Research *On* vs. Research *With*

21st-Century Cross-Cultural Collaboration and American Indian Education

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ABSTRACT—Given the historical trends of research that dehumanizes Native America, the methodological approach and research methods one uses to conduct research can be far more important than the outcome. As four middle-aged (30s–40s) scholars, Natives and Non-Native, male and females, serving a tribal college located in the center of the Great Plains, we argue for "collaboration despite colonialism" by utilizing critical researcher reflexivity as a tool to examine one's positionality in the study. We illustrate this process by sharing our own personal identities and lived experiences, acknowledging the privileges we may or may not have. We analyze our own tribal college's Institutional Review Board (IRB) processes and affirm that researchers working with and for Indigenous peoples should seek culturally congruent research methodologies. Further, we challenge others to ensure that institutional ethics support cross-cultural collaborative research methods as the new norm. This has implications for a variety of stakeholders in American Indian education and provides a learning opportunity about the places we inhabit and the nature and cultures tied to this space over time. In addition, we hope this article will serve as a guide for those interested in conducting research *with* Indigenous communities, as well as other minoritized populations.

Key Words: indigenous research methodologies, Institutional Review Board, tribal college

As Vine Deloria Jr. (1992) observed, "For most of the five centuries [of US colonization], whites have had unrestricted power to describe Indians in any way they chose." Aleutian scholar Eve Tuck (2009) adds, "For many of us, the research *on* our communities has historically been damage centered, intent on portraying our neighborhoods and tribes as defeated and broken" (412, emphasis added). If we were to trace the history of unethical research performed on Native communities over the years, it would likely be a multiple-volume series. For the purpose of this article, however, we will highlight some of the more prominent examples.

Some of the first detrimental research performed *on* Native communities were the IQ studies. As human beings, we are all members of the same species *Homo sapiens sapiens* (Fluehr-Lobban 2006). There are four sources for change in genotype, which contributes to change in physical appearance (phenotype): mutation, natural selection, genetic drift, and gene flow through migration (Fluehr-Lobban 2006). Separate racial categorization is not one of them. Rather, it has been documented that there is more human genetic variation within races than between them (Fluehr-Lobban 2006). Racial categorization is not based on biological fact; rather, race is a social construction. Yet the actualization of this social construct (i.e., racism) has real social implications.

During the 19th century and developing into the 20th century, scientists held monogenist and polygenist attitudes toward the concept of race. Whereas monogenists recognized a single origin of humans, polygenists argued for multiple origins of humans with relative ranking of said races according to degrees of cultural evolution (Erickson and Murphy 2013). This was depicted on a spectrum of "savage" to "civilized." In an effort to prove on anatomical grounds that four separate races exist, in 1799 polygenist Charles White (Fluehr-Lobban

Great Plains Research 29 (Spring 2019):17–24. Copyright © 2019 by the Center for Great Plains Studies, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

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2006) offered the following racial categorizations in descending order:

Europeans

Asians

Americans (Indians)

Africans

Here, the "savage" was concocted as the antithesis of a "civilized" person in the racialized tradition of Western thought. The term "savage" became especially relevant in the context of "Red Indians" in the New World (Fluehr-Lobban 2006). This is despite the fact that evidence exists of highly complex and organized societies (e.g., the Haudenosaunee confederacy and Cahokia civilization) prior to colonization. Incentives were proposed for White settlers to combat against these "savages." Colonial authorities initially offered bounties for the heads of murdered Indigenous people, later only requiring their scalps which were easier to transport in large quantities (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). It is noted that later "settlers gave a name to the mutilated and bloody corpses they left in the wake of scalp-hunts: redskins" (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, 65).

Further, Samuel Morton commissioned cavalrymen to collect skulls of Indigenous peoples for anthropomorphic measurements, which he later used as "evidence" to support his claims for ranking races (Fluehr-Lobban 2006). These flawed IQ studies also served as justification for the eugenics movement and related sterilizing of Native and other minoritized women to "rebuild a pure white race."

The impact of these flawed IQ studies also pervaded educational practices for Indigenous youth here in the Great Plains. For example, in 1922 researchers from the University of Kansas tested students from Haskell Indian Institute and concluded that intelligence decreases "with increasing amount of Indian blood" and then defined Native Americans as inferior to Whites in mental processes (Lomawaima and McCarty 2006).

