NAVIGATING TRIBAL CREDENTIALISM:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION PERCEPTIONS

WITHIN A PACIFIC NORTHWEST TRIBAL COMMUNITY

by

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A DISSERTATION

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Navigating Credentialism: An Ethnographic Case Study of the Higher Education
Perceptions within a Pacific Northwest Indian Tribal Community

This ethnographic dissertation examines contemporary perceptions of higher

education within the context of a Tribal government. The purpose of this dissertation is

to understand how Tribal community members perceive higher education as related to

Tribal self-determination. This project was partially modeled around two specific

research questions relating to Brayboy's (2012) model of self-determination. Specific

research questions for this dissertation included: (1) What are the perceptions of education

in a Tribal community as they relate to sovereignty, nation building, and self-

determination? (2) Are there differences among perceptions of education between groups

(e.g., traditionalists v. credentialists)?

In addition to addressing the specific research questions, this project also included

a modified grounded theory to foster emergent theme development. Emergent theme

development was intended to account for narratives beyond specific research questions.

Participants were presented the following questions in one-on-one, open-ended

interviews organized around the following questions: (1) How is formal education

important for Tribal members? (2) How is formal education important to Tribal

community development? (3) What formal educational credentials are most important to the operations of the Tribe? (4) What do you think formal educational credentials represent? (5) What tensions exist between a formal education v. cultural knowledge? (6) What do you think should be the ideal process of Tribal higher education? (7) How well do you think the current educational policies and practices of the Tribe complement self-determination? (8) What are the goals of a self-determination education?

Results for this project were mixed. Narratives indicated a relative absence of conceptual constructs associated with Brayboy's model of self-determination. Additionally, narratives also did not indicate a robust example of group dynamic. Results appeared to indicate an underlying presence of epistemological standpoints to frame Tribal higher education in terms of: (1) Formal Credentials; (2) Practical Experience; and (3) Cultural Experience. Finally, emergent theme development established how educational credentials are promoted, valued, and employed within the Tribal government setting. Narratives produced an extremely nuanced and dynamic landscape of perceptions, groups, utilities, tensions, obstacles, and reforms within Tribes. Narratives also indicated the presence of educational credentialism affecting self-determination in Tribal communities.

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This dissertation is dedicated
to my wife, Cheryl Bourgault (Shugalitsablu),
to my mother, Genevieve Rogers (Whytono),
and to my uncle, David Casey (Sebuticum).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Researcher Qualifications

My name is Kevin Bourgault. I am a descendent of the Coastal Salish Twana people, recognized as the Skokomish Tribe in Washington State. I come from the Miller Family, descended from my enrolled great grandmother, Slanay. My Tuwaduqsed name is Sha Sha Li, given to me by my Great Uncle, Subiyay Bruce Miller. In Tuwaduqsed, my name means to "carry very far."

I was of the first generation of Skokomish children to attend the reservation Head Start program in 1976 (following the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975). I was educated on the Skokomish Indian Reservation at Hood Canal Elementary and Middle School, District 404. I graduated from Shelton High School in 1991.

Following public education, I left the Skokomish Reservation for military service; enlisting for three years as a light infantryman in the 10th Mountain Division, which included combat service in Somalia and teaching duties at the United States Military Academy – West Point. Following military service, I attended Puget Sound Community College, Central Washington University, Indiana University, Duke University, completing a Masters degree in Public Policy, degrees in with Political Science and Public Policy, and minors in Anthropology, Geography, and Economics. This dissertation fulfills the final requirement for the PhD in Education at the University of Oregon.

Between my military services and my education, I have 17 years of professional experience in Tribal government, working as a GIS consultant, natural resources planner, community development planner, and economic development planner. My professional projects in Tribal government include:

- Creation of the Skokomish Geographic Information System (GIS)

- Skokomish Transportation Plan (draft for grant)

- Skokomish Community Economic Development (CEDS) Survey (draft for grant)

- Skokomish Wastewater Plan, including NEPA and SEPA review (Publication)

- Skokomish FEMA earthquake retrofit for the Skokomish Tribal Center (draft for grant)

- Skokomish Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Tribal police/Natural resources enforcement merger (draft for grant)

- Repatriation of Tribal remains from the Central Washington University, Department of Anthropology

- Suquamish Well Water Survey (draft for grant)

- Suquamish Wastewater Plan (draft for grant)

- Suquamish Broadband Communications Tower (archaeological monitoring)

- Suquamish Mobile Internet Connection Project (conception and draft for grant)

- Suquamish Elder's House Renovation Project

- Suquamish Community Redevelopment Capital Campaign (liaison and facilitation)

- Yakama Business, Training, and Technology Center at Toppenish, WA (including the management and maintenance at White Swan, WA and Union Gap, WA).

