Theory-to-Practice:
Researching Indigenous Education in the United States

Stephanie Masta

Purdue University

U. S. A.

ABSTRACT: This article advances theories and scholarship focused on Indigenous educational research in the U.S. by engaging with the scholarship of Bryan Brayboy and Sandy Grande. This article provides an overview of the history of Indigenous education research and suggests that engaging with Indigenous-centered theories is essential for scholars undertaking this research endeavor. This article also acknowledges how past research practices inform current research and offers researchers a brief demonstration of how to apply these theories to their own educational research practices.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous education, educational research

The field of Indigenous research has grown over the past twenty years, as scholars continue to wrestle with the long-lasting historical, political, economic, and social effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous communities. A particularly important conversation happening internationally in Indigenous research focuses on educational scholarship and the role of educational scholarship in either maintaining or disrupting the harmful outcomes of settler colonialism on educational structures. Within the U.S., this conversation is particularly significant because, in U.S. educational spaces, Indigenous peoples are the modern-day ghosts in education. Educators rarely speak of or center Indigenous perspectives in classroom contexts (Masta, 2018; Sabzalian, 2019a). There is almost no discussion of Indigenous peoples in U.S. history curriculum beyond the 1990s (Masta, 2018; Shear et al., 2015), and large-scale quantitative data sets fail to include Indigenous peoples due to "lack of representation" (Shotten et al., 2013). To address the lack of Indigenous-centered perspectives, scholars such as Bryan

Brayboy and Sandy Grande have often argued for the importance of Indigenous self-determination and activism in educational spaces. Although their approaches differ in scope and purpose, the goals are similar: to challenge and resist the type of Indigenous erasure brought about by settler colonialism. Grande (2008) specifically argues that Indigenous scholars should "theorize the ways in which power and domination inform the processes and procedures of schooling and develop pedagogies that disrupt their effects" (p. 236). One process often informed by "power and domination" is the research process or, more specifically, the analytic tools researchers use to understand the Indigenous educational experience.

Educational scholars should challenge power dynamics within education while also creating space to affirm Indigenous worldviews and perspectives. Therefore, this article takes up Grande's call to theorize ways to disrupt the effects of power and domination in research by pushing back against the long-term use of deficit-centered perspectives in Indigenous research, and to offer insight into the use of Indigenous theories in educational research. To do this, I first present a brief history of Indigenous educational research in the U.S. to provide contextual framing for why previous research focused on deficit perspectives (Brayboy & Chin, 2020; San Pedro, 2021). Then I offer a short discussion on theories used in Indigenous educational research, focusing specifically on those centered on Indigenous perspectives: Red Pedagogy (Grande, 2004, 2008) and Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005). Following the theory discussion, I draw from two Indigenous student narratives to demonstrate the analytic insight Indigenous theories offer in understanding Indigenous education. Lastly, I discuss why the application of these theories is important for the future of Indigenous educational research.

The History of Indigenous Educational Research

We are aware of how learning and the control of education in exclusive knowledge societies have gone hand in hand with serious inequality, exclusion, and conflict, exemplified in aborted achievements in schools, lack of self-esteem, fragmented identities and self-awareness, and underdeveloped capacities. The European settler societies that developed these systems disregarded IK and its teachings as invalid epistemologies and have used research to examine and appropriate IK for their own purposes. This has led to our continuing distrust of researchers and their disciplines. (Battiste, 2018, p. 125)

Two primary factors mar the history of Indigenous educational research. First, early research on Indigenous learners focused on their perceived differences and did not address the structural elements that hindered Indigenous learner success. Second, white researchers who studied Indigenous education often did so to preserve narratives of white supremacy. This history of Indigenous

educational research is directly responsible for the heavy emphasis on deficit perspective models, which continue to appear in Indigenous education.

