle (Harness, 2008).

The study was related to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which respects, recognizes, and values the inherent uniqueness of American Indian culture. Also, the researcher aligned the methodology to the Haudenosaunee culture, which is mindful to heal, strengthen, and preserve indigenous societies for the next seven generations (Harness, 2008).

Research Participants

Participants were identified through convenience sampling, and snowball sampling was used to identify Haudenosaunee adults who were adopted into European American families as children. Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are "convenient" sources of

data for the researcher (O'Leary, 2004). In snowball sampling, initial participants recruit other themselves, starting a process analogous to a snowball rolling down a hill (Everitt & Howell, 2005).

The researcher selected a sample of participants who met the criteria: (a) transracial adult adoptee and (b) identify with biological cultural heritage—Haudenosaunee. The researcher utilized a recruitment letter with general information about the study and contact information for individuals, who were interested in learning more about or participating in the study. The recruitment material was circulated via email to organizations serving American Indian adults in the Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York regions. Organizations included were the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the Seneca Nations Family & Children Services, and the Oneida Nations Family & Children Services (Appendix A). Also, as previously noted, the researcher applied snowball sampling, a recruitment technique in which research participants were asked to assist researcher in identifying other potential subjects who met the study criteria (Creswell, 2013).

This ethnographic narrative study was considerably personal, the researcher recruited only a few Haudenosaunee transracial adoptees for the study (Glesne, 2011; Howell, 2005). Small sample sizes are recommended in ethnography because much time is needed to develop and keep trust in relationships with the participants (Glesne, 2011; Howell, 2005). The study included many personal details in the interviews of three Haudenosaunee transracial adoptees.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The qualitative study used semi structured open-ended questions and ethnographic narrative interviews. They successfully summarized how each woman developed her identity in the years of her transracial adoption. Atkinson (1998) noted that people's life stories are those which they choose to relate about how they have lived. Approaching the research in such a way permitted an in-depth analysis into the influential context that aided in shaping their identities and making their experiences part of how they evolved as individuals (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

The interviews were semi structured with ample opportunities for the interviewees to freely express ideas (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 1998; Spradley, 1979; Wengraj, 2001). The conversations and responses elicited additional questions and dialogue. This structure allowed for the researcher the opportunity to cover a wide range of issues in greater depth (Hancock et al., 1998; Spradley, 1979). By allowing the participants to choose where to hold the interviews, the researcher could enhance the research participants' comfort and sense of privacy (Creswell, 2013). The interview protocol had 15 open-ended questions (Appendix C).

The interview questions addressed the broad topics of (a) transracial adoption experiences, (b) identity formation, and (c) what it means to be an American Indian. Semi structured interview questions allowed for ample details to be shared with the researcher. The researcher could ask follow-up questions such as "What did that mean to you?" "How did that make you feel?" "What was that experience like for you?" "Tell me more about that" and "What happened next?" Based on recommendations from narrative researchers, the interviewer was conscientious to not interrupt the participants to avoid

disrupting the opportunity for narratives to emerge naturally from the Haudenosaunee adult adoptee conversations (Elliot, 2005).

Although the interviews were semi structured and informal in nature, each interview began with a brief introduction, covering the purpose of the study and the role of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The researcher asked permission to record the interviews, while reiterating the fact that participants' identities would remain confidential. The names of these contacts were listed on the consent form. Using audio recording aided in accurate data gathering; it also permitted the researcher to develop detailed transcriptions of the interviews (Creswell, 2013). When the interviews were done, the researchers give a number to each one to ensure the recording's confidentiality and to manage organizing more than one recording. The researcher had those audiotapes transcribed by an independent transcriptionist who signed a confidentiality agreement (Creswell, 2013).

Participants signed the consent form and were provided a copy to keep. During the interviews, the researcher took field notes to capture participants' nonverbal gestures. She used a reflexive journal to keep note of her thoughts, personal insights, and feelings as the data collection process went on. This journal was strategically used to address researcher bias during the analysis and reporting stage of the study (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews were interpreted using Riessman's (2008) method of thematic narrative analysis. In connection to the interviews and the transcriptions, a primary analysis was initiated. Each story was protected and was not fragmented. The researcher

analyzed each interview separately. The events within each interview were organized into relevant events within the context of the research topic. The process was completed individually for each of the three interviews. Themes were analyzed with each story. Although the narratives did remain intact, it was necessary to identify boundaries within each story to capture themes. After each of the three interviews was analyzed, all the interviews were collectively analyzed to identify common themes. Distinct cases were then selected to portray broad patterns. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher remained focused on the content of the stories rather than how or why the stories were told. Riessman (2008) described language as a “resource rather than a topic of inquiry” (p. 59).

Riessman (2008) noted five levels of experiences in the narrative research:

1. Attending; the participant creates personal meaning by actively thinking about reality in new ways. The participants reflect and remember their experience. They compose their own realities.
2. Telling; the participant “re-presents” the events of an experience. The participants share the events by recounting characters, significant aspects of the event and their interpretation of the experiences. The interviewer takes part in the narrative by listening to the story and asking questions to further understand the story and ask for clarification. As the participants tell their story, they create their vision of themselves.
3. Transcribing; the participants’ stories are captured through audio recording. The analyst then creates a written text representing the conversation.

4. Analyzing; the researcher analyzes each individual transcript. Similarities are noted and a “metastory” is created by defining critical moments within narratives and making meaning out of each story. The analyst also makes decisions about form, order, and style of presentation of the narratives.
5. Reading; the final level of experiences in research in the process is reading. Drafts are commonly shared with colleagues and advisors. The research frequently incorporates this editorial feedback into the final report. The final report is the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In the present century, American Indian people are developing and presenting original traditions and historical viewpoints as they try to decolonize the mainstream narratives (Sinclair, 2004). Even now, it is not always typical for Native people to record their knowledge and traditions through the written word but instead through sharing and telling, observing and showing how they experience life (Sinclair, 2004). Still, as time goes on, some Native people are indeed using writing to fight the colonization that still exists as an American perspective (Bruyere, 1999).

Storytelling is a feature of American Indian societies in which oral tradition was the main form of transmitting and sharing knowledge with individuals and between groups. Through oral tradition, information was passed down through the generations in the form of stories and songs. One of the challenges for the researcher was listening to stories of lived experience in that the tellers decide what parts of their stories to tell and which parts to leave out (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990).

The researcher minimized personal bias by ensuring potential protective mechanisms. American Indian people and American Indian communities may have concerns the study is simply advancing research from a European American perspective (LaFromboise et al., 1990). The researcher had meetings with influential women from the Seneca, the Onondaga, and the Mohawk Nations, who ensured the Nations were represented in a respectful manner. Moreover, the researcher kept journals, both reflexive and methodological during the data collection to record any researcher bias and growing understanding of the content (Creswell, 2013).

To ensure credibility and authenticity of the data gathered through the interviews, all participants received electronic copies of their transcribed interviews. They were asked to review and make necessary changes to their interviews to reflect their personal stories (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also shared that she is a citizen of the Seneca Nations of Indians and strived to preserve the research participants' integrity and voice in this study.

Ethical Protection of Participants

In preparation for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, the researcher completed an on-line training course through St. John Fisher College. All participants were recruited after receiving Saint John Fisher IRB approval. Before conducting the interview, the researcher reviewed the consent form with the participants, stressing the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and informed the participants that they could request to stop the interview at any time and that their request would be honored. Participants were offered an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and then were asked to sign the form (Appendix B). Each participant was provided with a copy of the

signed informed consent form. Each participant was notified that the interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed, and they were provided information on confidentiality (Creswell, 2013). Again, each participant was informed she could end the interview at any time without consequences.

The researcher maintained data confidentiality and wrote notes by hand during every interview as well as kept methodological and reflexive journals. Audiotapes were stored in a locked file cabinet when she was not using them. To protect participant anonymity, the researcher took out any real names and identifying information from the transcripts during the final stage of data analysis. All study materials will be held securely for 3 years after the study's completion at the researcher's home (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used the reflexive journal as a tool in helping to understand the interpretive framework of the researcher and how beliefs and assumptions predispose and mold how data are analyzed, interpreted, and presented. The reflexive journal is a source for constructing meaning and making sense of the study (Rodwell, 1998).