Beyond my reservation work, I have three years of teaching experience as an adjunct instructor for the Department of Political Science at CWU. My primary responsibilities in this role were to create and instruct a required course for the American Indian Studies (AIS) minor: Tribal Rights and Sovereignty (POSC 411). In addition, I have also served as a member of the steering committee for the establishment of the American Indian Studies minor, as well as serving as a cultural and repatriation liaison for CWU Department of Anthropology.

In terms of my qualifications, I embody a rare combination of experience as a Tribal community member, a Tribal veteran, a Tribal employee, and a Tribal academic. In terms of my specific geographic research area, I know the people, I know the families, I know the history, I know the governments, I know the politics, I know the policies, and I know the issues. In summation, I know Tribes and Tribal people in ways most people cannot. I have an established reputation within Tribal populations that other academics do not have. Most importantly, I know how to do research in the way that honors and respects these cultures and communities in ways that other academics cannot understand. For these reasons, I am uniquely qualified for this type of research.

Primer on Tribes

Before I delve further into the specific issues associated with Tribal higher education I think it imperative that I provide a primer on Tribes, as in my experience I do not think that many people understand what a Tribe is or why it is different from other ethnic groups. First, I describe a Tribe as a collection of families who share a common history, who were relocated to a common geographic location, who were compelled to adopt a common political identity, who now possess a unique government-to-government

relationship with the United States. This relationship of these family groups is formalized by and through Tribal governments.

Furthermore, I posit that an individual's relationship with a Tribal government is a function of their enrollment status. Only enrolled Tribal people are subject to federal Indian law, and only under the auspice of a recognized Tribal government. Blood quantum is the primary requisite for enrollment in most Tribes today (Garroutte, 2003); including the Tribe associated with this study.[1] An individual's blood quantum is expressed as a fractional amount of the member's parents' blood quantum. Original blood quantum records for many Tribes were determined by BIA census rolls following the passage of the Indian General Allotment Act (Dawes Severalty Act) (Indian General Allotment Act of 1887, 24 Stat. 388) that sought to abolish collective Tribal relationships and privatize all reservation lands. These Dawes rolls reflected the assessed blood quantum as determined by BIA agents, not necessarily the Tribal persons.

Today, ripples of the Dawes rolls still remain and Tribal membership is still a function of government policy. Today each Tribe has its own set of blood quantum thresholds to determine who can be enrolled in the Tribe. For those individuals who meet the blood quantum thresholds, they are imbued treaty rights, including educational rights. For those who do not, the only recourse available is formal adoption by the Tribal membership.

What is important to remember that in terms of Tribal membership and Tribal rights is that there are three primary internal agents affecting the expression of these

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[1] For some other Tribes, there are additional requirements that involve membership qualifications based on additional factors of parental lineage, place of residence, and other similar indicators of relation to community, etc.

rights: (a) the individual Tribal member; (b) the Tribal family; and (c) the Tribal government. Within the three agents, there exists an implicit, complex set of relationships that provide insight about the expression of power in a Tribal community. The Tribal government embodies and protects the treaty rights while the individual Tribal member exercises and expresses the treaty right. The Tribal government can exercise collective oversight powers to limit and enforce individual expressions of the treaty right. Such limitation actions are exercised rarely, as the Tribal family can intervene to check the encroachment of the Tribal government onto family members.

Regarding this final point, I want to emphasize that I believe the power in Tribes is located not so much in the individual or in the government but rather in the Tribal families that constitute the Tribal government. The fact is that the Tribal families are the repositories for the expressions of tradition and culture within Tribes. Tribal families are the primary agents who compete for power. Tribal families are also the actors that set and guide priorities for Tribal business. It also holds true that Tribal families are central to Tribal policy changes (including changes in the blood quantum needed for membership). As such, I would urge the reader to situate interpretations of this study within the member/family/Tribal dynamic, remembering the central importance of the Tribal family within the power landscape.

