American Indian Studies and the Politics of Educational Colonialism [1]

Kathleen J. Martin and Nicole Ventre

American Educational Research Association Annual Conference
April 2012
Vancouver, B.C., Canada
Indigenous Peoples of the Americas

Kathleen J. Martin, Ph.D.
Cal Poly State University
Ethnic Studies Department
1 Grand Avenue
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
805.756.2827
kamartin@calpoly.edu

Nicole Ventre, M.S.
461 Wilton Ave
Palo Alto, CA
415.728.8485
nicoleventre@yahoo.com

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented as part of a panel entitled, "Arizona Calling: Re-centering the Role of the Organic Intellectual in Ethnic Studies" for the University of California, Riverside Conference "Critical Ethnic Studies and the Future of Genocide: Settler Colonialism/Heteropatriarchy/White Supremacy," March 10-12, 2011. With special thanks to Dr. Maria Eugenia Matute-Bianchi emeriti faculty and past provost Oaks College, University of California, Santa Cruz. As the panel discussant she provided exceptionally thoughtful and detailed comments.

Abstract

The politics of higher education at universities pose challenges for Native and Indigenous students that impact equity and equality, and the teaching and learning process. The most recent challenge: Native Studies Departments are no longer necessary as an academic discipline. This paper calls into question the right to education and future success and achievement in scholarship that increases knowledge for all peoples in the future. However, higher education institutions are still "working on deconstructing colonialism" with less attention to the enduring marginalization of disempowered peoples as campuses continue struggle with issues of inclusion, budgetary crises, and the minimizing of scholarship. Included is an examination of the current status of five (5) "critical points" identified by Robert E. Powless (2002) as important for the future of American Indian Studies, faculty and students.

American Indian Studies and the Politics of Educational Colonialism

This essay explores the politics of education, and re-colonizing and capitalistic practices that continuously frame challenges for Indigenous and Native education, and the ways in which economic, social and political systems impact equity and equality. Public attitudes, ideas and perspectives are central to the discussion in the push and pull struggles over power, economics and politics, particularly in higher education in the United States. We interpret these struggles as "same words, new mouths" in which push and pull policies swing with the mood and attitudes of the country; the mouths speaking may change, but the words and rhetoric remain the same. In this climate, there are "correct" ways of looking at the world as dictated by the dominant society; any challenge to this idea is perceived as a threat to settler colonialism. And significantly, the impact of economic globalization on the enduring marginalization of disempowered groups is affected by the political and economic hegemony of market capitalism.[2] Ethnic and Native Studies can be perceived as a threat to the status quo in the areas of gains in scholarship, access to funding, and presence at universities. This essay explores the push-pull dynamics of achieving equitable learning environments for all students in the US. It specifically examines the rise in influence of Native Studies departments since Robert Powless made recommendations for improvement in 2002[3] versus the push-back experienced by such departments via public and government attitudes and actions that work to maintain marginalization.

The most recent evidence of challenge to Ethnic Studies and Native Studies suggests a reinvigoration of these ideas with attempts to close and/or merge departments[4] into other programs in colleges and universities. For example, HB 2281 in Arizona, led by the

---

[2] Matute-Bianchi, 2011, personal conversation with author.
[3] Powless, "'*O'ezhichigeyaang* (This thing we do)' American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota-Duluth."
[4] In this paper, the terms Native Studies, American Indian Studies, and Native American Studies are used interchangeably since they reflect the variable use of terms at universities and colleges for these programs.

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, is instructive. The measure is designed to eliminate Mexican American Studies Department (MASD) in the Tucson Unified School District, and the list of banned books includes those by a number of prominent Native scholars including authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Sherman Alexie, and Ofelia Zepeda. And, these efforts put ethnic studies at universities also at risk under the law,[5] "particularly as school and university budgets are eviscerated."[6] In part, political actions such as these are justified by university administrators for a variety of reasons: economic viability, lack of leadership for the programs, the subjects are already taught in departments such as English, History, American Studies, or others, and more significantly, these programs are no longer necessary in the much touted post-affirmative action US society. More insidious and to the point are Horne's caricatures of students in the MASD as "militants and revolutionaries so driven by groupthink and resentment that they are willing and ready to overthrow the U.S. government."[7] This type of ideology, and the public attitudes that are spurred as a result of it, reflects and influences more broadly policies at universities and public perceptions in general.