Summary

This qualitative study used an ethnographical methodology to interview research participants located in two geographic areas from New York State. The ethnographic methodology offered Haudenosaunee adult transracial adoptees' opportunities to share their perspectives of their lived experience. The methodology allowed for the gathering of information from and the opportunity to give voice to this generation of adoptees, now in their early to mid-adult years, who were removed from their familial and environmental contexts and reared in European-American homes and communities.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings for this study. Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were coded, and analyzed. From there, themes were generated that categorize similar thoughts and ideas. The information collected from the interviews was used to provide answers and insight related to the research question for this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 is an overview of the adult research participants' responses about their lived experience as Haudenosaunee transracial adoptees who grew up in European American families. The individual narrative stories are shared, followed by a list of themes, which were derived from each participant's story. The cultural resilience of each participant's experience of being raised by a European American family is then described. Table 4.1 illustrates the four themes as well as the essences of each of subthemes. Participants' stories are protected as whole narratives through the multistory. Riessman (1993) cautioned narrative analysts against fracturing participants' stories. The researcher was advised to work with a single interview at a time, isolating and ordering relevant episodes into chronical biographical events. Thus, the responses are portrayed as holistic individual accounts.

Three Haudenosaunee adult transracial adoptees who were taken in by a European American family took part in this study. The participants' ages ranged from 60 to 76 years. Two participants identified themselves as citizens of the Oneida Nation, and members of the Turtle Clan, and the third participant identified herself as a citizen of the Seneca Nation and also a member of the Turtle Clan. All three participants currently live on Haudenosaunee territories within the boundaries of New York State.

Research Question

The findings are arranged to answer the question posed by this study: How do adult Haudenosaunee transracial adoptees demonstrate cultural resilience in the context of having been adopted by European American families?

Data Analysis and Findings

Narrative 1: Daisy. Daisy is a 76-year-old Oneida citizen, and a member of the Turtle clan. She shared she has four younger brothers. Daisy remembers she was age 5 when she was sent to an orphanage in Syracuse, New York. Daisy recalled the reason as a decision by family court, “because my mother was not taking care of me and my brother. I was the only girl and I’m the youngest in the family.” Daisy recalled that living with the adoptive family provided structure to her life that she had not experienced with her biological family. Daisy shared a description of her experience of living with the adoptive family: “I wasn’t beaten or anything like that, but when I was disciplined it was the worst discipline you ever had. I had to go to bed early, but it’s hard to go to sleep when you know your friends are out there having fun.”

Although the adoptive family provided structure, Daisy further explained that her adoptive family did not provide guidance or education on how to be successful or learn daily living skills to be independent. Daisy expressed that she did not know what she wanted to do when she grew up but she did find employment:

I wanted to be, when I grew up. I kind of fell into my jobs, really. I started working in my senior year of high school, and that was hard because I would get done with my schooling, and then I would have to go do my job.... It wasn’t a hard living, but it was hard because they were telling me what to do. Everything was structured and I didn’t even know how to make money, or spend money, or none of the practical things in life that you really need to learn.

Living in a prominent European American community also was a factor in her public-school education. She grew up attending primary school with European American

students in Syracuse, New York. Daisy mention the ethnicity was mostly Jewish American. For high school, she transferred to Onondaga Valley Academy, which she thought would have more American Indian students. However, after transferring, she learned that the youth of the Onondaga Nation attended the nation's school located on their territory and was part of the Lafayette Central School District.

As mentioned before, Daisy sought employment during her senior year of high school. Employment history varied from kitchen staff at Memorial Hospital to factory work at the General Electric factory. Daisy shared she attended Sidney Johnson School for vocational training. Daisy was able to learn how to be an insurance clerk claim examiner when the General Electric factory downsized.

Daisy explained that her lived experience was different with her adoptive family than when she was with her biological family. She does not have a strong connection to latter. When Daisy was allowed visits to her biological father's house, she recalls he lived on the Onondaga Nation territory with his other family. Daisy described a visit to his home when she lived in Syracuse with her adoptive family:

He came to pick me up, but there were so many kids in the car, I had to sit on the floor. To me that's not right. You love somebody you want them to be with you. My dad and I really didn't have any conversations like a normal father and a daughter would have because I was one of many, and I was more like a visitor. When he has his next family there, they were closer together because they grew up together in one group and I'm just like the outsider coming in and I was still an outsider.

Daisy shared her relationship with her biological mother was closer than her relationship with her biological father. When she was out of high school she moved from the city of Syracuse to live with her biological family at the Oneida nation: “I went to live with her [biological mother] after I got out of there [Syracuse, NY] because of my being 18 [years old] and they didn’t keep me there anymore. I had to find someplace to live.”

While living on the Oneida Nation, she met her husband, who is also a citizen of the Oneida Nation and member of the Turtle clan. Traditional Haudenosaunee people from the same clan do not marry, but Daisy revealed they learned after marriage they are distant relatives and other’s people opinions was not going to prevent them from being together. Daisy said that she and her husband lived on Route 46 in housing the Oneida Nation provided for its citizens. Her younger brother lived across the street from her in the housing. Daisy describes her relationship with her biological family as acquaintances:

We [Daisy and her husband] were there for a while and I lived across the street from my brother, and I wasn’t raised with my brothers, so I didn’t really know them. It seemed we were more like acquaintances because we were not like a family that grew up together and bonded. You know, you go over and you have a cup of coffee and visit all the time. I wasn’t close to any of my brothers probably except the youngest, Dave, because he was closest to my age but he had his own life too. So, it’s not that we hung out together or anything like that. I knew who he was. I know what he does for a living. I know who his wife is. I know who my nieces and nephews are, but it just seems like we’re apart; we’re not connected.

In 2009, Daisy was living in Syracuse with her family when she learned of the housing opportunity the Oneida Nation was offering. Before moving to the Oneida Nation, she and her son and daughter toured the apartment complex:

As soon as I took a tour of the place I said, “I want to live here” and I put down a deposit. They [the apartment manager] said, “We just don’t have a move in date.” I said, “I don’t care. I’m paying my deposit. I want to move in here.” So, when we finally had a room I brought my husband, my daughter, and my son and we all moved out here [Oneida Nation].

The move to the Oneida Nation brought to Daisy a connection of establishing a sense of who she was; she was finally feeling congruence with her cultural and social identities:

I had no exposure [Oneida culture] and when I came out here I finally arrived [to our new housing] I felt like I was finally home, you know? Because I learned so much. I learned how to do beadwork, I do photography. I can do, I make no-face dolls [cornhusk dolls]. I’ve even sold some of my stuff. Being never exposed to something like that I just felt like I was home.

Daisy said she has an interest in learning about her family genealogy. She showed the family tree scrapbook she is making for herself and intends to pass on to her daughter. She showed photos that were given to her from relatives and she obtained a copy of her parents’ and grandparents’ death certificates. She explained there is a lot to learn from the death certificates for health purposes. Daisy grew up with limited knowledge about her Haudenosaunee heritage: “I knew that I was Oneida and I knew I was from the Turtle Clan and that’s probably all I knew. That’s all I knew because I never raised around other native people.”

Further conversing with Daisy about the move back to the Oneida Nation brought a sense of belonging which differed from her experience with Christianity. She has been baptized twice; the first-time she remembered being baptized as a Baptist when she was a child. The second time she was baptized as an Episcopalian. She explained she would attend services because that was what her adoptive European American family did. Daisy explained that, since living on the Oneida Nation, she does not attend many of the ceremonies or “doings” as they are called by the elders because she wasn’t raised in the culture. However, she did participate in a naming ceremony as an adult because she was given a name as a child before she was adopted by the European American family.

An experience of acceptance as a member of the Oneida Nation was from Laurel, a neighbor from simply attending a neighborhood garage [sale]. Daisy said,

She [Laurel] she knew I was new, and she asked who I was, and I explained who I was. She said, “You want to come up to the [Oneida] culture center, come up to the elders group and have lunch with us?” She told me they were doing bead work and they’re this and that and she explained what the elders do. She said, “You got to come up there” and she said, “You’re always welcome,” so she made me feel comfortable and we got to talking. We got to be friends, but she passed away recently.