In order to discuss the present and future of Indigenous educational research, the following section offers a brief overview of the history of this research. The first studies started with the development of off-reservation boarding schools. Beginning in the early 1900s, individuals who wanted to solve "the Indian problem" viewed the public education system as the best option for the assimilation process (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997), even though researchers studying the rate and degree of the assimilation techniques used in off-reservation boarding schools found very few students assimilated into mainstream white culture (Lomawaima, 1994; McBeth, 1983). When the U.S. educational policy toward Indigenous learners moved away from the boarding school model, the research focus shifted to seven primary areas: intelligence/achievement testing (Coombs et al., 1958); urban migration (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972); role of teachers in teaching Indigenous learners (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972); parental influence on academic success of Indigenous learners (Harkins, 1968; Parmee, 1968); cultural differences (Berry, 1968; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997); stereotypes of Indigenous youth (Spindler & Spindler, 1958; Trimble et al., 1977); and the role of schools (Wolcott, 1984). Much of this research, conducted between the 1930s and 1980s, portrayed Indigenous learners as low achieving and culturally deficient, with very poor family and community support. According to this body of research, the educational failures of Indigenous learners were due to their inability to acclimate to the school environment, and not to the failure of schools to adjust to the needs of Indigenous learners. The stereotypes of Indigenous learners presented them as brave, courageous, and stoic, while also trying to overcome rampant alcoholism, drug abuse, and poverty. Although a small body of resistance research focused on school failure, institutional racism, and student resistance in education settings emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s (Deyhle, 1995; Wilson, 1991; Wolcott, 1984), the early research on Indigenous students emphasized their personal, cultural, and intellectual deficiencies as cause for their lack of academic achievement. None of this research focused on the structural factors involved in creating and maintaining a school system that was hostile toward Indigenous learners.

If the first reason to understand Indigenous educational research is the problematic focus of the early research, the second reason is to interrogate who conducted this research and for what purposes. The process of conducting research on and within Indigenous communities is often complicated because of the tenuous trust that exists between Indigenous communities and the non-Indigenous research community (Crazy Bull, 1997). According to the report, *Our Voices, Our Vision: American Indians Speak Out for Educational Excellence* (College Board, 1989), previous research conducted often inflicted great damage on those communities:

> Just as the exploitation of American Indian land and resources is of value to corporate America, research and publishing is valuable to non-Indian scholars. As a result of racism, greed, and distorted perceptions of native

realities, Indian culture as an economic commodity has been exploited by the dominant society with considerable damage to Indian people. Tribal people need to safeguard the borders of their cultural domains against research and publishing incursions. (p. 6)

Deyhle and Swisher (1997) argue that, historically, education research in Indigenous populations treated Indigenous people as "problems to solve" (p. 115). The first studies conducted on Indigenous peoples in education occurred during the initial attempts to educate Indigenous people in colonial times (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). Unfortunately, much of the research on Indigenous learners continues to focus on assimilationist practices and strategies, such as research emphasizing the need for Indigenous learners to accept and model the culture of predominately-white school spaces.

Who conducted research on Indigenous peoples also deserves some attention. Historically, a majority of the research conducted on Indigenous communities involved white researchers (Struthers, 2001), and this research was conducted in ways that disrespected Indigenous participants and did not create purposeful research. Too often, this research focused on "explaining" the experiences of Indigenous people to white audiences. Called "research poachers" (Ambler, 1997), scholars often used the experiences of Indigenous people for professional and financial gain instead of using their findings to better support Indigenous communities. Because white-centered perspectives defined research in the field of education, including determining the goals, research questions, and methods, research on the experiences of Indigenous peoples unfortunately reflected a white worldview instead of coming from the subjectivities of Indigenous experiences (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Lomawaima, 2000).