The closure of departments and the reoccurrence of ostensibly old ideas regarding equity pose only part of the threat to Ethnic and Native Studies.[8] Gary Okihiro suggests a more potent threat to programs is from "liberal's who have derailed the field's radical challenges into a celebration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism,"[9] much as Arizona's leaders (and conservatives of the right) claim. These areas of study are not viewed as significant in their own right, but rather reflect views of sociological discourse that present "multiculturalism as a force

---

[5] Soto & Joseph, "Neoliberalism and the battle for ethnic studies."
[6] Matute-Bianchi, personal conversation with author.
[7] Soto & Joseph, "Neoliberalism and the battle for ethnic studies," p. 49.
[8] For this paper, we use the terms Native Studies, Indigenous Studies, Native American and American Indian somewhat interchangeably as reflective the depth and breadth of programs and departments.
[9] Okihiro, "The future of ethnic studies," p. 4.

of societal fragmentation."[10] And, programs can be co-opted by liberals in service of multiculturalism and its values with discrete and fragmented holidays that emphasize food, similarities and fun. This devaluing contributes to negative public perceptions that are supported and fueled by politicians and administrators such as Horne and Jan Brewer, Governor of Arizona. The perceptions reflect fear of a threat to a way of life, as well as the implicit assumption that Ethnic Studies, and more specifically for this essay, Native American Studies are not relevant as bodies of knowledge, nor do the subjects add to the academic discourse. In fact, they often are characterized as contributing to the decay of society or the end of life in the US as it is theorized. Yet, these areas of study not only support a better understanding of social justice issues and the struggles of marginalized groups, they also advance the study of scientific knowledge, history, language, health, education, and societal challenges faced in the twenty-first century. For example, the relevance of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and its applicability are recognized as significant, particularly in the physical sciences and the humanities.

The political rhetoric and agendas as seen in Arizona engage in social and psychological maneuvering that diverts attention from issues and concerns relevant to the entire country. For example, it is possible that all people in the US will need to work together to find solutions to problems in the coming decades such as issues related to education, globalization, natural resource management and access to clean water, as well as a number of pressing concerns. Engaging diverse areas of thought is imperative to answer questions such as: What do we need to know and act upon to ensure the lives and well being of children and grandchildren in the coming years? "How and in what ways do Native American Studies and Ethnic Studies contribute knowledge to philosophical and epistemological thought? And, what knowledge is

[10] Wong, "Multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism in sociology," p. 11.

necessary to solve environmental, scientific and all manner of problems of the twenty-first century and beyond?" Yet this question seldom receives the serious investigation necessary to explore problems and concerns more explicitly as a focus.

Of related concern is the notion that individual rights are paramount in the US, rather than the challenges of addressing these questions as a "community of scholars" working together with interests and concerns beyond that of the individual. In some ways this has been at the crux of issues between those perceived as "minority" and those of the dominant society. The premise is that the collision between community-based ethics and individual-based ethics is one still to be resolved. Or as Soto & Joseph interpret regarding John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, "classical liberalism is fundamentally ambivalent about equality … [and a] fundamental understanding of the purpose of government is to preserve and protect unlimited and unequal distributions of property."[11] These issues and struggles present a picture of an historical situation that, although gains in equality and access have been made, sees a resurgence of the same historical attitudes initiated by the "Founding Fathers," John Locke and others. Now, however, they are based in neoliberal claims that view ethnic studies as racist in and of themselves.

Today, however, there are few in the United States who overtly question the existence of inequality in the past, the injustice of "separate but equal," of slavery, of women's rights, and of the necessity of religious freedom. Some of the changes in sentiment were brought about by active study, comparison and reflection of events with the benefit of hindsight, and more likely, the country's sense of embarrassment and complicity in US policies and actions. As Clara Sue Kidwell explains,

> The civil rights movement of the mid and late 1960s raised issues of equal access and affirmative action in higher education. The political activism spawned by U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War increased

[11] Soto & Joseph, "Neoliberalism and the battle for ethnic studies," pp. 51-52.

> sensitivity to racism. The massacre of Vietnam villagers at My Lai was compared, not without reason, with the massacre of Cheyenne families at Sand Creek in 1861, or of Big Foot's band of Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890.[12]

Yet, these are considered actions and events of the historical past, not ones evidenced in the present. In other words, "This doesn't happen anymore" or "Just get over it." However, situating the argument within the contexts of events and actions misses the point. Although discrimination and racism still exist, it is the underlying philosophy and mentality based in attitudes and perceptions that drives actions and events, not the other way around. For example, an underlying assumption regarding Native Studies programs is that they do not pose any new or important ideas beyond what is presented in Western ideology. It continues to assume these programs were established to address wrongs committed in the past and to placate a minority. As the theory goes, we are in the twenty-first century, long past the trials of these eras.

Native Studies and Equality

Unlike millions of immigrants to this country, Native and Indigenous communities have fought for survival against genocide, abuse, assimilation and expropriation of land and traditions.[13] The maintenance of traditional philosophies, ways of life, and educational paradigms continue to be faced with "unbelievable pressures, discrimination, government actions and restrictions."[14] Within this context, education and educational equality continues to be a significant area of struggle for Native Peoples beginning with the boarding schools and forced education programs and continuing to the present day with entrenched systems of western educational paradigms. Education often has been viewed as a double-edged sword for many American Indian students, and more recently for the growing number of Native faculty who serve in universities and

---

[12] Kidwell, "The vanishing Native reappears in the college curriculum," p. 45.
[13] Murray & Martin, *Indigenous Education: Who get to learn in California Institutions of Higher Education*.
[14] U.S. Commission on Human Rights, 1981.

colleges.[15] On the one hand, education is imperative for the success of Native communities for a number of fairly obvious economic, academic and social reasons. Yet, the educational system remains designed for assimilation and implemented by a dominant group that historically has viewed American Indian children only as an appropriate work force for trade or skilled and service positions.