Daisy described her perspective of herself as an American Indian:

To me I’m like a flower. When I came here my buds were closed. I didn’t know much about our [Oneida] culture. I didn’t know much about anything. I lived my life around but I was closed, but then I moved out here [Oneida Nation] and my life kind of opened because I’m learning so many things about our [Oneida]

culture. The trips that we go on brings all of us elders closer together. And we come up here and we have our coffee hour. We have our beading and we share our knowledge because when I came up here I didn't even know how to bead, so they showed me and there is so much that I have learned and I'm always learning. Sometimes, I must pull back a little, because I'm going home and too tired and I say, "I got to get a break from this and just relax for a while." Because sometimes it can be a little too much.

After the interview, Daisy gave a tour of the elders' center to the researcher. The hallway has quilts hanging that were hand stitched by the elders. In the sewing room when you enter there is a wooden frame established with a quilt being hand stitched by Oneida elders. The pattern is designed with masking tape. Daisy explained there is a monthly activity calendar which includes a quilting group meeting. The second room she showed was the beading room. Also on the monthly calendar is when the group gathers for beading. However, Daisy shared she brings her supplies with her other days and works on a project while sitting in the larger community room. When back in the community room, she showed the current beading project she is working on, which she is not sure if she would feature at the Indian Village at the New York State Fair this coming August.

Narrative 2: Lilly. Lilly is a 73-year-old. She is a citizen of the Oneida Nation and a member of the Turtle clan. Her thoughts about her own life were "it has been rough, but it could have been worse." Lilly acknowledged she does not have many memories about her childhood: "I must have things blocking my mind from about 6 years old and/or even back to 7 years old, something traumatic must have happened, because I

can't remember my childhood when I was little." She has a few memories about her adoptive family but does not share them because she fears it would open emotions she has not addressed.

Lilly shared that she did remember that both her parents were alcoholics. Lilly stated her father committed suicide at age 42. She also shared that her mom died at age 44 in a trailer fire at Oneida Nation. Lilly stated she has five siblings and she and her siblings were split apart after both parents were dead.

Lilly described the transition from living life on the Oneida Nation to the European American communities was an adjustment. The following statement explains why it was different:

Indian school to a White school was hard because we weren't off the reservation that much when we were little. My parents, siblings and I never went off [Oneida Nation]. Once, in a while we'd go to the grocery store or go to town, because we didn't have electricity. We had an outhouse, we had no running water, and we had to draw water. Then to go from that environment to [have to live] off the reservation I had a difficult time with it. On the first day [of school] I got expelled for a week for fighting, the White kids because they were saying [racial] things, but it was a hard transition. I never accepted it. I just didn't like it. We had a hard time; well, all the native kids had a hard time.

Lilly also shared she does remember adjustment to living away from the Oneida Nation was not pleasant. She recalled school was not easy:

I had a boy that would come in and I had long hair, and he'd always come by and grab the back of my hair and just yank it down, and he'd say, "How you doing

there, little Indian broad?” and just yank my hair, and I said, “Cut it out” and he threw a book at me and I grabbed the book and I threw it back and when I did it hit him in the corner of the eye. So, I cut his eye open so then I got expelled for that.

Lilly shared her story as an adult who wants to be connected to one of her parents’ Nations, but it has been difficult. After growing up in a European American family, she did not know which community to reach out to: “We didn’t know because my mother was Mohawk and my dad was Oneida. We were stuck in between tribes.” [The Bureau of Indian Affairs governments have different rules for establishing citizenship. The Mohawk Nation establishes citizenship based on the biological father. The Oneida nation establishes citizenship based on the biological mother. Technically, neither nation offers citizenship.]

Lilly explained how her limited experience with her biological father contributed to her plan for a for career in nursing. Lilly said that in addition to her father’s alcoholism, he was also diagnosed as bipolar and schizophrenic. Lilly recalled that her father was frequently admitted to the psychiatric center because he would not take his medication. Lilly remembered that she was 19 years old and was admitted into a registered nurse degree program, and then her father was admitted to the hospital:

I had just bought all my stuff for nursing school, my books and my stethoscope, and my dad got sick. I had to take him back to the VA hospital but he was claustrophobic and he wouldn’t ride in a car so we had to call an ambulance and I got him to the hospital. I got him there and they said, “You can just leave him here and then come back,” and he started crying, “Don’t leave me here, don’t

leave me here. If you're going leave me here get me some cigarettes" because he was a heavy smoker and I didn't have any money, so I took all my nursing stuff back to the store and got my money back and I bought him cigarettes. So, I took them over there, and he was gone. I think I was at school or somewhere and the hospital had let him out.

On the weekend, the hospital staff was supposed to notify family when he was being let out for a weekend visit, but they did not get notification. It is her last memory of her father:

He was released and took the two younger kids down, bought all kinds of groceries, bought them brand new bikes, and took them down to the house on the reservation. He sent the kids down to my sister's and she lived in the city. He was at the house alone and he shot himself, so after that I didn't want to be a nurse anymore.

Lilly shared that alcoholism has affected her life because of her parents and her own children:

I have three sons. They are all alcoholics. My one son lives in Florida. He's 35 years old and he's in a rehab doing much better. I have one in Gowanda prison [Gowanda, New York] for DWI [driving while intoxicated]. I have one who lives here down in Oneida. They're all alcoholics, which is sad, but I say alcoholism is hereditary. I know my girls all like to drink but they don't get in trouble. I don't like to drink, but I think alcohol is so easily accessed and they like it; they like to drink. There is not much I can do about that. But that's about it.

After Lilly's father passed away, her mother moved back to the Oneida Nation with her younger siblings. Lilly recalls that her mother was in an abusive relationship [with a new partner] and had been neglecting her younger siblings: "My younger brother and sister. I went down there [to visit my mom and siblings] with my older brother, and when we went to visit we found the door was padlocked to the bedroom and there was no food in the house." Her brother kicked the door and Lilly fed her siblings. Lilly described her mother as a quiet and passive [person]. Lilly remembers saying to her mother,

Mom, your own babies here are starving and you got all this food hidden in here. These two kids here are running around house to house bumming food from people when you have all this food in here. You get money for the two kids every month and they have nothing.

Lilly shared she remembers that she was exposed to religion [Christianity] through her father's siblings because her aunts were all Seventh Day Adventists.

I remember them coming down and because there were only four of us; the two younger kids weren't born yet, but there were 4 of us and my aunts would come down there and dress us up. They'd clean us all up. They'd give us baths and dress us in dresses and take us down to the Seventh Day Adventist church. And then for us it's different because it's, we had to get cleaned up and all dressed and were not used to wearing dresses and going to church and just sitting there and listening to stuff we didn't understand, but that's what they [the aunts] did. They had all American Indians attending.

Lilly really did not understand the religion aspect of church. Lilly identified her religion is Longhouse and going by the Longhouse way. [*Haudenosaunee* means "people

of the Longhouse” and it refers to the traditional buildings they lived in and the religion they practiced.] Lilly explained she has a strong foundation and understanding of the [Haudenosaunee] culture, “like there’s certain things you can do, and there’s different vegetables that we celebrate. The whole thing is different and it’s towards Mother Earth, taking care of Mother Earth.”

Haudenosaunee ceremonies have meaning to her and that is what she chooses to practice. Lilly shared a memory she had as a youth before leaving the Oneida Nation as a child:

We used to have we called *new yay* at the new year, and when we were kids because I remember them going on wagons, the clan mothers, and they used to throw fruit and candy. We’d have our bags and we would follow the wagon. And then you’d go to everybody’s house and you’d just yell, “New yay, you nay” and everyone would come out and give a cookie or an apple. It was like Halloween, but it was celebrating a new year. That was a lot of fun and then they had, I forget what it’s called, but I remember because all the woman would come into the Longhouse. The women sit at one end and the men, and you’d have to have the Haudenosaunee that come in.

Lilly returned to the Oneida Nation in 2006, but she does not attend many [Longhouse] ceremonies because she has heard the [longhouse] is [practicing] bad medicine. Lilly stated, “The different things that they’re teaching [at the Oneida Longhouse] aren’t the right way. It’s not the ways of our people, where when they have things [ceremonies] at Onondaga, that’s where most of the Oneidas from here go down to

Onondaga [longhouse for ceremonies]. That's where they have all the big ceremonies so they [Oneidas] participate in that. But as for up here we don't go to this one [longhouse]."