CHAPTER II

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

> What kind of professionals do we need in 'Indian Country?' The necessary condition is that they receive the requisite technical knowledge, skills, and abilities to advise Indian communities of an array of possible solutions and scenarios to address specific problems/issues. However, it is not a sufficient condition to meet the Tribal needs of culturally distinct Indigenous people. Any Tribal person or politically engaged Tribal member can testify to the fact that often when non-Indian professionals are hired to do things for Tribes, the clash of underlying worldviews—that is, Indigenous — versus — Western conflict — makes accomplishment of Tribal goals difficult, if not impossible.
>
> Daniel Wildcat, *Power and Place* (2001)

In 1972, the "Indian Education Act" (Part C, Title IV of Public Law 92-318, Educational Amendments of 1972) was signed into law. This act established a formal federal recognition by the United States of the fact that American Indians have unique, educational and culturally related academic needs and distinct language and cultural needs. Three years later Congress signed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (Public Law 93-638, 1975) into law. The legislative intent of this act was to build upon the "Indian Education Act" of 1972, by providing Tribes the authority to plan, manage, and administer federal funds for Tribal education programs to create self-governance and self-determination capacities within their communities. Three years after, Congress adopted the Tribal Community Colleges Assistance Act (Public Law 95-471, 1978), with the intention to provide funding and expansions of Tribal community colleges on Reservations. This final act was intended to serve as a capstone of educational self-development, allowing Tribes the ability to operate and credential their own members within their own communities. Combined these acts became the foundational pillars of Tribal education reform and self-determination (Stein, 1980).

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Despite the lofty intentions of these acts, in the nearly 40 years since passage, the intended positive effects have remained largely unrealized. Empirical data shows that on average, most Tribal people do not complete a high school diploma (Faircloth and Tippeconic, 2010). As a result, many Tribal people do not go to college, nor do they earn advanced or professional degrees (Grinder & Kelly Reid, 2013; Ross, et al., 2012; NCES, 2008; Aud, et al., 2012). The lack of collective educational credentials among Tribal populations appears to exclude Tribal people from positions of power in their own governments and continues to directly impact the self-governance and self-determination of Tribal communities.

Perception of the Problem

The current system of higher education appears to exhibit systemic flaws that undermine self-determination development within Tribes. Empirical evidence shows that American Indian/Alaskan Natives are among the populations least likely to gain academic credentials. Nationally, roughly 82% of Native students graduate with a high school diploma or equivalent (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamani, 2011).[2] In 2010, Natives represented only about .8% of students of undergraduate students (as compared to 72.9% for Whites) (Aud, et al, 2012, p. 285). In that same measurement, in terms of advanced degrees, Natives represent roughly .6% of the Masters degree population (as compared to 72.8% for White students) and .7% of PhDs (as compared to 74.3 % for White students) (Aud, et al., 2012, p. 285).

Within these figures it is also important to note that the empirical data does not take into account the important demographic distinction between a Native scholar and a

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[2] Statistics vary widely among states. Tennessee reports an 89% graduation rate in 2011. In comparison, Minnesota reports 42% graduation rate in 2011.

Tribal scholar. Native scholars may or may not be representative of a Tribal community or government in the same way a Tribal scholar would. If this distinction were to be further sussed out within the data, the educational credentials for Tribal scholars would be much lower. It is this fraction of Tribal scholars, who possess degrees, that this project was intended to address. I think that this fractional population of Native people represents the potential community leadership and workforce of Tribal people who embody contemporary and future expressions of Tribal self-determination.

It is this Tribal nuance within the data that reveals a larger systemic issue in higher education. The current system of higher education remains flawed; functionary upon an individual's successful navigation of the public and higher education systems. Education is still presented within contemporary society as an individual good, and as such, the collective utility of education as a [Tribal] community good is largely overshadowed. To underserved communities, singular educational accomplishment (e.g., higher education credentials) cannot be replicated by individual degree holders, insomuch as they cannot create and credential others like them within their own communities. The larger social, political, and economic effects of this arrangement have been one of the greatest sources of social injustice to Tribal people, Tribal communities, and Tribal governments. Despite all the lofty legislative and political rhetoric about self-determination and self-education, the reality is that social justice for Tribal people is functional upon both the retention and promotion of cultural identity, while at the same time requiring the attainment of academic credentials needed to serve the positions of power within their own governments. While cultural identity remains a ubiquitous commodity in Tribes, important educational credentials are not – have never been. This

appears most directly due to the fact that there has remained but one pathway of educational social justice available to Tribal students: the university system.