Since the late 1990s, educational issues in California have been of utmost concern, specifically the struggle for educational equity and equality for American Indian students at institutions of higher education. California, in fact, served as frontrunner in shaping educational policies across the United States through a number of Propositions that included 187, 209 and 227. Of these, the 1997 Proposition 209, ignominiously entitled the "California Civil Rights Initiative," called for the discontinuance of student related affirmative action policies for admittance to universities. The purpose of this initiative was to eliminate student affirmative action, a program designed to provide educational opportunities to qualified individuals who are members of groups that have experienced persistent discrimination. In the ensuing years since the passage of this proposition, other states followed California's lead with similar propositions, and with their passage, some of the public rhetoric and fear that claimed white discrimination has subsided. Simultaneously the admittance rate of students from disadvantaged groups at public universities in California has dropped.[16] For example, of the University of California (UC) campuses, a total of 908 American Indian students (0.6% of the total number of students) were admitted in 2003 and by 2009 the number had grown to 1,008 with no percentage change in the total number of students. More specifically, at UC Santa Barbara 139 American Indian students

---

[15] Murray & Martin, *Indigenous Education: Who get to learn in California Institutions of Higher Education*.

[16] According to an investigation of UC and CSU campuses in 2009-10 by two Student Academic Services coordinators, UC and CSU campuses have taken up the mandates of Proposition 209 in a variety of ways with differential impact to campuses' student bodies. Some campuses, primarily UCs, interpret 209 more liberally, while others enforce stricter guidelines for the recruitment of students. The CSU campuses tend to exhibit a wide range of interpretations, with Cal Poly among the strictest for enforcement.

were admitted in 2007, 115 in 2008, and 163 in 2009 reflecting a minimal percentage of the total number of students (19,630 in 2009).[17] At other public universities in California, the application and acceptance rates for freshman American Indian students also are minimal or diminishing. At Cal Poly State University, the number of students applying decreased from 104 applicants in 2000 to 87 in 2010, with 42 students selected for enrollment in 2000 and only 24 in 2010 (17,332 total enrolled). As well, the share of enrolled rates while a minimal 0.6% in 2000, dropped to 0.2% in 2010. These rates from premier universities in California are significantly below the population percentages, with little gain indicated or effort to stop further decline.

It seems apparent that the first assault on the education of Native students in the form of anti-affirmative action now is encountering a second more vigorous assault with the more recent political speech-making (again same words, new mouths) in Arizona specifically, but in the US more generally. Posed rhetorically, "Can social justice and democracy coexist?"[18] And, can places of difference be maintained without denying educational, economic, political, and social rights and opportunities to their inhabitants?"[19] We explore these questions within the context of education issues more specifically by providing evidence of the challenges faced in answering these questions as we move into the twenty-first century among the push and pull of identity dynamics.

NALA and Native Studies

Policies that have been continuously reinforced throughout US history such as, "be like us" or "you can never be like us" morph and are reinvented. And for Native Peoples, these push-pull policies are well-known as part of US history and the pendulum that swings with political

---

[17] Wilson, "The state of the system." See also, Biennial Higher Education Staff Information (EEO-6) Reports, Academic Advancement, January 2008.
[18] Lomawaima & McCarty, *To Remain an Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*, p. 169
[19] Ibid., p. 169.

change. This is evident in the policies of removal versus assimilation, to the more recent Native American Languages Act (NALA) of 1990 versus the English only movement. To reiterate: "Was NALA simply another arbitrary, if fortuitous, pendulum swing in federal Indian policy?"[20] Or more insidious, was it merely another gratuitous policy that did not reflect any significant threat to the status quo now that Native languages are considerably endangered?

Comparisons and analyses of federal programs and policies assist us in understanding the larger dynamics of government actions and public sentiment, as well as the ways movements are co-opted by dominant groups. As Lomawaima and McCarty indicate, we are able to:

> Discern patterns in the apparent anomalies that pepper the last century of education imposed on Native peoples. U.S. society and government were not … simply vacillating through 'swings of a pendulum' between tolerance and intolerance. Each generation was working out, in a systematic way, its notion of a safety zone, an area where dangerously different cultural expressions might be safely domesticated and thus neutralized.[21]

Interpretations of this sort illuminate a more complex and disturbing explanation of federal policies that are systematically planned and presented (or politically expedient) to appear supportive, but with very little actual impact or sincere desire to formulate change. By the time of NALA's passage, "Native American languages were, for all practical purposes, well within the federal safety zone … a symbolic gesture with little real consequences."[22] And, the federal government's "annual NALA allocations averaged $1 million, an amount that if distributed equally among more than 560 federally recognized tribes, would amount to approximately $1,800 per tribe per year."[23] This egregiously minimal amount of money can clearly be described as a "token" offering with no real or implied impact.

