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# Relationship Between Religion & Native American Identity

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# > How Native American Identity (NAID) is formed and treated within society lacks proper Scientific Research views Native Americans as a monolithic group, despite the fact that there are 574 unique Native tribes in the U.S. alone

Background

- > Othering by American society of Native populations is a continuing attempt to induct them into
  - Native Americans are more susceptible to this induction at a young age
- Children tend to look at exterior sources when forming their identity Identity is never static
- > There are several stressors that can affect Native American Identity including: Pan tribal identity, Mixed racial-ethnic identity, Stereotypes, Harassment, Rural vs. Urban Environments
- > American Indian and Alaskan Native institutions give AI/AN youth the "opportunity to engage in cultural activities" (Brown et al., 2016)
- Native Americans who "maintain, preserve, or reclaim their cultural heritage" have better mental health and a reduced risk of committing suicide (Scheela et al., 2011)

### Objectives

- > The study aimed to understand:
  - Whether there is a relationship between religious affiliation and Native American Identity
  - If so, does the type of religion change the relationship
  - To contribute to research on Native American and Alaskan Native identity

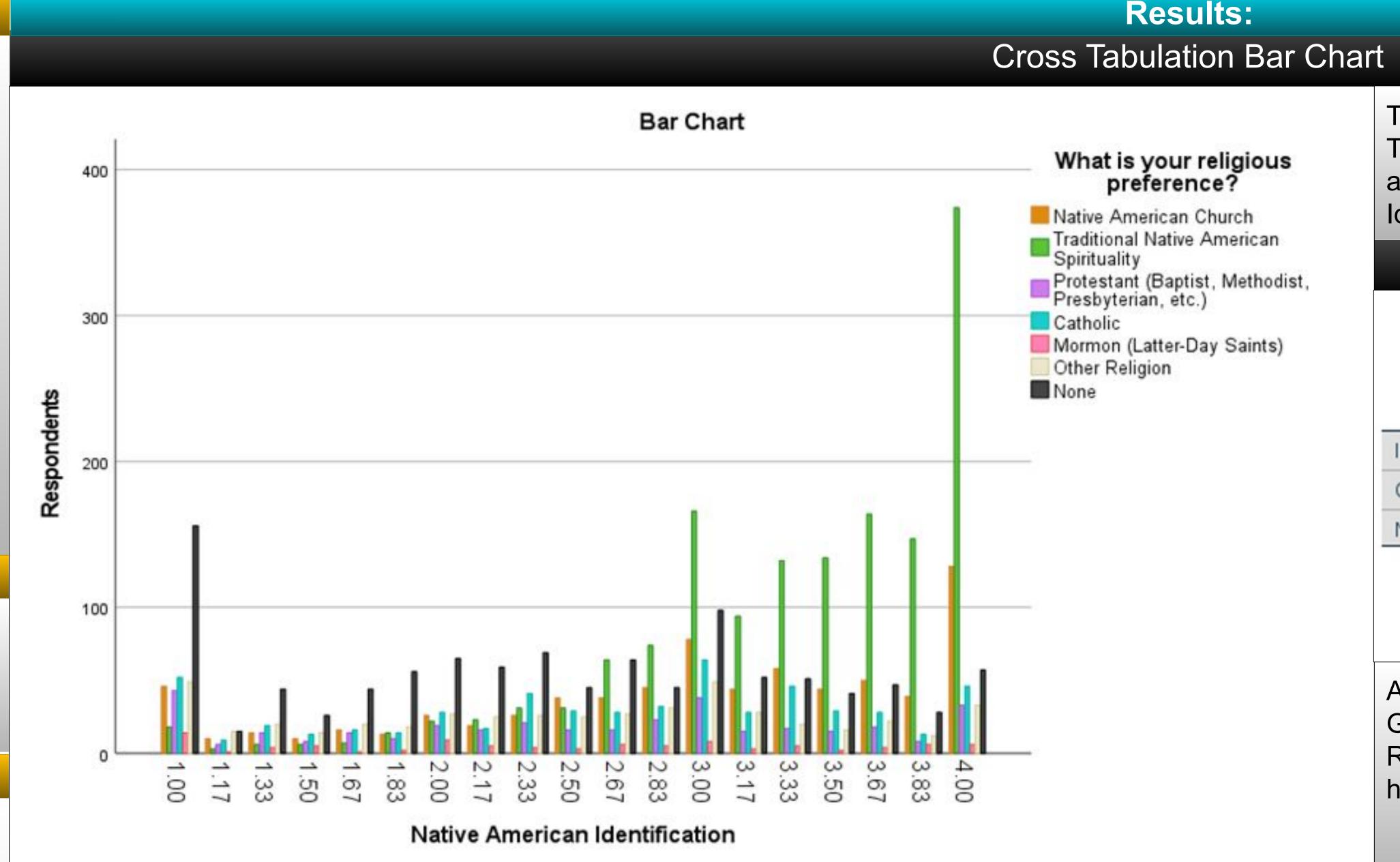
#### Methods

- Sample Characteristics:
  - American Indian Youth ages 12 to 19 that attend high school
  - 4786 Participants
- > The current study used data from Swaim and Stanley (2021) survey of American Indian youth.
- > To test the prediction, that religious affiliation has an effect on Native American Identity, a cross tabulation analysis and a Pearson's R correlation were conducted
- > To see which religions, if any, had the biggest effect on Native American Identity several simple regressions were run
- > Lastly a moderating regression was run to see if gender had a moderating effect on the relationship between religious preference and Native American Identity

larger scale to test the research hypotheses. This scale is referred to as the Native American ID Scale.

NAID =  $(Q96_1 + Q97_1 + Q98_1 + Q99_2 + Q100_2 + Q101_1)/6$  (AVERAGE).

NAID was derived from the average/mean of the answers to the questions below. Respondents had a Mormon (LDS) choice between 1 (None), 2 (Not Many), 3 (Some), 4 (A Lot). For example, if a participant answered 4 (A lot) for all six questions that person would have an average of 4 and a high level of NAID. Conversely someone who answered 1 (None) for every question would have a low NAID score.



The Coefficient tells us that if a respondent is part of

-0.313

-0.392

(insert religion) their NAID score would either be

This cross tabulation bar chart shows that there is a correlation between Traditional Native American Spirituality and high level NAID (4.00). There is also a correlation between no religious affiliation and low level Native American Identity (1.00).

#### Pearson's R Correlation

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	345	.013	-25.447	<.001°