But what are the collective effects of the university system on Tribal capacity to self-govern? What does education mean to Tribal people? How is education functionalized within Tribal contexts? The answers to these questions require an embedded and nuanced understanding of education as applied to Tribal communities. From my personal and professional experience I know that Native scholars and their families confront the perceptions of education, often times, through conflicting viewpoints. In my experience, Tribal people love learning, but often hate school. Tribal people typically go to school for collective reasons rather than to pursue individual career aspirations. Like all students, Tribal scholars want to succeed, but they often struggle within systems of higher education that requires compromise of their cultural identity as a requisite for graduation. Finally, the university system confronts Tribal scholars with a prerequisite of doubt that erodes their intellectual confidence, which prevents Tribal people from asking and answering their own questions in meaningful ways.

From my professional experience, the sum results of these individual and social perceptions of education appear to negatively impact the wellbeing of most Tribes in terms of community capacity to staff positions of power. It is a quiet fact in "Indian Country," that many of the Tribal governments, and communities still lack certain specialized credentials (e.g., MBA, JD, MD, PE, etc.) required for the planning, operation, and maintenance of their own governments. Tribal communities struggle with issues of determining who is "most qualified." I have witnessed how Tribes have tried to address these issues through the adoption and promotion of explicit hiring policies,

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commonly referred to as "Indian Preference."[3] However, I have also experienced that in the grand scheme of Tribal government, these policies typically rarely trump technical credentials, and that Tribal governments still hire "qualified" non-Tribal staff to fill positions of power (e.g., program administrators, planners, social workers, biologists, engineers, police officers, etc.) within their own governments because to place "unqualified" Tribal people in these same positions is viewed by Tribal administration as undesirable or as a potential breach of the external staffing agreements and funding requirements. As a result, I have come to realize that robust expressions of self-governance and self-determination remain largely underdeveloped in "Indian Country."

I even know of the ways in which the fetish for education credentials creates bizarre internal organizational and institutional paradoxes in Tribes. I have witnessed in several Tribal governments the situation in which Tribal members (lacking higher education credentials) are only "qualified" to clean toilets and cut grass at the Tribal center by day, but at night serve as important cultural and community members on governing boards and Tribal executive council.   For many years I have remained perplexed how these people remain unqualified to work within the operation and management of their own government, but are somehow qualified to lead it. This dissertation project was created as a means to examine the rationale behind these conditions and outcomes.

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[3] Indian Preference is typically awarded based upon a point scheme. A 10-point preference is awarded to Tribally enrolled candidate from the same Tribe. A 5-point preference is awarded to a Tribally enrolled candidate from another recognized Tribe. No preference points are given to Tribal descendants, to members of non-Federally recognized Tribes, or to non-Tribal candidates.

Research Questions

My study involved two general research questions to distill Tribal viewpoints about higher education and educational reform:

1. What are the perceptions of education in a Tribal community as they relate to sovereignty, nation building, and self-determination?

2. Are there differences among perceptions of education between groups (e.g., traditionalists v. credentialists)?

To examine these research questions, I presented participants the following questions in one-on-one, open-ended interviews:

1. How is formal education important for Tribal members?

2. How is formal education important to Tribal community development?

3. What formal educational credentials are most important to the operations of the Tribe?

4. What do you think formal educational credentials represent?

5. What tensions exist between a formal education v. cultural knowledge?

6. What do you think should be the ideal process of Tribal higher education?

7. How well do you think the current educational policies and practices of the Tribe complement self-determination?

8. What are the goals of a self-determination education?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an exploratory study to survey the contemporary Tribal attitudes and perceptions about higher education in the context of the development of a Tribal community college project. At the foundation of this study was the conception that education priorities are reflective of normative perceptions of identity, and that within the multiple expressions of experiences of identity within a Tribal community, there is a richness to a Tribal community's capacity to self-determine the kinds of education that are important.

The outcomes of this study were manifold. This study uncovered several important nuances about education and Tribal leadership, which appeared to affect expressions of sovereignty, self-determination, and nation building. In addition, this study helped to identify discord between singular metrics of educational success (e.g., graduation) and more collective metrics of education (e.g., capacity building) that clarify the types of education needed within Tribal governments and communities. Finally, this study helped to identify a landscape of educational narratives within the community that offered a community voice central to healing and to the reclamation of education (and accreditation) as a treaty right of Tribal people.

Scope of the Study

This study was limited to a single Indian Tribe in the Pacific Northwest. Specific data collections were limited to the Tribal Council and Tribal department staff, including education program leadership in the Tribal government. Additional collections were also gathered from the Higher Education board and the Cultural Coop board. These groups were chosen because they:

- Represent the popularly elected leadership for Tribal government and the popularly elected leadership for the enterprise and economic development of the Tribe

- Represent the formal community advisory boards that direct educational policy for the Tribal people.