---

[20] Ibid., p. 134.
[21] Ibid., p. xxii.
[22] Ibid., p. 136.
[23] Ibid., p. 136.

Regarding Native Studies programs, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn argues that Native Studies does not fit in either the "like us" or "not like us" arguments, nor does it fit with the push-pull debates. But rather, Native Studies:

> Stems from the fact that it challenges almost everything that America has to offer in education and society. It rejects assimilation in favor of tribal nationhood. It rejects mainstream America conservatism in favor of a new history that acknowledges a horrific period of greed and empire building in America during which genocide and deicide was legalized. … Its principles are indigenousness and sovereignty rather than cultural contact (or colonialism), pluralism, diversity, and immigration.[24]

Cook-Lynn's assessment calls into question aspects of sovereignty the US government and public in general are not willing to acknowledge programmatically, politically or administratively. Rather, the most recent attempts to merge departments in major universities, or eliminate them entirely, claim that justification is couched as "effective use of resources," either budgetary or that of faculty, both in the end economic. Furthermore, university administrators often find no benefit in addressing other more nebulous specifics of the significance of programs in terms of educational, historical or societal benefit; these are more difficult and secondary to the economics and politics in which the US would need to address its history of genocidal policies and the reality of sovereignty of Native Nations.

Higher Education

University departments that are viewed as most expendable are those with subjects perceived to be least necessary, not significant for "real research," and with course topics that won't help solve "real" problems in the future. This seems particularly true when the subjects taught are perceived to address "old problems" no longer in need of solving, were formed out of the foment

[24] Cook-Lynn, "Who stole Native American studies," p. 25.

of the 1960s, or are the product of protests of students of color and Native students at universities in the west, specifically California, and ultimately considered racist against whites. Gary Okihiro challenges these ideas by asserting, "in light of the 'culture wars' of the 1980s and 90s, the arguments of Arizona's political leaders appear positively old fashioned. They say that ethnic studies has been created only by and for particular racial groups, and that it promotes hatred of whites and minority group solidarity."[25] Yet the reverse seems to be more accurate. This presupposes that education, and the success, knowledge and achievement of all students regardless of ethnic background, are a measure of justice for past wrongs, ones that have already been rectified and realized, and it is necessary to return to "real" subjects. With the current issues of funding difficulties for public education, with fears of immigrants particularly in the southwest, coupled with generalized fears regarding individual success and achievement, we see revised efforts to minimize and limit the access and success of some students over others.

In some colleges and universities the dismantling of ethnic studies and area studies programs is evident, possibly indicative of political pressure brought on by the passage of Propositions 187, 209 and 229. At the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) during the 1990s, the reasons were budgetary with the implicit assumption that there was a duplication of programs.

> With the general U.S. economic recession, the Berkeley administration decided to meet its budget reduction obligations with departmental cuts across the board. Where similar or like disciplines could be joined to share administrative overhead, such unions were mandated.[26]

Yet, in seemingly ironic contradiction, UCB and San Francisco State University (SFSU) were two of the first to form American Indian and Ethnic Studies programs and departments supposedly out of the desire to address "the significance of colonialism as the primary form of

---

[25] Okihiro, "The future of ethnic studies," p. 1.
[26] Champagne & Stauss, *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*, p. 7.

domination confronted by Native peoples in their struggles for justice."[27] Theoretically then, these programs should provide opportunities to address Cook-Lynn's argument regarding the purpose of Native Studies.

More recently, UC Santa Cruz has worked to dismantle and placed under suspension the reputed "left-leaning" Community Studies Department, and has moved to change or alter the American Studies Department as well. According to a staff member spoken with in March of 2011, the suspension was not budgetary, but rather internal, and departmental conflicts entered into the decision. However, as noted by Professor B. Ruby Rich, "The department has been harmed by too many successive years of defunding on the part of the administration, from the elimination of key staff positions to the refusal to allow departing faculty's lines to be rehired. The reduction of resources predated the economic crisis in which we now find ourselves … nobody can run a department without adequate faculty and staff." Although the Campus Provost and Executive Vice-Chancellor voiced support for lifting the suspension, some believed that the it was merely per forma, particularly with the Social Documentation masters program anticipating a move to the Art Department as decided by the three remaining faculty members.

For the most part, mainstream academia has continued to reflect the goals, interests, values, and institutions of Western civilization. Applying the Western intellectual experience and categories of discourse and analysis to the study of Indigenous Nations puts the prospective scholar of Indian life at an initial disadvantage."[28] In this climate, Native scholars and Native Studies programs/departments must continue to navigate the difficult terrain of colonialism within a system that co-opts the discourse to fit Western academic studies. We ask: "Are these evidence of revitalized push and pull political agendas or merely evidence of co-optation and

---

[27] University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, Native Studies Program.
[28] Champagne & Stauss, *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*, p. 8.

assimilation of ideas in order to quiet and preserve power such as evidenced in Arizona, at UC Berkeley, at UCSC and at other institutions?"