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	335	.013	-24.563	<.001°
N of Valid Cases		4786			

- Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Several simple regressions were conducted to see which religions, if any, are good predictors

for Native American Identity. The coefficient in the data predicts whether a participant will be

The biggest predictor was Traditional Native American Spirituality, which predicted 14.5% of

Native American Identity. We can expect an indigenous teen who practices Traditional Native

The second biggest predictor is no religion, which predicted 6.10% of Native American Identity

Also worthy of note is Native American Church, which predicted .3% of Native American Identity

and on average resulted in a higher NAID score by .129. Meanwhile being Catholic, Protestan,

The simple regression also tells us that not belonging to a religion on average resulted in a

higher or lower on the Native American ID Scale based on their religious preference.

American Spirituality to have an NAID score .758 higher on the NAID scale than other

c. Based on normal approximation.

Simple Regressions

idigenous teens.

lower NAID score by .551.

or Mormon (LDS) led to lower NAID scores overall.

A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a moderate negative correlation, r = -.35. Given that there is a moderate negative correlation between NAID and Religious Affiliation, we can reject the Null Hypothesis that religious affiliation has no effect on NAID. The model is statistically significant at p < .001

This data shows us that practicing Traditional Native American Spirituality has some impact on an indigenous teens Native American Identity. This data supports the alternative hypothesis, that religious affiliation with Traditional Native American Spirituality increases NAID. Similar results were hypothesized for those that belonged to a Native American Church, since other researchers suggest that belonging to Native American Institutions helps make a person's NAID stronger. Instead Native American Church only predicted .3% of NAID, meaning that belonging to a Native American Church is not the best predictor of high level NAID.

Discussion Cont.

When it comes to the data on those that attend Protestant, Catholic, and Mormon churches, all three predicted very little NAID. These simple regression models show us that belonging to any of these churches has little impact on an indigenous teens NAID. While not belonging to a religion had a positive correlation to low level NAID. In other words, a participant who had no religious affiliation is expected to have lower levels of NAID compared to those that belong to a

The moderated regression revealed that religious preference is a significant predictor of Native American Identity by itself, but also the moderator (Gender) is also a significant predictor of Native American Identity by itself. It also revealed that gender had no significant moderating effect on the relationship between NAID and Religious Preference. Since gender is a predictor of NAID on by itself, further research may be required to examine the effect of gender on NAID.