To move past the problematic history of research in Indigenous education, two things should happen. One, scholars should push back against decades-long research that argued Indigenous learners lacked the capability to be academically successful. Two, scholars should confront and disrupt the legacy of research that advanced the narrative of Indigenous inferiority in support of maintaining white supremacy. Indigenous learners experience what Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to as educational debt. Educational debt is the cumulative influence of educational inequalities related to funding, resources, access, curricula, and teachers. For the Indigenous community, this takes the form of the legacy of boarding schools, forced assimilation, lack of support for Indigenous education initiatives, exclusion from educational decision-making, lack of representation in schools, and low levels of educational attainment. Research in Indigenous education has often been studied using white-centered perspectives. White-centered perspectives often place large responsibility on individuals and communities, but do not address the systemic factors that inform Indigenous students' experiences.

Key to analyzing the implementation of Indigenous educational research is recognizing the theories used within the field. The following section discusses two

theories, Red Pedagogy and Tribal Critical Race Theory. These theories represent important directions and futures for Indigenous educational research.

Theories in Indigenous Educational Research

Doing Indigenous-centered research attempts to "right a great wrong, to turn something 'dirty' into an act of re-empowerment and self-determination" (Smith, 2018, p 33). Although there are many scholars doing this particular type of work, in this section I focus on two theories: Red Pedagogy (Grande, 2004; 2008) and Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005). Although each of these scholars engages with the topic of Indigenous education in multiple dimensions, emphasizing these two theories is important because of their connection to broader political projects, such as the relationship between education and settler colonialism.

Red Pedagogy

Red Pedagogy is a pedagogical project rooted in Indigenous knowledge and praxis (Grande, 2008). Red Pedagogy offers educational researchers multiple ways to think through the challenges facing U.S. education and the need to define decolonizing pedagogies. As an Indigenous pedagogy, Red Pedagogy "operates at the crossroads of Western theory—specifically critical pedagogy—and indigenous knowledge" (Grande, 2004, p. 234). According to Grande (2004), "The trauma of struggling against colonialism in a postcolonial zeitgeist manifests most acutely in American Indian students" (p. 5). Educators working with Indigenous learners need approaches to schooling that emphasize the political nature of education, as well as strategies to challenge the colonialism present in school environments. Grande offers Red Pedagogy as a space of engagement for these conversations. Red Pedagogy provides insight into understanding the spaces Indigenous learners occupy.

In response to the influence of colonialism, Grande (2004, 2008) argues for educators to approach the structure of schooling using the perspective of Red Pedagogy. Red Pedagogy encourages educators to do the following: a) treat the "personal as political" where the politics of schooling are understood through the structural lens of colonialism and capitalism; b) construct self-determined spaces where Indigenous students learn to navigate racist, sexist, and capitalistic structures; and c) allow Indigenous learners to evaluate what being Indigenous means in today's environment and arm them with "a critical analysis of intersecting systems of domination and the tools to navigate them" (Grande, 2008, p. 241). The engagement with Red Pedagogy requires educators to critically analyze the primarily Eurocentric processes and curricula of predominately-white schools, to re-imagine an education system separate from its current colonial context, and to reintroduce Indigenous ways of knowing in the classroom, including the use of Indigenous languages. As Grande (2008) argues, "The project of decolonization not only demands students to acquire 'knowledge of the oppressor' but also the skills to negotiate and dismantle the implications of such knowledge" (p. 244). Red

Pedagogy is about creating school spaces that empower Indigenous learners to move forward in the process of decolonization, not find ways to "fit" within the current structure of school.

Grande's argument is that any structure created through colonialism will never serve Indigenous learners equally because "American Indian students do not enter a social space in which identities compete with equal power for legitimacy; rather, they are infused into a political terrain that presumes their inferiority" (Grande, 2004, p. 113). The only way for Indigenous learners to achieve equity in school is through the decolonization process. The emphasis in Red Pedagogy is to create spaces for critical analysis "intersecting systems of domination" (Grande, 2004, p. 118). In these systems, Indigenous learners must not only "navigate the terrain of the academy but to theorize and negotiate a racist, sexist marketplace that aims to exploit the labor of signified 'others' for capital gain" (Grande, 2004, p. 118). The recognition of colonization is not the important element in the theory—what is important is the struggle for decolonization and the recognition that schools serve as sites for this struggle. If Indigenous children are going to learn the "knowledge of the oppressor," fundamental to the battle for decolonization is providing the tools to navigate those systems of knowledge.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) emerged from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a branch of legal theory that uses perspectival experiences to illustrate the role the legal system has played in legitimizing the systemic oppression of non-whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT acknowledges how white supremacy and its subordination of non-whites created and maintains U.S. social structure (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT also examines the relationship between the social structure of white supremacy and the rules of law (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Though CRT began as a movement within critical legal studies, it has moved into other areas of academia, including education. Critical race scholars in education have "theorized, examined, and challenged the ways in which race and racism shape schooling structures, practices, and discourses" (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 3).