Critical Points: Native Studies in Perspective

The scholarship that has arisen out of the traditions of Native American Studies, and more generally Ethnic Studies can no longer be considered merely "leftist politics," or a reactionary movement from the right.[29] "Indeed, directly as a result of the challenge posed by ethnic studies, even the most elite and resistant Anglo-Saxon academic canon has gradually changed to include some references to other American voices."[30] The amount of scholarship evidenced in the area of Native Studies has moved beyond the urgency and push for equality of the 1960s to present ways of thinking about the past and move into the future. We see evidence for valuing traditional knowledge systems in the development of new technologies; the increase in literatures that address the variety of experience through the voices of those marginalized in the past; and an examination of past practices such as nuclear power and environmental issues that threaten the land.

Using Robert Powless's five critical points for the future of American Indian Studies in the twenty-first century as a measure to investigate Native Studies, we present an update on the status of the areas of significance he identified as summarized below.[31]

1. We must continue to fight the stereotype of ethnic studies as a place where students sit in a circle and condemn white people.

---

[29] See such discussions in California "Defend Ethnic Studies Across the CSU," http://www.facebook.com/notes/defend-ethnic-studies-across-the-csu/enrique-c-ochoa-article/337317770337 Nevada "Women's Studies at UNLV: Please Help" http://www.csgsnyu.org/2010/04/saving-womens-studies-at-unlv-please-help/ and Texas "Tom Horn to Ethnic Studies: 'Drop Dead,'" http://texasedequity.blogspot.com/2009/06/tom-horne-to-ethnic-studies-drop-dead.html; among others (viewed 20 April 2010.)

[30] Monteiro, "Who gets to define ethnic studies," p. 3.

[31] Powless, "'*O'ezhichigeyaang* (This thing we do)' American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota-Duluth," pp. 187-8.

2. We must continue to attract the best and brightest to the teaching ranks. A Ph.D. does not simply appear. … Our American Indian families and Tribes must identify students with academic potential early and ensure that they receive the best education possible.
3. We should be constantly looking for funding opportunities … but we should be leaning on our parent institutions to make certain that we are funded just as any other discipline.
4. We should be constantly refining as well as expanding the body of knowledge in our discipline.
5. We should be interacting more with each other to enhance what each of us is doing…"

These points continue to pose relevant ideas in the current climate of economic and political challenges and the future of American Indian Studies in the twenty-first century.

The first and most critical point, remains somewhat the same issue as when first presented by Powless. We must find ways to fight the ever recurring stereotype of Native Students/First Nation Studies and Ethnic Studies as places "where students sit in a circle and condemn white people." And it may be the most difficult and intransient of the points to change since stereotypes and ideas about not only Native Peoples but Ethnic Studies in general continue to surface and are adamantly decried by a dominant society intent on making sure their power and authority remains. Ironically, the opposite of what is decried is most often apparent. Examples of incidents that disparage Native students and cultures such as the "Pilgrims and Indians" party hosted by a University of California, Irvine fraternity in 2010 or the "Indian and Turkey" shoot hosted by a Cal Poly fraternity in 2009 are not isolated incidents. How do we encourage Indian students to make a commitment to their futures and achieve their educational goals when the context of their educational experience is stressful, unfriendly and sometimes downright hostile, and most significantly, demands a change in philosophy? A question posed by a non-Indian student remains relevant, "Does the new generation of American Indian students

have it any easier than previous generations?"[32] We must answer "doubtful at best" and probably more likely the same resounding "no" of past generations.

The power of university administrations and public perceptions coupled with the lack of knowledge by non-Native students and the general public cannot provide the kind of learning environment for students that educational researchers know to be essential to success. This speaks to the need for Native and Indigenous Studies and valuing these knowledge systems as an important focus in the education of non-Native students as well. Higher education institutions do not focus on ways to value traditional knowledge systems and improve education; rather, the demands of public sentiment and budget concerns dictate policy and procedures. This is the one critical point in which the ability to impact is not always in the hands of those who understand the complexity of the issues and strive for change. And the struggle to include American Indian Studies with Native professors, scholars and students on our campuses continues to be difficult to address.

Regarding the second Critical Point, we see some success at public institutions and tribal colleges for students and faculty.