Consistent with this racist logic, not only did colonially oriented officials and settlers "appropriate the land, labor, and resources of indigenous inhabitants, but also sought to dispossess them of their children" (Jacobs 2006). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, White maternalists such as Estelle Reel recommended taking the Indigenous children from their homes in order to raise them themselves, as she believed that "the Indian child must be placed in school before the habits of barbarous life have become fixed, and there he must be kept until contact with our life has taught him to abandon his savage ways and walk in the path of Christian civilization" (Jacobs 2006, 462).

In an effort to extend this "civilization" of Indigenous youth, Richard Henry Pratt, who led Fort Marion (where prisoners from the Indian Wars were detained) before founding the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879, also believed that schooling would circumvent the "Indian problem." Pratt urged that the boarding-school movement, of which his Carlisle Indian Industrial School served as a model, should provide a means to "kill the Indian, save the man." Carlisle became the model from which the boarding-school movement and missions followed, with the historical trauma from these lived experiences continuing even today (Lomawaima and McCarty 2006). On the Plains, several such off-reservation boarding schools were created in Oklahoma (Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, Riverside Indian School), Kansas (the Haskell Indian Industrial School, which has since become Haskell Indian Nations University), Nebraska (Genoa Indian Industrial School), South Dakota (Pierre Indian School, Flandreau School, Rapid City Indian School, and St. Joseph's Indian School), Minnesota (Pipestone Indian School and Morris Industrial School for Indians), Montana (Fort Shaw Industrial School), and North Dakota (Wahpeton Boarding School) (Reyhner and Eder 2004).

A more recent example of damage-based research *on* a Native community stems from the work of Klausner and Foulks, whose team conducted research among the Ukpiagvik in Barrow, Alaska, for two months in the late 1970s. The purpose of the study was to analyze the social and cultural relations of the Barrow community after they experienced a big oil boom, and the research team focused with particular emphasis on the distribution, consumption, and abuse of alcohol in the community. Not long after the team published their results and sent out a press release, mainstream media picked up the story, which ultimately left negative economic and social impacts on the community. The press release was picked up by Dava Sobel of the *New York Times*, whose front-page headline read "Alcohol Plagues Eskimos" (Sobel 1980). The following is an excerpt from the news article:

> The Inupiat Eskimos of Alaska's North Slope, whose culture has been overwhelmed by energy development activities, are "practically committing suicide" by mass alcoholism [. . .] research-

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> ers said here yesterday. The alcoholism rate is 72 percent among the 2,000 Eskimo men and women in the village of Barrow, where violence is becoming the most frequent cause of death as a result of "the explosive and self-destructive abuse of alcohol," the researchers said. "Offshore oil development is expected to peak in 2010 or 2015" [. . .] one of the researchers, said at a news conference. "We don't see the Eskimos surviving till then. This is not a collection of individual alcoholics, but a society which is alcoholic, and therefore facing extinction."

Members of the community and their allies critiqued the research team for the sweeping generalizations that were made, as it reinforced the stereotype of the "drunken Alaska Native." In addition, many felt that the researchers had violated their trust by failing to share the results with the community first in order to allow for community members to comment on the results and offer another lens to interpret the data. This prompts the question of how this profound harm could have been prevented, as the risks clearly outweighed the benefits to the community. Edward Foulks (1989), one of the original members of the research team, reflected retrospectively on "the degree to which the questions and methods of science are rooted in ethical social, and ethnical political issues of the times, and of how scientists must self-consciously include these sometimes intangible, value-laden factors into their research design and planning."

The final example we will discuss here is from Teresa Markow, who conducted research on blood samples of the Havasupai. The Havasupai Tribe of Arizona sued Arizona State University for failing to properly acquire informed consent from tribal members who donated blood samples for use to determine if type 2 diabetes was genetic. The tribal members involved in the research, numbering almost 400, were under the impression that their blood samples would be used to help them find a cure for the type 2 diabetes, which has become epidemic among their people. They did not know that their blood sample would also be used variously in research on schizophrenia, inbreeding, and the Great Migration theory. Several scholarly articles were written that had detrimental effects to the Havasupai. Stigmatization of the tribe due to the "inbreeding" research caused emotional distress among a community that considers this term a taboo. The cultural beliefs and sovereignty of the tribe were challenged and caused hurt and confusion among its members because the story the elders taught of their creation was not the theory of crossing the Bering Strait but rather started at the base of the Grand Canyon.

We recognize that not all these cases come from the Great Plains, but the Indigenous presence in the Plains is subject to the same larger political economy and history that has patronized, dismissed, and more violently ignored or denied Indigenous heritage, rights, and sovereignty. Repeating the solidarity we shared at a recent meeting we had with colleagues from fellow tribal colleges, we would like to take a moment here to remember all those who have been negatively affected in the research studies we've just shared. Wakónda, ongú éwewahona. (Creator, we pray for them).