While a global acknowledgment of the relationship between colonization and racism exists, Brayboy (2005) argues that current policies in the U.S. position Indigenous people as racialized but not colonized, necessitating the need for TribalCrit. TribalCrit roots itself in "the multiple, nuanced, and historically – and geographically – located epistemologies and ontologies found in Indigenous communities" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 427). Key components of TribalCrit include deconstructing the relationship between colonialism and sovereignty and understanding knowledge as "the ability to recognize change, adapt, and move forward with change" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 434), which serves to move away from the white/Black binary CRT originally constructed. TribalCrit also argues that colonization is endemic to society, despite the desire of Indigenous communities to obtain and maintain tribal sovereignty. TribalCrit also makes clear that U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are often rooted in white supremacy and forced

assimilation. Lastly, TribalCrit acknowledges how Indigenous perspectives inform the concepts of culture, knowledge, and power, and these perspectives serve as legitimate sources of data and knowledge. Much like Red Pedagogy, TribalCrit is significant in the conversation on Indigenous education because it recognizes the positionality of Indigenous people as both colonized and racialized in the U.S. TribalCrit places the Indigenous experience at the center and validates the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and values in educational spaces. TribalCrit also stresses the relationship between theory and practice, arguing abstract ideas do not make change in real-life communities (Brayboy, 2005).

Brayboy (2005) developed TribalCrit to recognize how the experiences of Indigenous people differ from other groups because of the legacy of colonialism. Brayboy argues that TribalCrit exposes inconsistencies in structural systems, such as the educational system. Once aware of these inconsistencies, Brayboy argues practitioners can then make "institutions of formal education more understandable to Indigenous students and Indigenous students more understandable to the institutions" (p. 441). Brayboy suggests two approaches to address the inconsistencies. The first approach, assimilation, is highly problematic. Assimilation is "an act or series of policies that force those who are not like those in power to become more like them or to model themselves after the 'norm'" (p. 167). Brayboy et al. (2007) suggest accommodation as an alternative approach to assimilation. Accommodation occurs when Indigenous students make the choice to adopt the values and behaviors they find most beneficial in school settings.

Theory-to-Practice: The Application of Indigenous Theories

To demonstrate how Indigenous theories assist researchers in making meaning of Indigenous contexts, I present two small-story composite narratives (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Masta, 2018; Willis, 2019) generated from interviews of Indigenous participants who participated in a study on their experiences as Indigenous students, which was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The narratives came from the prompt "reflect on a learning moment you had as an Indigenous person in school. You can choose any level of schooling to reflect on." Although the use of two narratives might seem narrow in scope, the narratives are similar to other documented experiences of Indigenous people (Masta, 2016, 2018; Sabzalian, 2019a; Shotten et al., 2013). Following the narratives is my application of both TribalCrit and Red Pedagogy in analyzing the narratives. In my analysis, I suggest that each theoretical application offers important understandings about Indigenous learner experiences. Using Indigenous theories is an act of resistance that attempts to disable grand narratives constructed by colonial ideology. Indigenous perspectives "challenge Eurocentrism in curriculum and provide generative analyses" to enrich education more broadly (Sabzalian, 2019b, p. 330). In these instances, I use the theoretical application to position Indigenous people as those "we can learn *from (*not *about)*" (Sabzalian, 2019b, p. 330).