For Students

Through the efforts of organizations that help student navigate the terrain of college admissions, enrollments and graduation rates have been increasing. At the "Graduate Horizons" (GH) 2010 program, a 72-hour "crash course' for Native American college students on preparing to enter graduate school, over fifty Native Nations, Alaskan villages and Native Hawaiians from over 20 states were represented. Held at Arizona State University (ASU), GH, an affiliate of "College Horizons" founded in 1998, was established in 2003. To date more than 425 college students have completed the graduate program. Unlike most campuses in the United States with Native

[32] Murray & Martin, *Indigenous Education*.

students representing a small percentage of the student body, ASU ranked fourth in the nation among universities awarding Native students bachelor degrees in all disciplines combined during the 2007-08 academic year with Northern Arizona State ranked ninth. Universities in Oklahoma took the top three rankings, graduating a total of 998 Native students across all disciplines. California State University, Long Beach and the University of New Mexico ranked fifth and sixth respectively with 353 students awarded a degree.[33] These efforts reflect an increase in graduation rates for Native students and demonstrate the promise of the past four decades since the incorporation of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) in 1970 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The University of Oklahoma and Cal State Long Beach works at "attracting the best and the brightest," and identifying students with potential. Yet, often the difficulty occurs when the time comes for admittance, particularly in graduate programs. As Edward Valandra relates regarding his acceptance to graduate school and mentorship by Vine Deloria, Jr., "As a professor who now participates in graduate admission and search committees, I have come to appreciate how he must have laid his reputation on the line to effect my admission to graduate school."[34] These continue to be areas of difficulty, and we see a decrease in enrollment and retention at premier universities such as Cal Poly and the University of California in general. It is clear that the admittance and success of Native students in major universities and colleges, whether through early identification and support through programs such as College Horizons or actively recruiting and supporting student success once at the institution, must be improved. Unfortunately, not many admissions committees have membership by a Native scholar such as either Vine Deloria or Edward Valandra.

---

[33] See statistics listed at "Diverse Issues in Higher Education," http://diverseeducation.com/top100/ (viewed 1 October 2010).
[34] Valandra, "The 'Indian Handshake' between generations," p. 163.

Proposition 209 remains a significant factor in marginalizing students and limiting access, admission, recruitment and retention even once admission is achieved.[35] As Linda Murray notes regarding her own educational experiences and work as a Native student counselor: "This can be a very disorienting and lonely time since family and community is the way you define yourself."[36] In a limited study of California university administrators who work with Native student enrollments, one conclusion was indicative of factors that affect American Indian student success. "Most problems arise from lack of funding for the students, lack of support from the administration, and lack of understanding by the faculty. If we were to align these together, having all departments work together to provide American Indian students with feasible ways of getting through college while staying true to their identity, we would see a higher success rate."[37] However, in the current derogatory and reactionary climate coupled with budgetary challenges, this point will remain difficult to address.

For Faculty

There have been increases in the number of Native and Indigenous scholars completing doctoral and masters degrees at universities and colleges, and who begin careers at these institutions, as well as at tribal colleges which have seen an increase in advanced degree teachers and staff. At the University of California campuses, however, we see minimal change in the number of Native American full-time ladder rank faculty. In 1989 there were a total 19 (0.2%) faculty members who identify as such compared with the total faculty numbering at 7,676 (87.2%) who identify as White. By 2007, the number of American Indian faculty had increased to 37 (0.4%), while the

---

[35] On 13 February 2012 the California Appeals court heard new challenges to Proposition 209. "Gov. Jerry Brown has weighed in on the case, asking the court to reopen the challenge to Proposition 209. Deputy California Attorney General Antonette Cordero, representing Brown, told the court, "We believe Proposition 209 does not level the playing field."Instead, Cordero argued, the measure creates "an unequal political structure" for minority groups. San Francisco Examiner: http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/2012/02/appeals-court-hears-new-proposition-209-challenge-today#ixzz1oMbEJU9z, (Viewed 6 March 2012).

[36] Murray & Martin, *Indigenous Education*, p. 10.

[37] Milligan, "*Dreamcatchers": Understanding the role of Higher Education Institutions in the Recruitment and Retention of American Indian Students,"* p. 51.

number of White faculty declined to 77.7%.[38] These percentages remain minimal and of more concern, who will replace these professionals if we continue to see the decline or limited enrollment and graduation of Native and Indigenous students at premier public institutions, particularly in California.

As university budgets continue to shrink, Critical Point number three will remain difficult to address. Opportunities for funding through universities continue to dwindle even as more recent Native and Indigenous Ph.D.s begin their careers. Some funding through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Institute of Health, federally supported agriculture and engineering projects have been beneficial to tribal colleges and Native faculty working in universities, but again these areas will see further reductions as economics plays a role in accessibility. For example, NEH applications for small grants in the past funded approximately 15% of proposals. In 2010-11, however, only 7-8% were funded. More needs to be done to better support research and educational funding although in this time of fiscal miserliness and severe budgetary constraints. This will continue to be a difficult point to address.