Our Context

Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) is a tribal college in northeast Nebraska with three campus locations along the Missouri River; two campuses are rurally located in Macy (on the Omaha Reservation) and Santee (on the Isanti Dakota Reservation), while our urban campus location is in South Sioux City. Today, NICC remains chartered by two tribes (i.e., the Isanti Dakota Tribe and the Omaha Tribe). Our Indigenous Umónhon and Dakota languages stretch across the landscape of the Great Plains, on the names of towns, rivers, and street signs. As Greenwood (2011) notes, "The concept of *place*, or more precisely the experience of *places*, can help concretize the abstract notion of culture in the everyday lives of people in their diverse and unique environments." As a community college, we serve members of the community (i.e., of the place).

As a tribal college, one of our core beliefs is that we have the unique role of empowering our students with tools for nation building, so that our communities can achieve a higher level of sovereignty and self-determination. The major underlying goal for this belief is to rebuild the cultural identities of our students, especially among the lost generations who have been stripped of their cultural identity due to outside forces such as the Indian Removal Act, the boarding-school movement, and the removal of Native children from their homes to be adopted by White Christian families, all of which can be tied to that long-extant intention to "kill the Indian and save the man." Place is intrinsically

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intertwined with one's cultural identity, since places are the nexus where culture and environment become interconnected (Greenwood 2011).

As researchers and teachers, we are uniquely positioned regarding how to pursue this cultural rebuilding work because some of the first documented cross-cultural collaborations between Natives and non-Natives took place here in Nebraska (Fletcher and LaFlesche 1911). Our team argues for "collaboration despite colonialism" by utilizing *critical researcher reflexivity* as a tool to examine one's positionality in the study (Hermes 2012). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) asserts, "When undertaking research, either across cultures or within a minority culture, it is critical that researchers recognize the power dynamic that is embedded in the relationship with their subjects." This reflexive space should include a "concern for our common humanity alongside a concern for inequality and power," according to Glynis Cousin (2010). As such, it is of utmost importance that we recognize our own roles as researchers in this context.

Vanessa Hamilton is an enrolled Umónhon member and Yankton descendant, a Honga clan member, who considers her roles as wife, mother, and grandmother to be of the utmost importance. She serves as a mentor for current students, organizes cultural activities, and works in the business office. She is a lifelong learner of Umónhon language and culture, as she has realized the importance of learning the language and passing it on to her son, grandson, family, and other tribal members. Vanessa's educational background includes Native American studies, business, psychology, criminal justice, and she is currently pursuing a master's degree in Indigenous Peoples Law through the University of Oklahoma. In the summer of 2018, she became a board member for the Dhegiha Language Preservation Society, which encompasses the languages of five cognate tribes (i.e., Omaha, Ponca, Osage, Kaw, and Quapaw). Previously, she served as a board member for NICC, as well as being an auxiliary member of Omaha NE Warrior Society and Umónhon Taipiah (Gourd Dance) Society.

Carlton LeCount grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, and is an enrolled member of the Omaha Tribe. He is of the Tha'tada Clan, subgens Ke'in Clan. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Native American studies from Evergreen State College and the University of Arizona, respectively. Carlton has worked extensively in the Omaha tribal community and began serving Nebraska Indian Community College as the financial aid administrator in July 2016, moving to the position of Native American studies division head in the spring of 2017.

Nicole Parker Cariaga was born and raised on the Omaha Indian Reservation, located in northeast Nebraska. She is an enrolled member of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa in the Tha'tada Clan, subgens Ke'in Clan. Nicole earned her first master's degree in higher education counseling from Wayne State College and her second master's degree in legal studies in Indigenous Peoples law from the University of Oklahoma. Nicole has been serving this tribal college for the last three years as the recruitment and retention specialist. She is very passionate about providing our Native American students and tribal community members with resources that will help them reach their educational and personal goals. Nicole began her doctoral studies in educational leadership and policy at the University of Utah in the fall of 2018.