Colonialism Benefits the Colonizer

Colonialism always benefits the colonizer. This is what I've taken away from my training as a scientist. No matter what type of compensation, whether money, land, food, clothes, or even acceptance. There will always be a price to pay. It may be from the land we are on, to the children being taken from their homes, to the complete loss and destruction of our ways of life. The goal is to always improve the situation of the colonists, not the Natives. Colonialists viewed themselves as "saviors of the old world." Essentially people who "save" Indigenous people with religion, technology, government, and social constructs, and so forth. Then from this viewpoint, they feel it is right to take from the Natives such as land, resources and more. Disrupting the ecosystem of our people and culture in return for the "things" they gave us. Colonialism also spread many diseases and death, so yes, they gave us this and took away much more. My voice is silenced in the classroom. We are trained as [Western] scientists to avoid certain cultural topics. My culture values understanding how a situation affects everyone in the community because that is how you decide what is the best course of action to take. Yet, we are often presented with "cold, stark" numbers which inherently reduces what could be an inherently complex cultural issue. (Patrick, Graduate Student)

Our Experiences Are Not Generalizable

It's hard because the Midwestern campus is really Native heavy, which was why I was sad there wasn't much involvement. They have an entire diversity center for Native students. I think there should be more focus on the difference between a real Native student and a stereotypical Native student. That was something I ran into when I was at my undergrad institution. I took a class called Native American history, something or whatever. And it was so generalized to the point that I was sat in the class and I was like, "This isn't correct for every tribe." The professor was going like, "This is the government structure. This is some of the religion, etcetera." And I'm like, "You can't just generalize like that." Every tribe is different. Even each county has their own thing, for us it's like different celebrations. You can't just generalize. And I get one class you can't really break it up [into specific tribes], but it was so frustrating to be the only Native student sitting there and going, "What are you teaching?" People need to know that we're just the same as every other person that's sitting in a seat, but we have our own culture and things that we want to preserve and move forward with and stay active in our community because it's slowly vanishing. (Jennifer, Graduate Student)

Theoretical Meaning Making of Indigenous Experiences

Applying Indigenous theories to Indigenous contexts offers researchers more insight into the challenges Indigenous students face and allows for different approaches to studying Indigenous educational spaces. As the narratives above

demonstrate, key to recognizing Indigeneity in situations is viewing those situations with Indigenous lenses. The use of TribalCrit and Red Pedagogy suggests that 1) colonial ideology informs multiple facets of an Indigenous student's experience; 2) Indigenous perspectives and worldviews are dismissed or diminished; and 3) Indigenous learners are valuable experts of their own experiences.

It is not surprising that both narratives highlight the endemic nature of colonialism, as both TribalCrit and Red Pedagogy argue this as foundational to the need for their theoretical approaches. Indigenous people encounter colonialism throughout their educational tenure through interactions with others, in the curriculum, and within the campus culture. As Patrick noted, "My [Indigenous] voice was silenced in the classroom. We are training as Western scientists to avoid certain cultural topics." He elaborated on how his doctoral training as a scientist contributed to his recognition of colonialism in the academy:

> This is what I've taken away from my training as a scientist. No matter what type of compensation is offered, whether money, land, food, clothes, or even acceptance, there will always be a price to pay. Then from this viewpoint, they [white scientists] feel it is right to take from the Natives such as land, resources and more. Disrupting the ecosystem of our people and culture in return for the "things" they gave us.

Jennifer shared that while her campus was really "Native heavy" and had an "entire diversity center for Native students," there was little involvement from Indigenous students. The lack of involvement was due to what Jennifer indicated was the failure of the campus administrators to distinguish "between a real Native student and a stereotypical Native student." Campuses often assume that all Indigenous students came from reservation communities and needed assistance "adjusting" to campus. There is no consideration that Indigenous students bring diverse backgrounds and experiences to campus.