Connection of the Study

This research was grounded in several specific disciplines of knowledge including Education (specifically Sociology of Education), Native American Studies, Political Science, and Public Policy. Specific bodies of knowledge connected to this research included TribalCrit, higher education policy reform, social justice research, and participatory action research. Specific topics included credentialism, Tribal self-governance, and Tribal self-determination.

Summary

Education and accreditation are two primary issues that affect the sovereignty, self-governance, and self-determination for all Tribal groups. Though education systems have been created to serve Tribal people, they have created unintended consequences that undermine Tribal autonomy and self-determination. This study was intended to uncover educational perceptions of Tribal education within the community context of the development of a Tribal community college. To do this, Tribal participants were asked to respond about the types of educations and certifications valued by Tribal governments, why certain credentials are valued, where should the emphasis be between cultural knowledge and credential knowledge, and how Tribes should to change education systems to serve their communities and build capacities in their governments.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature Review Strategy

My intentions for the literature review strategy were to seek out a collection of materials that included both empirical data and qualitative inquiry. This combined data emphasis was important because to truly understand Native education, data must be located within the cultural context for which it describes.

I made specific literature searches within the Journal of American Indian Education, Wicazo Sa Review, Journal of Indigenous Nations Studies, the Canadian Journal of Native Education, and Pacific Northwest Quarterly. General literature searches were also made using University of Oregon Summit database and Google Scholar. In addition, I also made a TOR deepweb search of non-indexed .edu databases for .pdf files. I organized queried results upon the following themes and keywords: Native education rates; Native graduate education; Tribal self-determination; Tribal self-governance; Tribal sovereignty; Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs); social reproduction; cultural reproduction; and credentialism.

I prioritized literature according to the number of existing citations, type and source of peer-reviewed publication, and publication date. Qualitative materials were excluded based upon the scope of research, with exclusions for research relating to non-federally recognized Tribes, urban Natives, or other dispossessed indigenous populations. I made these exclusion to differentiate Tribal and reservation population experiences from other Indigenous groups which might self-identify as Native, but lack the federal recognition and legal status that provides and protects specific Tribal rights of

sovereignty, self-governance, and self-determination.

In the cases of empirical data exclusion, I adopted 10-year exclusion rule. I decided this based upon the premise that all empirical data is essentially a snapshot of conditions. Since this project is about surveying contemporary perceptions of education and not about creating trends from past empirical data, I deemed that there was marginal utility to extending data collection to historic eras beyond the last census. In the case of parallel metrics within multiple studies, materials were excluded based upon the presence of more current data.

In terms of the volume of material, I found a magnitude of materials involving the historic and qualitative account of Native people and Native education experiences. An initial literature search of the Native education yielded 11,856 entries. After winnowing down the material to focus on the intersectional topics of Tribal education, self-determination, and nation building, the search yielded 251 entries. Further distillation to the literature produced in the last 10 years yielded a subset of 58 entries. I used this collection of literature as the foundation of the qualitative inquiry themes describing the ways in which Native educational reform has been promoted, what these reforms are intended to empower, and how this individual empowerment is vital to self-determination.

In regards to the empirical data of Native higher education, I found the literature review process revealed an important context and comparison to qualitative data. Most notably, I found that there is a near absence in empirical evidence tracking Native graduate and professional student populations. Although Native undergraduate populations and graduation rates are a regular staple of empirical research, the status of

Native graduate students remains largely ignored. I was able to uncover only seven

reports describing Native graduate and professional populations in the last 10 years.

Additionally, I found one study, *American Indians and Alaskan Natives in Post*

Secondary Education (NCES, 1998), which examined nearly the exact types of Native

graduate metrics I was interested in. I opted to exclude this resource because of its focus

on past conditions that provided little in terms of contemporary utility to explain current

Native education profiles.

What I did find was that the relative absence of Native graduate and professional

type of data appears to be a common issue.

> Indigenous faculty are frequently not included in national studies and data-
> gathering efforts, and there are only a handful of empirical studies on or
> that include Native faculty. The dearth of information limits our ability to
> understand and resolve the issues that faculty encounter in higher
> education. (Tippeconnic and McKinney, 2003 as cited in Brayboy 2012,
> p. 78)

Beyond the basic demographic data, I found an absence of studies examining the

utility of education beyond the aggregate successes (e.g., graduation) of the singular

Native scholar. Empirical data appears organized with a certain methodological bias that

limits educational metrics to the bounds of academia; data often concludes at the point of

graduation or dropout (NCAI, 2015; Aud, et. al., 2013; NCES, 2008). This general

methodological orientation hints at a classical liberalist notion that promotes individual

graduation as an acceptable proxy metric for the good of the group (in this case Tribe).