Lilly is very proud of being Haudenosaunee. She teaches her children and her grandchildren the traditions. An important one is setting a plate of food for those ancestors on particular times throughout the year: "Anniversaries of my parents when they passed, on those days we usually set out a plate for them at our meal, to feed them once a year and then you put it out the next day." Her children are proud to be American Indian and are "cultural minded." Her daughters have learned to speak the language. Her oldest daughter is the program coordinator at the elder's center. Lilly shared what she does when she visits the Oneida elders' center:

I do bone work, I do feather work, and I do bead work. Any crafts, I can just about do. And if I don't know how to do something, I'll ask. I try to teach [crafts], I try to teach my girls [crafts]. There's only a few of my grandchildren that enjoy doing bead work. I have one that's very talented and she could pick it up like nothing. I taught her how to do some earrings; she picked it right up. She knows how to do that. I mean I have a few of the grandchildren that like to do crafts, and I said, "You know, it's something that I'm passing down, because I want you guys to learn how to do this, so it stays within the family." So, they'll know how to survive; I use that now. When I do, it shows I do a lot of stuff, but I try to have the kids do it. The younger ones do what I do. That way it gets passed down and they have a skill they can sell to earn money. That's what I had to do when my children were growing up, was do crafts just to buy groceries or heating oil for the kerosene heater. I try to pass that down to them.

Lilly's interview began in the sewing room where she was fixing a shirt for a friend. She explained the quilt the elders are working on would be raffled off at an Oneida Nation event. After the interview, Lilly shared the backyard of the building, [Elders' Center] which is a playground. She explained on the other side of the elders' center is the children's center. The two programs do host programs together. Lilly expressed that children are important because the elders share Haudenosaunee traditions, language, and who they are through stories, which she learned from elders.

Narrative 3: Violet. Violet is 60 years old. She is a citizen of the Seneca Nation, and a member of Turtle Clan. She revealed that she has two families. She has her adoptive family and her biological family, which she considers to be her true family. Based on where her adoptive family lived, Violet also used to identify as an urban American Indian who lived on the west side of Buffalo, New York. At the age of 5, she and her younger siblings were removed from their parents' care. Violet shared that both of her parents were alcoholics and they would leave them [Violet and her siblings] alone and abandoned. Violet remembers the neighbors called Child Protective Services (CPS), who then came and removed her siblings and her, and the children were placed in foster care until a permanent placement plan was determined.

Violet is the oldest of the four children. Violet shared that two of her younger siblings were placed in long term foster care homes and eventually returned to the mother's custody. Violet further shared that she and her middle sister were raised together. She recalled the memory of the car ride with the CPS worker and driving her brother to a different foster home because he was an infant. Violet also recalled the CPS case worker was a man and went up to the front door of the house and handed her brother

over like a sack of potatoes to the foster mother. Violet watched her brother leave from the back seat of the car and in her mind, she was screaming and crying because at age 5 she knew that her baby brother, who was removed from the car, was handed to a stranger and was no longer with her.

Violet shared she would visit with her parents separately because they were no longer together. The visits started at the family home until her mother did not appear for the scheduled visits. Then the visits were moved to the Erie County office building in downtown Buffalo, and visitation included her younger siblings. Violet said that the visitation time was the only time she could see all her siblings. She recalled at one visit when her father arrived drunk and he was just really laying into [yelling] at her brother, who was 4 months old. Violet remembers her father stated her baby brother was not going to amount to anything. Also, Violet remembers her father commenting about her brother being chunky when he was small, and so he made fun of him and her brother would cry. Violet stated, "So, we didn't have no more visitation with my father and we didn't have no more visitation with my mother either because they lost the right to visit with me and my siblings."

Violet shared that she and her sister were raised by Mr. and Mrs. Allen, who were an older couple with sons who were already adults. At the time, Violet and her sister came to live with the Allen's, their oldest son was married with children and the youngest son was in college out of state in Cincinnati, Ohio. Violet shared from the age 6 until she graduated from college she lived with that family. She moved out on her own in her 20s. She remembered seeing the bedroom for the first time. She stated, "It was weird; I remember that feeling, I remember looking in the bedroom they showed us. Mr. Allen

built this desk so we had places to work for school and we had two twin beds. It was a pretty room, so I thought at the moment that life with Mr. and Mrs. Allen was going pretty good.”

Violet then shared a deeply personal story of how wrong her belief that life would be better with Mr. and Mrs. Allen. Violet said that Mr. Allen molested both her sister and her. However, these fact leaves Violet conflicted because in many ways the Allen’s family was the only family she knew:

I remember the last time Mr. Allen tried to touch me on my breast. I was by his bedroom in the door jam and I told him, “No, you are not going to do this to me again,” and then Mr. Allen got in my face and he was brutal. He threatened to hurt my sister, and I remember crying and just sliding down that door jamb till I was lying on the floor. And he never touched me again. I don’t remember the outcome, but I remember that, just sliding down and *bam* I was sitting on the floor crying, and he never touched me again. But I don’t think he stopped touching Donna. And it is real hard to hear this stuff, but that’s what happened.

Violet learned to cope with everything in her life by drinking alcohol. Violet remembers her drinking started with peer pressure and she sought comfort from drinking:

What happened, because my coping, at the age of 14, peer pressure, being with teenagers, I would start drinking, we would hang out drinking, well it just took off with me. I liked it right away, sure I remember getting sick but that didn’t stop me. And so, from that age, and then when I was older and able to get my own apartment, I didn’t drink a lot but I began to more until I was just an alcoholic and I really took a nose dive into that and I was trying to submerge it, submerge the

abuse. And it seemed like it was working for a while but it was a too crazy way to live; it was stupid, it was insane. I was in my late 30s and I finally said I can't stand this anymore. Shit wasn't staying down there no more, and I was getting angry, and I wanted to end it. I couldn't live like that. I had a plan, I was going to jump into the Niagara Falls by Grand Island. I had a plan. AA wasn't talked about back then, like it is today, like I'm just blurting it out to people. It wasn't talked about, and it wasn't in my circle anyway, but I knew about it, because I knew that my father had become sober. My real dad had become sober. And so eventually on my path, I prayed to God, and by the time I was 39 I got sober. That is what enabled me with a clear mind to eventually find my way home here [Seneca Nation] to my people.

Violet did show her Alcohol Anonymous (AA) coin for sobriety. She smiled and discussed how proud she was to have this coin. She continued to smile about finding her way home. Violet shared her learned nothing from her public school or her adoptive parents about her American Indian heritage:

I didn't know anything about my heritage. They didn't take us. I didn't go to no powwows. I didn't see any other natives. I didn't see the Indian village at the fair, didn't see that at all. Otherwise I would have had a little awareness. And it wasn't till I got out on my own that I discovered my heritage.

Violet did not meet her extended family till later in life, at her younger sister's untimely death. It was for sad circumstances for the family gathering. Violet said,

My sister was 24 when she died and I was 26, at that moment that is when I met [my biological family], because they came to the wake and the funeral. I met my

mother's family, my mother's people and my father's people. Otherwise growing up I didn't meet them. I didn't come out here [Cattaraugus territory, Seneca Nation] and I didn't visit with my cousin. They didn't come visit [me] and grandma didn't either. And so, it was kind of nice to meet everybody, but I'll tell you I'd rather have my sister alive then meet any of them, but she was gone.

Violet has been exposed to religion and spiritual guidance has changed over the years. Her father was Catholic, and he had Violet and her siblings baptized as Catholics too. Her mother practiced Longhouse [traditional Seneca religion]. The adoptive parents [Mr. and Mrs. Allen] had Violet and her sister attend church with them:

We went to religious instructions and I would skip out with a boy, oh I was bad when I was 14. Then go home on time when religious instruction was done. I didn't really like it. I didn't understand like [why] you have to do this or [why] have to do that, because I didn't like doing [adoptive parents' religion] have to do, but I did it 'cause I was in the foster [Mr. and Mrs. Allen's] home, and I felt like I was under [their control] that fear [made me comply]. I had a fear there [in my mind of what would happen if I did not comply].