Kristine Sudbeck grew up in northeast Nebraska, on the former hunting grounds of the Omaha and approximately 15 miles from the former Omaha village Tónwongthon-piazhi. She is a non-Native with predominantly German heritage. Kristine earned her doctorate in educational studies with a specialization in language, literacy, and culture, and currently serves the institution as the dean of academic affairs. Because she is a non-Native working with and for Indigenous communities, it is also her responsibility to disrupt the silence that secures the privileges she has:

> I self-identify as a White female in my thirties, and am a member of the dominant race in the land now occupied by the United States. I grew up in a relatively homogenous White community, where my racial identity and the privileges that came with it had largely been invisible to me. English is my first language, which also places me with an unearned advantage in our society. During the fall of 2014, I enrolled in Omaha and Ho-Chunk language courses at two tribal colleges to embark on a journey of learning two Indigenous languages. Here, I wish to ask forgiveness for my shortcomings, particularly from elders within these language communities, as I remain a student and recognize that I still have much more to learn.

Tuck and Fine (2007) have critically discussed the nature of those who cloak and overshadow coloniz-

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ers' guilt by acknowledging the oppression exists but simultaneously retreating from taking responsibility for change. In their critique, they assert that "These responses of white guilt and colonizer's guilt distract from what a real [and] an ethical conversation about ongoing colonization and ongoing decolonization requires: preparedness, listening, reflection, and reparation." Hence, Sudbeck has an ethical responsibility to not only name the privileges she has and share this knowing (Cardinal 2013), but she also has the responsibility to move beyond White/colonizer's guilt.

In the dominant society of Turtle Island (i.e., the land now occupied by the United States), we must understand the myriad of systems of oppression that continue to affect people's lives. We can begin to understand beneath the surface by exposing our own positionality through critical researcher reflexivity. "Positionality situates individuals within a constellation of relationships between people and place. [. . .] As it turns out, positionality, within an Indigenous methodologies framework, is not solely about an individual. Rather, it is connected to an individual in relation to others and to place," writes Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy (2018, xi). We come to this manuscript as four middle-aged (30s–40s) scholars serving a tribal college centrally located in the Great Plains. We are Natives and non-Native, male and females, with varying levels of formal education in a variety of different disciplines. Each of us brings our own unique schooling experience (public and parochial, rural and urban), and life experiences living both on and off reservation.

Institutional Review Board—Common Rule

In the spring of 2018, members of our team had the opportunity to attend a professional development training hosted by Dr. Deb His Horse Is Thunder and other colleagues from the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) on the topic of the anticipated changes coming to the rules guiding our Tribal Institutional Review Board (i.e., IRB). The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and the US Department of Health and Human Services are in the process of revising the *Human Subjects Regulations Title 45, Part 46–Part A*, also referred to as the "Common Rule." One portion of the Common Rule in particular has raised some concerns among tribally affiliated and other tribal college IRBs, like ours:

> *§46.114 Cooperative Research.* Cooperative research projects are those projects covered by this policy which involve more than one institution. In the conduct of cooperative research projects, each institution is responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects and for complying with this policy. With the approval of the department or agency head, an institution participating in a cooperative project may enter into a joint review arrangement, rely upon the review of another qualified IRB, or make similar arrangements for avoiding duplication of effort.

One of our concerns is in the interpretation of this item. In the phrase pertaining to "avoiding duplication of effort," it is important that researchers do not skip over tribally affiliated and tribal college IRBs completely.

In Sudbeck's own research, she identified the shortcomings of relying solely on an R1 institution's IRB (Sudbeck 2016). Instead, she consulted with two separate tribal councils, two tribal college IRBs, and then her own institution. While this process did take a considerable amount of time (i.e., nine months), many of the obstacles to obtaining IRB approval lay within the R1 institution that did not fully understand the complexities of tribal sovereignty or the cultural protocols. Harding et al. (2012) maintain that tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) and tribally affiliated IRBs are necessary "to ensure against potential adverse impacts to tribal individuals or governments that may be overlooked by academic IRBs." Therefore, these separate and simultaneous processes are not redundant.

Our team encourages the authoring bodies of the Common Rule to clarify and affirm sovereign tribal nations' status within §46.114 Cooperative Research. We agree with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) who purport, "Research is not culturally neutral. Research that is designed to not be influenced by culture has actually harmed Indigenous people" (NCAI 2009). Thus, it is ever more important for tribes to exercise their own sovereignty over research before it is conducted. If the purpose is to avoid the duplication of effort, the nonindigenous and often larger institutions should not be privileged. Tribally affiliated and tribal college IRBs should be the primary source of re-

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search proposal approvals that have ties to Indigenous communities.

Deana Around Him and Naomi Tom (2018) recently discussed the unique role of TCUs and other tribally affiliated IRBs, gleaning from the NCAI's compilation on the expression of tribal sovereignty in research. First, the sovereignty of Tribal Nations includes the right to regulate research. When research among Indigenous peoples is not guided by tribal input, in effect the researcher relinquishes tribal power over the interpretation and dissemination of results and, in turn, diminishes the tribe's sovereignty. Second, tribal colleges serve a unique role, in both teaching and research, which affirms that Indigenous knowledge is valid and should be valued.