Present throughout the narratives is also the indication that Indigenous perspectives and worldviews are often dismissed or diminished. This occurs because policies toward Indigenous people are often rooted in white supremacy and assimilation. Jennifer described this experience in a course on Native American History:

> The professor was going like, "This is the government structure. This is some of the religion, etcetera." And I'm like, "You can't just generalize like that." Every tribe is different. Even each county has their own thing, for us it's like different celebrations. You can't just generalize. And I get one class you can't really break it up [into specific tribes], but it was so frustrating to be the only Native student sitting there and going, "What are you teaching?"

The professor treated Indigenous groups as monolithic and did not engage any Native students in discussion about their understanding of Native American history.

Patrick also noted that any discussion about colonization or its affects occurs from the perspective of whiteness, where the argument is that colonization was good. He shared, "The goal is to always improve the situation of the colonists, not the Natives. Colonialists viewed themselves as 'saviors of the old world.' Essentially people who 'save' Indigenous people with religion, technology, government, and social constructs, and so forth." Perpetuating the notion that colonization "saved" the Indigenous people denies not only the robustness of Indigenous communities at the time but fails to account for the white supremacist ideology behind the idea of "saving" certain groups.

Lastly, the narratives demonstrate that Indigenous learners are valuable experts of their own experiences. TribalCrit argues that Indigenous peoples are legitimate sources of data and knowledge, which often comes from their ability to analyze critically the intersecting systems of oppression that influence Indigenous experiences (systems as identified in Red Pedagogy). Patrick acknowledged this expertise when he brought up the tension between being trained as a Western scientist and recognizing the limits of that science. As he shared, "My culture values understanding how a situation affects everyone in the community because that is how you decide what is the best course of action to take." Patrick points out that Indigenous people are legitimate sources of knowledge when it comes to community-based issues. Part of Patrick's perspective derives from his analysis that focusing on numeric data only might miss important factors. He shared, "We are often presented with 'cold, stark' numbers, which inherently reduces what could be an inherently complex cultural issue." Jennifer also offered insight into the role of Indigenous community expertise. She stated, "We have our own culture and things that we want to preserve and move forward with and stay active in our own community because it's slowly vanishing. Jennifer's analysis acknowledge that the ongoing assimilation makes it harder for Indigenous communities to remain vital.

The Future of Indigenous Educational Research

Indigenous research is an act of great hopefulness, an investment in engagement with the academy and with settler society, both of which excluded us, and an engagement in drawing knowledges together. (Smith, 2018, p. 33)

The narratives shared offer brief but important insight into the experiences of Indigenous students. Valuing Indigenous experiences in the research process is essential to improving how Indigenous learners engage with schooling. Purposeful educational research with Indigenous communities encompasses two things: a commitment to Indigenous knowledge and praxis and theoretical perspectives that align with Indigenous philosophies and worldviews. As Smith (2018) argues, "The big political agenda of Indigenous research is for the paradigm

shifts and transformations that overturn colonialism and create new relations of power with the nation-state so that Indigenous well-being and ability to be self-determining is achieved" (p. 33). How researchers achieve this remains an ongoing question in Indigenous educational research. However, theories like Red Pedagogy or TribalCrit, offer a way forward for researchers.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999; 2012) foundational work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* serves as the best articulation of the purpose of using Indigenous-centered approaches in research: to reclaim, reformulate, and reconstitute what the process of colonization stripped. Colonization is the experience that separates Indigenous peoples from other racialized groups in the U.S., thereby necessitating that educational theories regarding Indigenous education address its influence. It is imperative that educators "recognize that colonization is not historic" and that its "structures, discourses, logics, and practices" remain embedded in education (Sabzalian, 2019b, p. 16/18). According to Smith, within this research agenda are 25 different projects pursued by scholars relevant to the experience of Indigenous people. The three projects where scholars can often start implementing Indigenous-centered theories are intervening, representing, and reframing.