In any case, the absence of this material occludes the discussion of a difference between

the worth/importance of a degree to a single individual and the worth/importance of that

same degree to a community.

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That stated, there does appear a narrative within the existing body of research to explain the status of Native education, the internal collective aspirations for Native (and Tribal) education, and the external systemic realities that affect individual Native and collective Tribal successes (e.g., capacity building, community wellness). I offer the following sections to bind empirical data and qualitative inquiry in order to create the most complete picture of Native higher education as it relates to the Tribal sovereignty, self-determination, nation building, social and cultural reproduction, and credentialism.

Status of Native Higher Education

The 2010 US Census estimates approximately 5,220,579 Native Americans and Alaskan Natives living in the United States (US Census, 2012). Compared to the total population, Native people represent roughly 1.6% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2015). The Native portion represents the total estimated membership of the 566 federally recognized Tribes, as identified within the federal register (BIA, 2014).

Of the 5.2 million+ Native Americans and Alaskan Native living in the United States, the total number of Native undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Title IV higher education institutions was 17,311 students (as compared to 3,652,685 for non-Natives) (Grinder & Kelly Reid, 2013). A survey of Native education in 2009-2010 recorded 3,960 Native master's degrees and 952 PhDs, for a combined total of 4,912 students (as compared to 752,198 for non-Natives (Aud, et al., 2012). Combined, Native students represent a comparative population of .7% for 4-year, master's, and PhD programs. In terms of success Native students represent .7% for graduate degrees and .7% for PhDs. When NCES total graduation data (Aud, et al., 2012) is compared to 2010 U.S. census data, comparative distributions indicate that American Indians and Alaskan

Natives rank lowest of all racial groups in relative comparison of graduate degrees earned

by race by population alone or in combination with another race. Table 1 details the

distributions of combined masters and doctoral degrees for American Indians/Alaskan

Natives in comparison to other races for the year, 2010.

Table 1

Comparative Table of Graduate Degree Rates by Population by Race.

RACE	White	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Asian/ Pacific Islander
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	2.67	2.33	1.11	3.67

This distribution indicates that Asians earn graduate credentials at 3.67 times the

rate of American Indians and Alaskan Natives; Whites earn at 2.67 times the rate; Blacks

at 2.33 times; and Hispanic/Latinos at 1.11 times. What is also important to note is that

the graduation totals representing American Indians and Alaskan Natives graduate

credentials is based upon the total number of Tribal and Native graduate degrees. At this

time the exact numbers of Tribal-only graduate credentials have yet to be parsed out. It

follows that as a sub population of the total number of graduate degrees, an adjustment of

the numbers to account for Tribal-only rates of graduate credentials would reflect an even

greater disparity between the relative graduate degree rates by race for American Indians

and Native Alaskans and other groups.

Additional sources provide parallel metrics to further describe the conditions of

Native graduate student populations. NCAI (2015) reports "Only five percent of

American Indians and Alaska Natives have received graduate or professional degrees,

compared to 10 percent for the total population, and only nine percent of American

Indians have earned bachelor's degrees compared to 19 percent for the US population"

Shotton, et al. (2013). Further, the median number of years between starting graduate

school and receiving the doctoral degree was 7.5. Among US citizens and permanent

resident racial/ethnic groups, the median time-to-degree was shortest for multi-race (7.6

years), White (7.7), and Asian (7.7) doctoral recipients, and longest for American Indian

[recipients] (9.6 years). (Bell 2010b, p. 4).

Pivoting to include professional degree populations, I found even less in terms of

empirical data about this population. There is little data to track what becomes of Native

graduates post-university. What data are available offers an ancillary reflection of the

conditions of education within community. Ross, Kena, Rathburn, et al. (2012) revealed

that only 53.6% of Native people ages 25 to 34 with bachelors degree or beyond are

currently employed in the workforce. Specific categories and rates of employment for

this population include: business workers/managers (19.5%); educators (5.7%), and other

(25.8%). For other potential employment categories (including legal professionals,

human protective/service workers, military personnel), NCES states that reporting

standards were not met in half of the categories studied (e.g., population too low to

count). An expanded query to the following Native professional associations did not

produce any empirical reports or further data on these populations:

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)

- Association of Native American Medical Students (ANAMS)

- Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP)

- Society of American Indian Dentists (SAID)

- National Native American Bar Association (NNABA)

- American Indian Council of Architects and Engineers (AICAE)

Due to this absence of research it is difficult to estimate or conclude anything in terms of Native professional education, other than there probably are not that many Native professionals being produced in comparison to other populations.