Violet shared that in her 30s she attended Protestant church services: "I went to that; I liked it because they were singing. I liked the family activity, I liked her [my sister's] family, brother-in law's family and they loved me." Violet admitted that although she likes some aspects of the Protestant religion she felt like she needed more. She said she continued her journey for spiritual guidance. Violet described the day that changed her spiritual life:

It was May 28, 1997, my first day of sobriety because I have never touched another drink [since then] and that was 20 years ago, and at that point I was wandering around aimlessly. I was looking for something but what is it? It was something spiritual I was looking for, and I didn't know what it was, and my little child self didn't remember what that was, and that's why I went to my sister's [Protestant] church. And then I said there's something else, what is it? And so, I was almost being going to go to a synagogue. I was going to be Jewish. I thought, *I'm curious about that* [Jewish religion]. I said it's going to look weird because I'm Indian. I'll just sit in the back and be quiet as a mouse and listen to see if I like this. Well, I never went to the synagogue, but I looked in the phone book and I knew where I was going to go in Buffalo. I didn't go there but what I did was I went to Lilydale [a spiritual community located in Western, New York]. I went there and I got a reading [spiritualist]. Then it was about that time that I said I'm going to go live there. And so, I did for two years. And I thought. *this is nice but this ain't it* [either]. The spiritual thing was right here with my own people, my own territory, and my own family.

Violet left Lilydale and returned to the territory. Violet explains she now attends ceremonies at the Longhouse [located on the Seneca Nation, Cattaraugus Reservation]. Violet recalls the first time she attended a ceremony:

I got back here in September of 2002, and the first ceremony was Gaiwio, and that's like late, late September around there. I remember Leon [pseudonym] taking me by hand, and he led me into the Longhouse. Other people were looking at me and I think they were thinking *who's your ma? who's your grandma?*

Once they learned who Violet's mother and grandmother were, then they [Citizens of the Seneca Nations] knew she belonged [at the Longhouse]. Violet shared that she would answer those same questions over and over about how she belonged until they got to know her.

Violet contributes by being part of the [Longhouse] ceremonies, and spiritually [she feels at home]. She does not understand the [Seneca] language; however, she understands what [ceremonies] she is participating in:

I know spirit. I think it's from my ancestors, the DNA is in me where it makes sense and whatever it is, it is good stuff. Some of the [Seneca] words I'm learning and I can recognize them [Seneca words]. But a lot of people who attend the Longhouse [ceremonies] don't know the [Seneca] language but they are still there. And I talk to my [Seneca] elders and I've asked the questions about "what's going on?" And over the years, since I have returned, I have grown up in the Longhouse [religion], some of my community didn't know, so maybe I think they still don't know, like "what dance is this?" Maybe they still don't know, but they are there [attending Longhouse ceremonies] and they love it.

Violet shared she no longer feels like an outsider to the [Seneca] community. She has been a vendor at the Erie County fair at the Indian Village [Seneca culture, and arts are celebrated at the village]. Her thoughts on that experience were thus:

I used to be on the outside looking in, now I'm on the inside looking out and that is the truth. I never would have imagined [as a child or young adult] I would be on the inside of a booth selling Native American crafts that I had made for the Indian village at the Hamburg fair.

She has also taught ceremonies to her nephew. She has explained to him about the sweet grass and why it is braided:

The grass is a gift from Mother Earth and [when] braided it is medicine. I burned it [braided sweet grass] because the smoke [by sending a message to the Creator] is the medicine and I take this eagle feather and say a prayer [to the Creator].

First, you got to smell the sweet grass, it smells so good, and then say a prayer and it goes straight to the Creator.

Violet explained this process is called smudging. She further explained she had her nephew smudge her and she smudged him. Violet plans on continuing to teach her nephew more [Longhouse] ceremonies.

Violet reflected out loud about times when her brother returned to the Seneca Nation [Cattaraugus territory]. Violet even extended an invitation to her brother to return but he did not. Violet also shared that at one point as an adult she recalls her other brother offered for her to come back to the Seneca Nations, but she declined his offer. Violet stated, "I'm like, still having that thing [opinion] like 'oh no, they [Senecas] are bad people.'" Plus, I was mad at my mother. I hated her guts. I don't know why. I just thought she couldn't take care of us, and here we are going up to this [foster] home. Sent to a home, where we were getting molested. It was bad; I just had this anger toward her.

Violet remembered when she did make the decision to visit the Cattaraugus territory that it was on memory and support from a friend. Violet stated,

How I got to the rez' [Seneca Nation, Cattaraugus territory] was my friend, Leon, who was friends with my brother. For many years before I came upon Leon, my brother would have a party at his house. One of his [Leon's] kids was born and

we would have a party and Leon would bring the corn soup. I think I ran into him about four or five times before me and Leon became friends. That's how I got here to the rez' was Leon was holding my hand to get here, which was 15 years ago. So, I was 5 years old when they took me away, and I was 45 years old when I came back here [Seneca Nation, Cattaraugus territory] on my own. It's the best thing in the world.

Lastly, Violet reflected on how the Creator works in mysterious ways. She stated, "I believe the Creator made it so when I came along Leon, he was there to hold my hand. I believe the Creator, made our paths join and this friendship is meant to be. It is a medicine thing; it is a friendship." She encourages people to connect with their Native heritage. Violet shared she is willing to help anyone, as someone was there to help her.

This chapter is organized by the one research question, four themes, and subthemes that emerged from the qualitative interviews. The themes are based on the qualitative interviews and examples for the researcher which was analyzed. Table 4.1 illustrates the summary of the themes and provides a brief description of the essence of the themes. The first theme, *traumatic beginnings*, had three subthemes regarding alcoholism, child neglect, and involvement of social service. The second theme, *relationships*, had four subthemes of being disconnected from family, being disconnected from siblings, relationships with adoptive family, and reconnecting with the community later in life. The third theme, *identity development*, had six subthemes that covered many areas: religion, good and bad aspects of education, racism, otherization, addictions, and spirituality. The fourth theme, *cultural transcendence*, involved three subthemes of finding a new sense of belonging, having new spiritual connections with the Nation, and

feeling connected to the community. The themes will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Table 4.1
Themes

Themes	Subthemes
Traumatic Beginnings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of parental supervision 2. Alcoholism 3. Experience with Child Protective Service
Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separation from siblings 2. Relationships with birth family 3. Relationships with adoptive family 4. Support from community when reconnected
Identity development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religion 2. Education (positives, negatives) 3. Racism 4. Otherized by peers and White culture 5. Personal addictions 6. Spirituality
Cultural transcendence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A discovered sense of belonging 2. Spiritual, body, mind, and soul connection experiences living on the Nation 3. Connections with the community

Summary of Results

Overarching theme 1: Traumatic beginnings. All the participants experienced traumatic events that followed from their removal from their parents' care. The participants acknowledged their biological parents were alcoholics and were not providing parental supervision of their siblings and them. One participant recalled a county judge determined her parents were not fit to raise her. Another participant recalled how two Nations would not accept her sibling and being turned away.

A third participant recalled her experience with a CPS case worker coming to her parents' home and removing her and her siblings from her parents' care as if it was happening that moment. She was moved to a temporary foster home with her two younger siblings. She and her sister were moved to an adoptive family that has one extra bedroom for them but not her brother.

Overarching theme 2: Relationships. Being adopted was not a positive experience for any of the participants. One participant blocked out her childhood memories and believes something traumatic occurred and cannot remember for protective purposes. Another participant was molested by her adoptive father and witnessed her sister being molested. That participant never confronted the adoptive parents about what she experienced but knows her sister told the adoptive mother. However, when each participant turned 18 years old, they left the adoptive families to live independently.

The participants were affected by their parent's alcoholism and have witnessed the abuse in the Nations. Two participants shared they do not drink and never did to the levels of becoming alcoholics. One participant shared how even though she is not an alcoholic, both her sons are alcoholics and how alcohol has negatively impacted their lives. She also mentioned her theory is alcoholism skips a generation but also believes that has something to do with genetics.

The participants were separated from their siblings and extended family, which made it difficult to create a bond. As an adult, a participant lived across the street from her younger brother and because they did not grow up together, there was not a relationship; instead, they were neighborly acquaintances. Another participant met her mother's extended family for the first time when an untimely death of a sibling occurred.