The number of scholarly journals and publications emanating from the field of Native/Indigenous Studies has grown substantially and is quite impressive in terms of the fourth Critical Point. The list of relevant journals as indicated on the website "First Nations Periodicals"[39] reveals the depth and breadth of the field in terms of senior and junior scholars, and student publications. Journal publications address issues of research, methodology and critical study efforts in the field of Indigenous/Native Studies. After a review of Native/First Nations youth newspapers and online news services, Canada far outstrips the US in presence,

---

[38] Wilson, "The state of the system." See also, Biennial Higher Education Staff Information (EEO-6) Reports, Academic Advancement, January 2008.
[39] See "First Nations Periodicals" http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/journal.htm#pubonline (viewed 1 October 2010).

availability and access to such services and discussions for First Nations and Aboriginal youth. As well, Canadian journals appear to present more progressive work in the fields.

The number of scholarly texts and research investigations in terms of theory and methodology, writings of fiction and non-fiction, and monographs of significance is impressive and too extensive to detail here. However, the number of excellent and significant publications in and across multiple fields has seen significant gains. This is particularly apparent to faculty who teach in the subjects and are able to use texts rather than compiling "readers" for courses. Clearly, this point has seen vibrant and successive improvement and gain.

Finally, regarding the fifth Critical Point, interaction among scholars in the field has been a growing process in professional organizations such as, the American Educational Research Association and the American Academy of Religion for almost twenty years with the formation of Special Interest Groups (SIGs). As an initial point of entry into the academic discourse this has been valuable, yet SIGs remain embedded in these larger dominant group associations and are susceptible to co-optation. In 2008, as a means of addressing this concern and that of Native and Indigenous scholars, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) was formed with the principal objective to "promote Native and Indigenous Studies through the encouragement of academic freedom, research, teaching, publication, the recognition of Indigenous knowledges and methodologies …"[40] Since its inception, NAISA has generated significant interest and grown exponentially both in scope and membership with annual meetings that present a diverse array of thought, ideas and research.

NAS/AIS Studies Programs

Native American Studies in colleges and universities is a specialized field of study, largely one built on philosophies, languages, epistemologies, societal and historical origins. And, Native

[40] Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, (viewed 31 January 2012) http://naisa.org/.

Peoples have a distinct and separate relationship with the US, not as a minority ethnic group, but as sovereign nations with rights to self-determination. "NAS/AIS programs have survived in academic institutions largely because of political currents in higher education. In the 1970s administrators viewed them as tools for the affirmative action goals inspired by the civil rights movement."[41] More recently, programs present areas of study that increase scholarship in: diversity of worldviews and perspectives; legal issues; recognition of scientific thought and the importance of diversity and sustainability in the environmental sciences; the social construction of interpersonal relations; and social, economic, and cultural studies that may enhance life for all peoples.[42]

The number of degree awarding universities that offer degrees in Native American Studies (NAS), American Indian Studies (AIS), Indigenous or Ethnic Studies departments have grown substantially since the University of Minnesota established the Department of American Indian Studies in June of 1969.[43] As indicated on the website, *"A Guide to Native American Studies Programs in the United States and Canada,"*[44] there are twenty-seven (27) PhD/MA/JD programs and fifty-one (51) baccalaureate programs. Offered through a number of other academic disciplines such as History, Anthropology, Religious Studies and Education. Of these, over one hundred and eighteen (118+) programs offer either a minor, certificate, or concentration in these areas. Universities fall into multiple categories of degrees offered and the website lists applicable universities in all of the categories. For instance, UC Riverside offers Native American Studies degrees in the following categories, Baccalaureate in Ethnic Studies and a

---

[41] Kidwell, "American Indian Studies: Intellectual navel gazing or academic discipline," p. 2.
[42] Areas of scholarship in Native American Studies are important for judicial and economic processes, environmental policies, and relations with other nations (Berry, 2010). See http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/national/midwest/85501717.html (viewed 20 April 2010).
[43] See the Department of American Indian Studies website for a list of resources, language revitalization, and education contacts http://amin.umn.edu/resources/ (viewed 24 February 2011.
[44] Robert M. Nelson,*"A Guide to Native American Studies Programs in the United States and Canada"* https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~rnelson/asail/guide/guide.html (viewed 28 September 2010).

Doctorate through the Department of History. Some university websites with NAS, AIS and Ethnic Studies programs often were difficult to find such as the University of Arizona (UA) whose information on American Indian Studies can be difficult to locate. This marginalization of programs inside other departments and with difficult websites to traverse is not unique to UA. This may contribute to fewer student applications and enrollments for these programs, and limited enrollments can spur decisions by university administrators to implement cost cutting measures such as blending smaller departments like Native Studies into larger more “traditional” disciplines.

Conclusions

As noted in the beginning of this essay, higher education institutions are still "working on deconstructing colonialism" within the same limiting constructs set by those in power. There continues to be less discussion and attention to the enduring marginalization of disempowered peoples on campuses, and the struggle for inclusion and minimizing scholarship narrows the range and significance of what could and should be accomplished as educational principals. As has been argued, "When Indian studies, as an area of study, is misunderstood by university administrators to be a subdiscipline of ethnic or minority studies, the threat of incorporation into other academic units remains real and may become stronger in the future as mainstream theories of race, ethnicity, and gender gain more attention and theories of Indigenous rights are less widely understood."[45] Further as noted in the discussion, degree-awarding institutions in the US continue to offer courses and degree programs in the "traditional disciplines," not in stand-alone Native Studies departments or programs.