The first project is *intervening.* Research focused on intervening is "designed around making structural and cultural changes" (Smith, 2012, p. 148). This research involves making structural changes to meet the needs of Indigenous people and not forcing Indigenous people to change to conform to the structural system. Disrupting the current educational structure is one of the most important reasons for new theories on the experiences of Indigenous learners because research suggests current educational structures do not serve Indigenous learners adequately. The second project is *representing*, which focuses on "proposing solutions to the real-life dilemmas that Indigenous communities confront, and trying to capture the complexities of being indigenous" (Smith, 2012, p. 152). Centering new educational theories on the perspectives of Indigenous learners indicates the importance of their representation within the conversation on addressing problems in education. The third project is *reframing*. Previous attempts to research problems and issues in Indigenous communities framed those problems and issues using a white lens. Reframing research takes control of that perspective and introduces new ways to discuss these topics. The call for new theories seeks to reframe the current conversation on Indigenous education to reflect the views and perspectives of Indigenous learners, not the views white people think Indigenous learners hold. Smith (2012) argues within Indigenous research spaces that methodological debates are concerned with the broader goals and strategies of Indigenous research. By using these three frames, I situate the need for new theories within the ongoing dialogue about the purpose and goals of research with Indigenous communities. This helps to ensure that research in Indigenous communities is "respectful, ethical, sympathetic, and useful" (Smith, 2012, p. 9).

The purpose of this article was to demonstrate why Indigenous theories are necessary for understanding the experience of Indigenous learners in education, particularly within the United States. As more scholars engage with this topic, it is

important to acknowledge how past research practices inform current research practices—and to offer researchers a brief overview of two Indigenous-centered theories they might use in their own work. My own practice as an Indigenous scholar seeks to encompass Indigenous perspectives in ways that challenge and disrupt the different settler colonial practices present in research spaces.

In 2000, Lomawaima, referencing the history of scholarly research on Indigenous communities to represent domination and oppression rather than emancipation, wrote,

> Despite that history—or perhaps more realistically because of it—many Native communities and schools accept the need for high-quality research guided by locally meaningful questions and concerns. We need more research on why and how children succeed; on how local Native control can be meaningfully implemented; on the results of implementing "culturally congruent" teaching pedagogies on curricula; on models of language maintenance and revival; on Native-language curricula; on community-based models of epistemology and community-defined structures of knowledge, and so on. We need more research in Indian education. (p. 22)

Her words are very similar to the words of Marie Battiste at the opening of this article—each recognizes how settler societies have harmed, and continue to harm, Indigenous communities through problematic research and the only solution is to engage with scholars who place Indigenous knowledge and worldviews at the center of their practice. Twenty years later, Indigenous scholars still seek justice for their communities.

References

Ambler, M. (1997). Native scholarship: Explorations in the new frontier. *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education, 9*(9), 8-11.

Battiste, M. (2018). Reconciling Indigenous knowledge in education: Promises, possibilities, and imperatives. In M. Spooner & J. McNinch (Eds.), *Dissident knowledge in higher education* (pp. 123-150). University of Regina Press.

Berry, B. (1968). *The education of American Indians: A survey of the literature.* U.S. Government Printing Office.

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *The Urban Review, 37*(5), 425-446. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y

Brayboy, B. M. J., Castagno, A., & Maughan, E. (2007). Equality and justice for all? Examining race in education scholarship. *Review of Research in Education, 31*, 159-194. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X07300046159

Brayboy, B. M. J & Chin, J. (2020). On the development of territory. *Contexts, 19*(3), 22-27. https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504220950397

College Board and American Indian Science and Engineering Society (1989). *Our voices, our vision: American Indians speak out for educational excellence.* College Entrance Examination Board.

Coombs, M., Kron, R.E., Collister, E.G., & Anderson, K.E. (1958). *The Indian child goes to school.* Haskell Press.

Crazy Bull, C. (1997). A Native conversation about research and scholarship. *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education, 9*(1), 17-23.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction.* New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.51089

Deyhle, D. (1995). Constructing failure and maintaining cultural identity: Navajo and Ute school leavers. *Journal of American Indian Education, 31*(2), 24-47.