It was an awkward experience at the funeral home, but this encounter did not foster the participant's desire to get to know her extended family more closely. The last participant was an adult when she took on the parental role of her younger siblings living with her mother, and the mother was neglecting those children too.

Overarching theme 3: Identity development. All participants had religious experiences and were baptized as Christians. Two participants were baptized at the behest of their biological parents. One of the two was first baptized as a Baptist and a second time by her biological family as an Episcopalian. The second participant remarked about having to be cleaned up and dressed to attend a Native Seventh Day Adventist's church, which did not make sense to her. Still, she did not question her elders about why this was occurring.

Each participant had to overcome obstacles in schools. In attending primary school, each participant encountered racism. One participant shared she was a minority in her school, which was primarily a Jewish community. Another participant fought back by throwing a book at the student. She was expelled while the other student did not face any consequences. Also, the teachers did not offer any assistance. All three participants were not exposed to American Indian culture in school.

When the first participant graduated from high school, she did not attend a school of higher education because she did not know what she wanted to be. She recognized she was not prepared to be successful for independent living but pursued working in a variety of jobs. It was later in her life she obtained a certificate to be an insurance claimer.

The second participant disclosed her father was an alcoholic and was diagnosed with mental health problems. The participant recounted her father's noncompliance with a mental health treatment discouraged her plan of starting a registered nurse program.

The last participant pursued a higher education degree to move out of her adoptive family's house. She was being molested by her adoptive father and wanted to get away from him. She shared that in order to cope with her emotions of being molested and witnessing her sister being molested that she began drinking at age 14. When she was living on her own, the drinking occurred daily and in larger amounts. Even when her younger sister died, when returning home from a night of drinking, that made only a short-term sobriety impact in her life. She showed her AA coin for her sobriety and talked highly of the program.

However, a common theme among the participants was their experiences did not discourage them from reentering the community as adults. Another common theme is as adults, they connected with their spirituality. In their infant to adolescent years, they explored a variety of religions and a spiritual community before reconnecting with the Longhouse. Each of the participants understood the Longhouse religion as the piece that was missing in making her complete.

Overarching theme 4: Cultural transcendence. A strength the participants possess is who they are as Haudenosaunee. Most importantly they are very proud to be a citizen of their Nations [Seneca or Oneida]. All the participants experienced an immediate connection when they first visited their respective Nations. A participant explained that for years, people would ask who her mother and grandmother were to make a connection to who she was. Now, 15 years later, people know her as a member of

the community. All the participants have established a sense of belonging that was lacking in their lives. They have a whole spiritual wellness connection to their respective Nation.

Living in the Nation, the participants also chose to learn more about the Haudenosaunee culture. They have done so by attending ceremonies at the Longhouse and practiced ceremonies at home they were taught by elders from the community. The participants have developed a meaningful relationship with other citizens by attending events and classes at the elders' center. One participant shared how her neighbor brought her to the elders' center and that act helped her bond with other community members. The elders' center offers coffee hour and social time, as well as bus trips that bring the community together. Other activities at the elder center are programs that teach the elders traditional craft skills. Teaching these skills to the elders then allows these skills to be taught to the younger generations by the elders.

A common theme with the participants is that their choice of faith is to practice Longhouse religion, once they returned to their biological communities. Some of the participants chose to attend Longhouse ceremonies, while others chose to practice the ceremonies off their territory. However, each of the participants shared how she has taught her children, grandchildren, or nephews about the Longhouse religion along with rituals they practice currently.

Another common theme was that each found a connection to Longhouse beliefs. Two of the participants attend ceremonies that are spoken in the indigenous oral language that they do not speak. Still, they can understand what the message is being spoken. One participant commented it was her spirit that connected to the place when she stepped foot

on the Nation, and it was almost as if it had been waiting for her to return. She says she now feels whole.

Another participant who attends ceremonies at the Longhouse remarked that it was where she meets people who knew her biological mom and grandmother. The participant also shared that being a cook at the cook house where she helps prepare meals, and socializing with the women allows her to learn more about being Haudenosaunee. The participant's grandmother was a faith keeper, whom she did not get to know but has since, learning about her from other women who knew the grandmother. Each participant has learned traditional craft skills that are important to the culture such as beading, quilting, and bone work. One participant attends local and international Haudenosaunee box lacrosse games with a friend who crafts wooden lacrosse sticks. Each participant regards the game of lacrosse as an act of healing.

The last common theme is each woman admits she has had a hard life but thinks it could have been worse. They believe in the Creator, who guided their path. None of them has anger or resentment towards what have been her lived experiences but rather is at peace with her life.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the research findings. The study is briefly summarized and final conclusions are drawn of the Haudenosaunee adult adoptees' lived experiences. This research is compared to the indigenous based culture resilience theory. Implications for research and education are considered.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Prior to this study, the lived experience of a Haudenosaunee transracial adult adoptee raised by a European American family and the strength of their resilience has not been studied. The participants shared how they had the ability to overcome negative life events, the trauma of being separated from their biological families, stress, and other forms of risky behavior. They also shared how they came to reclaim their biological Haudenosaunee culture as adults, otherwise known as reculturation. This chapter includes a review of this study and discusses the implications of the findings. Additionally, recommendations are discussed along with the limitations of this study. Lastly, possible future studies are presented.

Review of the Research Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study was to explore and understand the American Indian transracial adoptee narratives regarding their experiences being raised apart from their birth families and communities. Participant selection criteria included (a) being transracial adult adoptees and (b) identifying culturally with their biological Haudenosaunee heritage. The three participants were two women from the Oneida Nation and members of the Turtle Clan and one woman from the Seneca Nation who was also a member of the Turtle Clan. Two members self-selected into the research and participated in one-on-one interviews. One member recruited the third member to participate in this research, the latter of whom was also interviewed.

This study adds to the body of knowledge, validates Haudenosaunee adoptees' life experiences, and allows for the collection of rich and detailed information from the

perspectives of this group. The findings of the study were derived from the guiding research question: How do Haudenosaunee transracial adoptees demonstrate cultural resilience in the context of having been adopted by European American families?

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data, incorporating elements related to the participants' lived experience of being removed from their birth family's care, then being raised with a European American family and their journey to reclaim and reconnect with their birth culture. The four themes which emerged were (a) *traumatic beginnings*, (b) *relationships*, (c) *identity development*, and (d) *cultural transcendence*.

Implications of Findings

A finding based on the interviews, is the participants verbalized feelings of being secure about their identities as American Indians. However, the participants still yearned to learn more about their specific Haudenosaunee culture. This finding affirms stories told by other American Indians transracial adoptees, who described their journeys of understanding and learning about their specific American Indian culture, history, and traditions (Simon & Hernandez, 2008). For many, the participants' biological families played a significant role in reclaiming their culture, once family reunification occurred (Simon & Hernandez, 2008).

Traumatic beginnings. American Indian people who are adopted into non-American Indian homes have experienced and continue to experience disconnectedness in their lives due to the modification of their environment (Carriere, 2007; Tam, 2013). Transracial adoption creates a different environment than that intended by biological creation, as was demonstrated during the three interviews conducted. The participants shared their experiences of being removed from their biological families and being raised

in European American ones. Some participants shared a traumatic event such as their biological parent(s) having a mental health diagnosis, committing suicide, and being alcoholics. A participant recalled how her biological father's mental health hospital experience and her needing money to purchase him cigarettes led her to a critical decision. She chose to return her school books and stethoscope she had bought for nursing school to try to appease her father's needs. She further shared that in her absence, her biological father was released from the hospital and then committed suicide at home, unknown to her. She had already decided that she would not be a nurse to help him. This experience left her feeling helpless and hopeless for her future.

Relationships. American Indians' approach to attachment is collective and involves the extended family so that a child has many people to support his or her attachment. An Indigenous paradigm stresses culture as embodying collectivity, community, interconnectedness, the sacred, and the spiritual, whereas the Western paradigm is more individualistic, linear, specialized, and hierarchal (Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009). The Haudenosaunee approach appreciates connectedness as it relates to extended family, cultural traditions, norms of collective care giving, and finding resources and supports within the extended family and community.