Although this essay and an examination of Robert Powless's points illuminate areas of success and enfranchisement over the past ten years, the struggle to maintain equity and equality remains. In some ways, these successes in the field have increased visibility and power and fueled opposition. The possibility of increased access to resources, students who are engaged in the studies, and faculty who enrich the discipline through scholarship, clearly is perceived as a threat to the status quo and settler colonialism in the "mainstream" academic disciplines. As economic pressures increase, and vocal proponents from the right argue for the teaching of so called "American" subjects and argue against so-called "white discrimination," the threat of incorporation or demise of Native and Ethnic Studies departments is a very real concern.

---

[45] Champagne & Stauss, *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*, p. 7.

We began with the title "same words, new mouths," in light of the discussion we might revise this assessment to include notions of reframed arguments and co-opted ethics that continue to divide. We might ask, "Why is UC and CSU enrollment of Native students, with only a very few exceptions, so low when these are premier institutions?[46] And, "What is next in the moves to disestablish and disenfranchise as exemplified in Arizona?" It is exceedingly difficult to erase the hegemony of the past with platitudes, government policies that arrive too late, and the use of isolated and often anecdotal examples. It is even more difficult to convince those with power and position to offer the same opportunities to those without. Or minimally, offering opportunities to others as long as it doesn't come at the expense of those with a disproportionate share of the wealth and power this country bestows. Colonialist mentalities continue to rear their head.

[46] Cal State Long Beach is one such exception, as well as UC Davis with a Department of Native American Studies albeit these programs are not without their own challenges.

References

Berry, Carol. "Native status may be affected by diversity issues." *Indian Country Today*; March 3, 2010, p. 1, http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/national/midwest/85501717.html (visited April 20, 2010).

Champagne, Duane & Stauss, Jay (eds.) (2002). *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. (Spring 1997). "Who stole Native American Studies?" *Wicazo Sa Review*, 12(1), PP. 9-28.

Kidwell, Clara Sue. "The Vanishing Native Reappears in the College Curriculum." *Change*; Jul/Aug 1994, 26(4), 45, 1p.

Kidwell, Clara Sue. "American Indian Studies: Intellectual Navel Gazing or Academic Discipline?" *The American Indian Quarterly*: Winter 2009, 33(1), 1-17.

Lomawaima, K. Tsianina & McCarty, Teresa L. (2006). *To Remain An Indian. Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Matute-Bianchi, Maria Eugenia. (March 2011). Discussant response to this paper, presented at University of California, Riverside Conference, "Critical Ethnic Studies and the Future of Genocide."

Milligan, Kelsie. (2010). "*'Dreamcatchers': Understanding the Role of Higher Education Institutions in the Recruitment and Retention of American Indian Students.*" California Polytechnic State University, Kennedy Library: Ethnic Studies Department Senior Project.

Monteiro, Kenneth P. "Who gets to define Ethnic Studies." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 4, 2010, http://chronicle.com/article/Who-Gets-to-Define-Ethnic/66093/Kenneth (viewed 8/12/2010).

Murray, Linda, & Kathleen J. Martin. (2004). *Indigenous Education: Who Gets to Learn in California Institutions of Higher Education?* Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Nelson, Robert M. *"A Guide to Native American Studies Programs in the United States and Canada."* https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~rnelson/asail/guide/guide.html (viewed 9/28/2010).

Okihiro, Gary Y. "The Future of Ethnic Studies," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 4, 2010, http://chronicle.com/article/The-Future-of-Ethnic-Studies/66092/ (viewed 8/12/2010).

Powless, Robert E. (2002). "'*O'ezhichigeyaang* (This Thing We Do)' American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota-Duluth." In Duane Champagne & Stauss, Jay (Eds.), *Native American Studies in Higher Education: Models for Collaboration between Universities and Indigenous Nations,* pp. 183-189. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Soto, Sandra K., & Miranda Joseph. (2010). "Neoliberalism and the Battle over Ethnic Studies in Arizona." *NEA Education Journal: Thought & Action*, 26, pp. 45-55.

University of California, Berkeley. "Native American Studies Program: Toward a Critical Native American Studies." Retrieved from http://ethnicstudies.berkeley.edu/programs/nas.php (viewed 8/17/2010).

Valandra, Edward C. (2006). "The 'Indian Handshake' between generations." Wicazo Sa Review, 27(2), pp. 157-165.

Wilson, Bridget. (2010). "The State of the System." PowerPoint presentation, UC Berkeley.

Wong, Lloyd. (2008). "Multiculturalism and Ethnic Pluralism in Sociology: An Analysis of the Fragmentation Position Discourse." *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 40(1), pp. 11-32.