Toward Decolonizing the Research Process

In Indigenous communities, too many outside researchers have come in, conducted research, and left without ever being heard from again. We challenge others to ensure that institutional ethics support what Steigman and Casteldon call the kind of "community-driven, capacity-building, empowering research that Indigenous communities, Indigenous scholars, and non-Indigenous scholar allies are demanding becomes the norm" (2008, 4). To do so, we offer the following protocol to use as a guide. It is important, first, to recognize and affirm that each sovereign nation may have their own unique protocols. That is to say, sovereign nations have the inherent right to self-determination. In our own context at Nebraska Indian Community College (chartered by the Isanti Dakota and Omaha sovereign nations), we request researchers to follow these steps:

1. Collaborate *with* members from the community.

2. Present proposal to Tribal Council.

3a. Submit IRB proposal to TCU and/or tribally affiliated IRB.

3b. If applicable, submit documentation of approved IRB proposal to additional IRB at additional affiliated institution.

4. Present research to those involved for guidance on interpretation of results and for approval *prior* to dissemination and publication of results.

Will a proposed research project *empower* members of our community? This will be one of the first questions that we ask. One of the simplest ways for empowerment is to collaborate with members from the community. Collaboration can take many forms, with varied levels of participation across a spectrum (e.g., community action board for consultation, youth participatory action research [YPAR], community-based participatory research [CBPR], and/or TCU students or other members of the Indigenous community as research assistants or full members of the research team). Michelle Fine (2008) explains that participatory action research (PAR) is not a method, but rather an epistemological perspective:

> Participatory action researchers ground our work in the recognition that expertise and knowledge are widely distributed. PAR further assumes that those who have been most systematically excluded, oppressed, or denied carry specifically revealing wisdom about the history structure, consequences, and the fracture points in unjust social arrangements. PAR embodies a democratic commitment to break the monopoly on who holds knowledge and for whom social research should be undertaken.

As a critical epistemology, PAR should be distinguished from traditional research, as it instead relies on multiple perspectives redefining knowledge as "actions in pursuit of social justice" (Cammarota and Fine 2008). Those employing PAR as an epistemological approach to research have the ability to emphasize the role of democratization and the redistribution of power. PAR epitomizes research *with* in place of research *on*.

In addition, we encourage researchers to consider the paradigmatic shift from damage-centered to desire-based research (Tuck 2009). That is, it is important to recognize and affirm the damage that has been done in the past, while also acknowledging the hope and desires for the future. One can do so by drawing on the five tenets of Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (CIRM), which include proactive attention to (1) relationships, (2) responsibility, (3) respect, (4) reciprocity, and (5) accountability (Brayboy et al. 2012). With these five CIRM tenets in mind, it is essential to learn the cultural protocols of the community you are serving.

Some examples of cultural protocols in our own community include presenting an elder with a gift be-

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fore asking him or her to share their knowledge with you. Another note of caution is to be mindful of nonverbal communication. Do not mistake silence by the respondent for not knowing the answer. They may know but simply not want to share that information with you.

Great Plains Research defines as its particular purview the prairie that stretches from Manitoba to Tamaulipas, Mexico. The NICC is just one of the TCUs on that expanse, and the Omaha and Isanti Dakota are just two of the tribes with current and historical ties to this region. Nonetheless, acknowledging that details will differ by locations and groups involved, we insist that our framing of research *with* rather than *on* pertains beyond our particular spaces and groups. Education research that is pursued on the Great Plains (and elsewhere) with indigenous communities needs to acknowledge past exploitive and harmful histories and be pursued now with inclusive epistemologies that shed subordinating assumptions.

Drawing from the words of educational philosopher and social justice advocate Paulo Freire (1970, 68), the oppressed "cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become human beings." Rather, those subordinated through the system of oppression must be actively involved as agents in their own liberation. There is a definite distinction between research performed *on* (as we've summarized in the history of unethical research at the beginning of this article) and research *with* (which we've highlighted in the desires we hope to guide). It is our vision to have tribally engaged or controlled research *with* members from the Indigenous community for generations to come.

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Acknowledgment

We ask that those who cite this work always acknowledge by name all authors listed rather than citing only the first author and using "et al." to indicate coauthors. All collaborated on the conceptualization, development, and writing of this manuscript.

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