The participants shared that finding and maintaining positive relationships with other members of the Haudenosaunee Nations that their biological family originated from has helped them find a sense of belonging and true community. A common theme was each participant felt connected and supported since reconnecting with their respective Nations. The findings support researchers who have revealed a more collectivist,

contextual, cultural approach in American Indian cultures that includes extended family and community (HeavyRunner & Sebastian Morris, 1997).

Identity development. The Indigenous perspective of identity development is more appropriate than attachment theory for Indigenous children and youth but with the connectedness. According to these authors, the child's cultural connections and sense of belonging can also be nurtured through a relationship to land, Mother Earth, spirit, ceremony, and the ancestors (HeavyRunner & Sebastian Morris, 1997). Being connected to a sense of place can bring positive feelings to a child's sense of purpose and belonging.

Haudenosaunee view connectedness in a holistic way. According to HeavyRunner and Sebastian Morris (1997), the traditional American Indian family unit is the extended family, where each child has an abundance of blood and clan relatives to share the responsibility of child rearing. American Indian people's identities are connected to large numbers of people, land, space, and time (the metaphysical states). Indigenous people introduce themselves in relationship to their clan, house, band, family lineage, and Nation(s). The participants have taken notice of their surroundings. They catch sight of the beauty of reconnecting to the Nations. The participants savor the moment they could reconnect with the Nations, being aware of the world around them, and what they are feeling. Each participant has learned to balance living within two worlds. Each participant has reflected on her experience that helped her appreciate what matters to her.

These findings confirm researchers' studies of American Indian adoptees who experience confusion between having two separate cultures to learn and navigate, adding stress to the already complex process of individual identity development (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 2008; Harness, 2008; Hill & Edwards, 2009).

Cultural transcendence. The cultural identity of American Indian children and youth in care cannot be ignored; their well-being is connected to cultural healing (Tam, 2013). A benefit of connectedness is that knowledge of oneself and one's existence with others gives meaning to being part of a larger community and also of knowing oneself; connectedness enhances individuals' sense of who they are (Carriere, 2007; Tam 2013). The adoptees expressed their need for connectedness and their desire to belong to a community of others like themselves.

The participants discussed giving back. They have a connection with all four dimensions in which it is important to think of the seventh generation. They have taught the next generation the traditional crafts and ceremonies. All of them have linked to the wider community to create connections with the people around them. Lastly, the participants keep learning of their culture. Each is open to learning more about her culture, which appears to affect her confidence.

The participants' ability to develop skills and social supports promote positive adaption to the extreme circumstances of adversity. The participants have connected with the people around them. They have developed relationships with their neighbors next to them, at elders' centers, and the Longhouse. Each of the participants has invested time in developing relationships. The participants showed resiliency by building connections support which enrich their everyday lives. They are active in their culture to their level of comfort. They leave their homes to attend programs at their elders' centers and other services each Nation offers. Each participant has discovered a physical activity she enjoys and suits her level of mobility and fitness.

Also, the participants have taken notice of their surroundings. They catch sight of the beauty of reconnecting to the Haudenosaunee culture. The participants savor the moment they could reconnect with their American Indian culture, being aware of the world around them, and what they are feeling. Each participant has learned to balance living within two worlds, Haudenosaunee and European American. Each participant has reflected on her experience in how it has helped her appreciate what matters to her.

Recommendations

The researcher has several recommendations that make practical use of the findings in this study including revisions to policy, changes in the education of future social workers, and other areas for further research.

Policy Change. American Indian tribes have a lack of resources and limited institutional capacity to successfully implement the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 as single tribes (Deluzio, 2014; Engel et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Stevenson, 2013). American Indian tribes need additional funds to establish court systems to ensure the tribes maintain tribal jurisdiction in matters related to American Indian transracial adoptions. American Indian tribes should have equal access to funds to operate child welfare and family services within their jurisdiction. The funds would limit how many American Indian children would be placed in foster care and adopted by non-American Indian families, which is an effort to have the children remain under tribal jurisdiction (Deluzio, 2014; Engel et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Stevenson, 2013).

Furthermore, successful application of ICWA involves establishing tribal court systems with tribal jurisdiction over cases involving American Indian children. These children are members of the tribe or eligible for membership and reside on the

reservation. ICWA provides for concurrent state and tribal jurisdiction in cases involving eligible American Indian children who are not domiciled on the tribe's (U.S. Federal) reservation. It is not possible for American Indian tribes to exercise jurisdiction over these cases if there is not a tribal court system in place capable of handling them (Deluzio, 2014; Engel et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Stevenson, 2013).

When an American Indian tribe achieves vitality and respect as a sovereign nation, these native citizens, including children, would stand to benefit. ICWA is an essential piece of the overall federal policy of tribal self-determination, and growth in the tribal sovereignty correlates strongly with a tribe's economic growth too (Deluzio, 2014; Engel et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Stevenson, 2013). Moreover, ICWA's procedural and substantive provisions should be implemented to permit state courts to bring a multidimensional, situated interpretation to the goal of advancing the interests of individual children (Deluzio, 2014; Engel et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2008; Stevenson, 2013).

The health, safety and well-being of all children, American Indian and non-American Indian, are critical to the future stability and success of this country. Public officials at all levels of government have an interest in seeing that child welfare services are effective and culturally-competent, and that child welfare court proceedings are handled in a way that ensures that the best interest of the child is served. The implementation of ICWA is one way to see that the needs of American Indian children are met. There are several options available to state legislators to increase state compliance with the United States Federal Act and to improve outcomes for American Indian children involved in child welfare proceedings.

Education of future Social Workers. Based on the literature and this study, there is a need to have social workers engage in ongoing training about racial and cultural differences, and how to support adoptive families to reconnect with their biological culture. Greene, Watkins, McNutt, and Lopez (1998) recommend a three-part cultural competency framework: (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes, and (c) skills for culturally competent practices in transracial adoptions. Green et al. added, “To the information needed to develop an accurate understanding of the client’s life experiences and life patterns” (p. 48). Attitudes are factor related to the social worker’s self-awareness of assumptions, values, and biases that are a part of his or her own European American culture, worldviews, and understanding of the worldview of the adoptee who is a member of a different culture. Skills relate to the development to meet the needs of a culture including cross-cultural communication skills.

For social justice to occur, social workers need to know the importance of learning about the effects of race and culture of others and help the adoptive parents learn it as well. Social workers working with transracial adopted adoptees need to assist them with acquiring racial awareness, which can be defined as a person’s awareness of how the variables of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and related power status operate in one’s own and others’ lives (Green et al., 1998).

Social workers need to adapt skills and services to meet the needs of American Indian families, which is an essential aspect of child welfare practice. Social workers must understand and follow the mandates of ICWA of 1978. Having American Indian families stay with their respective American Indian tribes optimally allows American Indian youth to maintain connections to their biological families and culture.

Future research. Future research involving American Indian transracial adoptees should also take into consideration the influence of a few variables associated with adoption that may in isolation, or combination with one another, influence overall psychological and behavioral adjustment and identity formation. These variables include, but are not limited to, the participant's age at the time of adoption, the pre-adoptive history of the adoptee, gender, and the presence of biological siblings or same-race siblings in the adoptive family.

Mixed method. While there is common background to what the transracial adoptees experience, there are also unique factors that influence development, and they should also be accounted for in future research. A mixed method research methodology that can involve surveys of large groups of people in addition to in depth data would provide a richer and more complete understanding of the complexities of transracial adoption on the psychological, behavioral, and health outcomes of the adoptees.

Cultural Resilience. Additional research is needed to better understand the complexities of culture resilience formation among transracial adoptees from a clinical perspective. Such research, coupled with the literature on multi-cultural counseling, would help psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinical social workers who are providing therapeutic services and supports to transracial adoptees. With an increased understanding of the unique experiences and contextual influences on resilience development among transracial adoptees, therapeutic interventions that are culturally relevant and competent could be developed, adapted, or tailored to truly meet the needs of transracial adoptees seeking professional help related to their adoption experiences.

Community Resilience. While little is known about the outcomes for transracially adopted American Indian children throughout their adulthood, even less is known about the outcomes and experiences of the birth families and community from which the children were adopted. Future research involving American families whose children were adopted would provide a deeper understanding of the impact of the adoption policies and practices initiated by the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. The intergenerational legacy of the transracial adoption era can only be understood by gathering information from those families who were impacted by the separation. In the words of Byler (1977), "The wholesale separation of American Indian children from their families is perhaps the most tragic and destructive aspect of American Indian life today" (p. 1).