Deyhle, D., & Swisher, K. (1997). Research in American Indian and Alaska Native education: From assimilation to self-determination. In M.W. Apple (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education, 22,* 113-194. https://doi.org/10.2307/1167375

Fuchs, E. & Havighurst, R.J. (1972). *To live on this earth: American Indian education.* University of New Mexico Press.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2006). Thinking big with small stories in narrative and
 identity analysis. Narrative Inquiry, *16*,122–130. https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.6.15geo

Grande, S. (2004). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Grande, S. (2008). Red pedagogy: The un-methodology. In N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, & L.T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 233-254). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686.n12

Harkins, A.M. (1968). *Public education on a Minnesota Chippewa reservation.* Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 3-12. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035007003

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*, 47-68.

Lomawaima, K. T. (1994). *They called it prairie light: The story of Chilocco Indian school.* University of Nebraska Press.

Lomawaima, K. T. (2000). Tribal sovereigns: Reframing research in American Indian education. *Harvard Educational Review, 70*(1), 1-23. https://doi.org /10.17763/haer.70.1.b133t0976714n73r

Masta, S. (2016). Disrupting colonial narratives in the curriculum. *Multicultural Perspectives, 18*(4), 185–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2016.122 2497

Masta, S. (2018). "I'm exhausted": Everyday occurrences of being Native American. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 31*(9), 821–835. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2018.1499984

McBeth, S.J. (1983). *Ethnic identity and the boarding school experience of west-central Oklahoma American Indians*. University Press of America.

Parmee, E.A. (1968). *Formal education and culture change: A modern Apache Indian community and government education program.* University of Arizona Press.

Sabzalian, L. (2019a). *Indigenous children's survivance in public schools.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429427503

Sabzalian, L. (2019b). The tensions between Indigenous sovereignty and multicultural citizenship education: Toward an anticolonial approach to civic education. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 47*(3), 311-346. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2019.1639572

San Pedro, T. (2021). *Protecting the promise: Indigenous education between mothers and their children.* Teachers College Press.

Shear, S., Knowles, R.T., Soden, G.J., & Castro, A.J. (2015). Manifesting destiny: Re/presentations of Indigenous peoples in K-12 U.S. history standards. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 43*(1), 68-101. https://doi.org /10.1080/00933104.2014.999849

Shotten, H., Lowe, S., & Waterman, S. (2013). *Beyond the asterisk: Understanding Native American College students.* Stylus Publishing.

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples.* Zed Books.

Smith, L.T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.)*. Zed Books.

Smith, L.T. (2018). The art of the impossible—defining and measuring Indigenous research? In M. Spooner & J. McNinch (Eds.), *Dissident knowledge in higher education* (pp. 21-40). University of Regina Press.

Spindler, L. & Spindler, G. (1958). Male and female adaptations in culture change. *American Anthropologist, 60*, 217-233. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1958.60 .2.02a00020

Struthers, R. (2001). Conducting sacred research: An Indigenous experience. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 16(1), 125-133. https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.2001.0014

Trimble, J.E., Goddard, A., & Dinges, N. (1977). *Review of the literature on educational needs and problems of American Indians: 1971-1976.* Battelle Human Affairs Research Center.

Willis, R. (2019). The use of composite narratives to present interview findings. *Qualitative Research, 19*(4), 471-480. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118787711

Wilson, P. (1991). Trauma of Sioux Indiana high school students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 22*(4), 367-383. https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1991.22.4.05x1194x

Wolcott, H. (1984). *A Kwakiutl village and school*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Yosso, T.J., Parker, L., Solórzano, D., & Lynn, M. (2004). From Jim Crow to affirmative action and back again: A critical race discussion of racialized rationales and access to higher education. *Review of Research in Education, 28,* 1-25. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X028001001

Author Contact

Stephanie Masta, **szywicki@purdue.edu**
Curriculum & Instruction, 100 N. University, Beering 4154, West Lafayette, IN 4790