#### Weaknesses

- I am not Native American; therefore, I lack general understanding of what it is like to be Indigenous in the United States
- Research and data lack a full understanding of Traditional Native American Spirituality and Native American Church
- Native Americans are not a monolithic group
- Data was collected sporadically when funding was available. Which means that not every question was asked each time they conducted the survey.
- There is little research on Native American populations in general.

#### Theoretical Implications

The data confirms that there is something to the theory that religious preference effects Native American Identity. This theory was based on the sociological idea that social location effects how a person sees themselves. Social location is a combination of factors that include, race, gender, age, social class, sexual orientation, ability, geographic location, and religion. This research adds to this sociological idea in a more micro way since it focuses only on the impact of religious preference on Native American Identity. However, this research could be expanded to study the impact of religious preference on one's sense of self.

#### Practical Implications

There is concern among Native American leaders that Indigenous teens lack a connection to their Native American Identity. If Native American leaders want to increase Indigenous teens connection to their Native American Identity, they may want to start marketing Traditional Native American Spirituality towards these teens. If Native Leaders were solely using this research, they would want to promote Traditional Native American Spirituality since it predicts 14.5% of Native American Identity in this data set. It is by far the religion with the highest impact on Native American Identity among this research. Following the same mindset, the leaders would probably want to discourage not belonging to a religion, since it is connected to low levels of Native American Identity.

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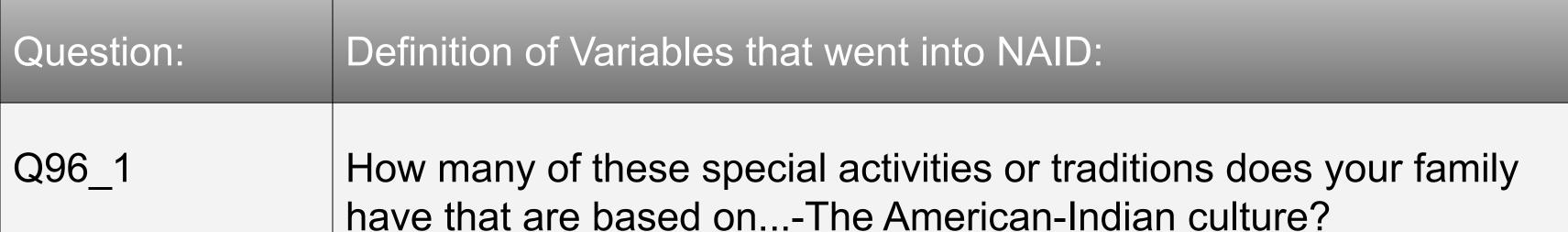
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# Native American Identity (NAID) is a compilation of individual questions used to create a Native American The formula for calculating NAID is:



Q97\_1 When you are an adult and have your own family, will you do special things together or have special traditions that are based on...-The American-Indian culture?

Q98\_1 Does your family live by or follow...-The American-Indian way of life?

Q99\_2 Do YOU live by or follow...-The American-Indian way of life? Q100\_2 Is your family a success in...-The American-Indian way of life?

Q101\_1 When you are an adult, will YOU be a success in...-The American-Indian way of life?

Moderated Regression Male: R<sup>2</sup> Linear = 0.114 Female: R<sup>2</sup> Linear = 0.124 y=3.45-0.14\*x

What is your religious preference?

higher or lower

Religion:

**Traditional Native** 

Am. Spirituality

**Protestant** 

No Religion

% of NAID

14.50%

0.30%

0.60%

6.10%

A moderated regression analysis was done to determine if gender had a moderating effect on the relationship between Native American Identity and Religious Preference. The entire moderated regression model is statistically significant as shown by the ANOVA since p < .05 (F (3, 4764) = 229.6937.

The independent variable (religious preference) is a significant predictor of the dependent variable (NAID) by itself (t = -7.5790, p < .0001). The moderator (Gender) is also a significant predictor of the dependent variable (NAID) by itself (t = 3.7251, p = .0002). However, gender had no significant moderating effect on the relationship between Native American Identity and Religious Preference since the p-value is > .05 (F (1, 4764) = .2299, p = .6316). The fact that the graph has parallel lines is consistent with the result stating that the gender has no significant moderating effect.

## Discussion

Overall, there is evidence to support that religious preference has an impact on Native American Identity. Given that there is a moderate negative correlation between Native American Identity and Religious Affiliation, we can reject the Null Hypothesis that religious affiliation has no effect on Native American Identity. However how much of an impact religious preference has on Native American Identity really depended on the religion.