Native Motivations: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Nation Building

Stepping back from the empirical literature, an examination of the historic and theoretical literature provides an understanding of the intended linkage between individual Native higher education credential, collective political empowerment, and the greater goal of leveraging Native education successes into Tribal capacity building. This intersectional space is vital, because within there exist several important conceptual touchstones which help identify the potential collective aspirations of Tribal empowerment as they relate to Native scholars and their multiple contexts for why they pursue higher education. Touchstone conceptions include the issues of sovereignty, self-determination, and nation building.

Native Education and Sovereignty.

> …. Cultural sovereignty encompasses the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of our lives. Because of this, only Native peoples can decide what the ultimate contours of Native sovereignty will be. (Coffey and Tsosie, 2001, p. 210)

The issue of sovereignty is generally promoted as a legal right of Tribal governments to remain autonomous; to choose, create, and enforce their own rules and institutions within their own boundaries, for their own members, without approval or interference from other entities (Xanthaki, 2007; Wilkins, 1997, 1999; Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001; Pevar, 2007). In terms of Native education, sovereignty is also discussed as a cultural and intellectual right of Indigenous peoples to determine their own educational priorities and traditions (Coffey & Tsosie, 2001; Warrior, 1995; Deloria,

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1969; Grande, 2002; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002, Fisher & Ball, 2003).

> The concept of cultural sovereignty is valuable because it allows us, as Native people, to chart a course for the future. In that sense, cultural sovereignty may well become a tool to protect our rights to language, religion, art, tradition, and the distinctive norms and customs that guide our societies. Indeed, cultural sovereignty may ultimately prove to be our most valuable legal tool. (Coffey and Tsosie, 2001, p. 196)

It must also be acknowledged that the conception of sovereignty is not uncontested. When applied to an argument for Tribal intellectualism, Deloria (1998) derides the extensions of intellectual sovereignty to problematize individual intellectual sovereignty when divorced from collective identity and application.

> … Do we have the luxury of examining our navels and whining about our lack of "intellectual sovereignty"? Should our novelists be writing books that reinforce negative images of Indians, justifying efforts to terminate the reservations? The largest barrier to individual intellectual sovereignty that I can see is the refusal of Indians to take their own traditions seriously and simply repeat Western notions of the world. (Deloria, 1998, p. 29)

Deloria's refutation (1998) introduces an additional nuance to the complexities within Tribal scholarship. His argument is that an individual cannot claim sovereignty as an individual right of expression. His contention is that sovereignty (legal, cultural, intellectual, or other) must be located within a larger community identity, to which the singular individual must not only acknowledge but also volunteer to be constrained within. To this condition, extensions of sovereignty appear somewhat tempered.

Native Education and Self-Determination.

> We are led to believe that we are prepared to exercise self-determination because we are… able to… compete with the non-Indian world for funds, resources, and rights. But we must ask ourselves, where is the self-determination? …We are basically agreeing to model our lives, values, and experiences along non-Indian lines. (Hertzberg, 1971, p. 150)

Having established that the reclamation of intellectual and educational rights within the legal conceptions of sovereignty is a fundamental right of Tribal scholarship, the derivative examination of self-determination is required. While sovereignty is described more so as a process to evoke and claim rights pertaining to individual identity and collective autonomy, self-determination is heralded more in terms of community capacity building through local control of health, wellbeing, and economic development of the Tribal group (Deloria, 1969, 1985, 1999; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, Wilkins, 1997, 2001; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Castile, 1998). Brayboy (2012) describes self-determination simply as the "operationalization of sovereignty (p. 82)."

Within the literature, self-determination is promoted as conceptual horizon to orient progressive reforms in order to address problems and buttress solutions specific to Tribal communities (Brayboy, 2005, 2012; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Shotton, 2008, 2013). The primary importance of self-determination as an educational concept is that it locates an individual Native scholar within a greater communal tradition and purpose. In specific reference to Native education, Shotton (2013) explains self-determination as referring to "the right to determine the best avenues for educating Tribal members (p.13)." In this orientation, Native education is no longer just a measure of the graduation of an individual student, but as a larger community metrics of wellness and capacity building.