The removal of American Indian children from their familiar networks may have left many parents feeling lonely, demoralized, and even further disenfranchised from the systems that were meant to support them in their role as parents. Byler (1977) noted that "assaults on American Indian families help cause the conditions that characterize those cultures of poverty where large numbers of people feel hopeless, powerless, and unworthy" (p. 8). The transracial adoption of American Indian children severed the children's ties with their parents, siblings, and extended family and kinship networks, essentially all that was familiar to them. This phenomenon left parents, grandparents, siblings, and other members of the extended kinship network with a legacy of grief complicated by the circumstances surrounding the child being adopted to a Non-American Indian family.

In addition to examining the impacts of transracial adoption at the individual and family level, it must also be understood in terms of the loss experienced by tribal communities. Becker-Green (2009) emphasized that the removal and separation of generations of children not only has affected the lives of individuals, but has had tremendous consequences for the cohesion and well-being of entire American Indian communities. Many American Indian communities were hindered because they lost their next generation of citizens. Without a next generation, communities would not be able to pass on important cultural and spiritual teachings, traditions, and lessons.

To understand fully the impact of the transracial adoption related policies and practices, it is important to also develop research methodologies that include the voice of members of the American Indian community. While the true costs of the transracial adoption of American Indian children on their communities may never fully be known, or understood, the testimonies provided by American Indian leaders and advocacy organizations in support of the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 give some indication of the importance of American Indian children to their communities and the continued existence of American Indian life.

Limitations

Despite these strengths, the study is not without its limitations. The limitations of the study include: reluctance of participants who would participate in the study. The limitations are discussed as follows:

Reluctance of participants. When traditional European American research recruitment strategies were tried to recruit participants, the researcher received no participants at first. Instead the indigenous researcher had to use indigenous methods to

recruit individuals through existing social-familial networks and Haudenosaunee communities. The snowball sampling method resulted in three female participants, thus making it difficult to ascertain the impact of gender differences on identity exploration and formation. Further, the recruitment strategies resulted in a sample of individuals who had chosen to be reconnected with their Haudenosaunee culture or birth families and community. Transracial adoptees are not a homogenous group, and their unique cultural and environmental contexts must be taken into consideration when interpreting findings related to their experiences.

Conclusion

Transracially adopted American Indian adults exhibit a range of experiences across their lifespan that both positively and negatively contribute to their resilience formation. Some have successfully mitigated life's challenges that result from being a transracial adoptee and can develop a healthy and strong racial identity as demonstrated through the three lived experiences of transracially adopted Haudenosaunee adults who chose to reconnect with their respective nations and the strength of culture resilience. Even though each participant's transracial adoption story was unique, in combination, they provided greater insight into the complex processes and interdependent contextual factors influencing culture resilience.

Common themes across the participants' lives transcended the individual narratives. While each adoptee shared stories about her personal journey of creating a sense of self, commonalities across the stories emerged and included episodes of joy and loss, confusion and clarity, reunion and rejection, discovery and rediscovery, immersion and exclusion, denial and acceptance, and connectedness and disconnectedness. As

information about the participants' past, present and future became more apparent, additional aspects of their identities became unveiled and integrated into their sense and understanding of self.

This study gave voice on resiliency to a generation of American Indian transracial adoptees who have typically been excluded from research. Much of previous research has focused on transracial adoption and the effects it has on youth at the time of adoption and about the controversial debate that surrounds transracial adoption. Lived experience interviews provided culturally relevant information specifically about the phenomenon of Haudenosaunee transracial adoption through the lenses of the individuals involved in this study. The interviews provided an avenue to gain a richer level of insight and deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences prior to adoption, their childhood as adoptees, and as adult adoptees who returned to their Haudenosaunee culture and communities.

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Appendix A: Initial E-mail Invitation

Tricia J Lyman
Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College
315-405-3055 cell
tjl02376@sjfc.edu

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral candidate in the EdD. Program in Executive Leadership at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. I am in the process of writing my dissertation and I am planning to conduct my research during May-June of 2017.

I am reaching out to you because my study is in the area Haudenosaunee individuals who have been adopted by European-American families. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to add to previous studies about the lived experiences of American Indian transracial adoptees relating to the development of an American Indian culture identity while living in a transracial home. The purpose of this study is to understand how American Indian transracial adoptees complete the tasks of (a) conforming to the adoptive family culture, which is part of the European-American dominant culture; (b) developing an American Indian cultural identity as a person who is racially different from those who parent them, and (c) identifying the barriers that adult Haudenosaunee adoptees encountered in the process of developing their American Indian cultural identities.

My dissertation, entitled *An Ethnographic Study about the Lived Experience of Transracial Adoption from a Haudenosaunee Adult Adoptee Perspective*, is dependent on the participation of transracial Haudenosaunee adult adoptees. I am currently seeking participants in my study and I am reaching out to request your assistance as I endeavor to make a scholarly contribution to the field of cultural identity.

I am asking for a one-hour interview, at a time and location of your convenience to be scheduled within the next four weeks.

Participants' personal identity will be kept confidential throughout the study process. The name will NOT be revealed in any way. All data will be aggregated into themes and structure learned from all the participants collectively.

If you are willing to participate, please email me at my St. John Fisher address: tjl02376@sjfc.edu or call my cell (315)405-3055. Once I hear from you I will reach out to schedule an appointment with you for the interview.

Sincerely,
Tricia J. Lyman

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

St John Fisher College Informed Consent Form

Title of study: An Ethnographic Study about the Lived Experience of Transracial Adoption from a Haudenosaunee Adult Adoptee Perspective

Name of researcher: Tricia J. Lyman

Faculty Supervisor: Kim VanDerLinden, Ph.D.

Phone for further information: 315-405-3055

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to add to previous studies about the lived experiences of American Indian transracial adoptees relating to the development of an American Indian culture identity while living in a transracial home.

Place of study: Participants will be select locations

Length of participation: 1 hour

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

Risks

- There are minimal to no risks in this study.
- Participant confidentiality will be protected by removal of identifying data.

Benefits

- The results of the study will contribute to scholarship and professional practice in American Indian transracial adoption.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:

All interview transcripts, audio, and results will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed after three years. No names will be identified with comments or from participant work in any publications.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.

4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.

5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print name (Participant)

Signature

Date

Audio Tape Consent Form

I consent to being audio taped during this study

Print name (Participant)

Signature

Date

Print name (Investigator)

Signature

Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact the Health and Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study and/or if you experience any physical or emotional discomfort, you can contact Jill Rathbun by phone at 585.385.8012 or by email at: irb@sjfc.edu.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

- 1) Can you tell me about your adopted family and what it was like for you growing up?
- 2) When did you realize that you were Native American? Do you remember what it was like for you when you learned that you were Native American?
- 3) Did your adopted family introduce you to your Native culture? If yes, when and in what ways?
- 4) Do you remember learning about Native culture in school? If yes, what do you remember?
- 5) Did you have a religious upbringing? If yes, can you tell me more about your religious upbringing?
- 6) Did your adopted family introduce you to Haudenosaunee spiritual practices and beliefs? If yes, can you tell me more about how you were introduced to the practices and beliefs?
- 7) Is spirituality an important part of your life now? If yes, can you tell me more about your spirituality?
- 8) Can you tell me about how you reconnected with your biological family? What was that like?
- 9) Do you have any particularly memorable experiences or stories about reconnecting with your biological family?
- 10) Do you participate in Native cultural activities and events? If yes, can you share some specific examples?
- 11) What are some of your thoughts and feelings in terms of how you view yourself as a Native person?
- 12) Have your attitudes and values changed as a result of connecting with your biological family? If yes, can you explain?
- 13) Do you feel a part of the Native culture? If yes, please explain. Do you (*or did you*) ever feel like an “outsider?” Do you (*or did you*) ever feel conflicted about your cultural identity?
- 14) What practices, beliefs, and traditions are you (*or do you hope to*) pass down to your family members?

15) For other adoptees who might want to connect with their biological family and their Native culture, what would you share with them?