Other Native authors share this viewpoint of self-determination through Tribal-centric higher education. In "Toward a Tribal critical race theory in education" (2005), Brayboy details specific higher educational changes that he contends are requisite planks of Tribal higher education reform for self-determination. Included within, Brayboy refers

to types of community-oriented education (in this case, legal educations) that he believes

are vital to the operation of Tribal government and the protection of Tribal communities.

> …. Heather who told me in the spring of 1995, when she was an
> undergraduate student at an Ivy League university, "I have always wanted
> to be a lawyer; my father and mother and my elders told me that's what I
> was going to be, so I wanted it...I do this because it will mean a better life
> for my people, my siblings, my cousins and nieces and nephews...I can
> handle anything for those reasons; and I have."

> Heather's experiences in both undergraduate and law school were harsh
> and oppressive. She managed, however, to utilize her skills and credentials
> in powerful ways. She worked for her tribe's law firm and was a key
> litigator and negotiator in a new deal around the use of natural resources
> on her tribal nation's reservation. In the process, she blended her
> knowledge as an attorney with her knowledge as a tribal member to
> benefit her entire society.   (Brayboy, 2005, pp. 438-439)

Similarly, in *Power and Place* (2001, Chpt. 12), Daniel Wildcat discusses the

importance of higher education as a means of empowerment and self-determination for

Tribal people. Wildcat discusses the imperative within the Tribes to create Native cadres

of professionals to do the important work needed on Reservations. He proposes an

educational reform through the development of Native STEM programs. Though he

never explicitly identifies which specific credentials should be prioritized, his implicit

point is that Tribal self-determination requires people within the community to possess

some form of scientific or mathematics training, as a means of individual self-

empowerment but also as a resource to serve and advise Tribal leadership.

Native Education and Nation Building. It is through the foundations of

sovereignty and self-determination that the conception of nation building is constructed.

Akoto (1992) describes nation building as, "the conscious and focused application of

[Indigenous] people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of

liberating and developing the psychic and physical space that is identified as [their] own

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(p. 3). Brayboy (2012) forwards nation building as the praxis between the theoretical

ideals of sovereignty and the material conditions needed for self-determination. He

explains that the process of nation building consists of many layers, including the

development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that

elucidate the community's history and culture, infuse and protect knowledge of the past

in the present-day practices and ensure the future identity and independence of the nation

(Akoto, 1992, in Brayboy, 2012).

Similar to Wildcat (2005), Brayboy extends Akoto's general conception of nation

building to examine the pursuit of specific kinds of education [and credentials], with the

communal intention to bolster occupational and service capacities lacking within Tribal

communities.

> Interests in the fields such as educational administration, research, and
> leadership as well as biological/biomedical sciences and psychology
> suggests students are interested in particular types of education, training,
> knowledge and skill sets. Pursuing careers in these fields likely allows
> Indigenous students to give back to the community in ways the
> community needs most. (Brayboy, 2012, p. 77)

Brayboy (2012) offers two models to frame nation building. In the first model

forwarded by Alfred (2005), nation building is viewed as a process of decolonization that

strengthens the political, economic, social, and spiritual processes within Indigenous

communities (Brayboy, 2012, p. 20). Within this model, economic development is

promoted as the focus, with the implicit intention for the Tribe to develop the "power of

the purse" as a mechanism for independence. Cornell and Kalt (2010) offer an

alternative model of nation building "focusing upon political self-rule, with the emphasis

on building legal, political, and juridical practices based upon community belief systems

and practices (Cornell and Kalt, 1998, 2006, 2010, Helton, 2003/2004; Jorgenson, 2007);

managing of health and healing practices, services, and the institutions that offer these

services (Cornell and Kalt, 2010); economic development (Blaine, 2010; Cornell and

Kalt, 1998, 2006, 2010; Jorgenson, 2007; and educational development (Alfred, 1999,

2005; Champagne, 2004; St. Germain, 2008; Lynch, 2004)" (Brayboy, 2012, p. 77). The

primary difference between these models of nation building is the lack of economic

development as a prioritized end within the second conception.

Whatever the chosen model, the important concept to understand about nation

building is that it embodies the types of discussions within Tribes about the ways in

which education is examined and interrogated.

> Only an education program that researches Native issues and trains leaders
> and community members with contemporary knowledge of the world as it
> is and simultaneously translates that knowledge and brings the skills of
> higher education to Native communities will help in supporting Native
> nation building and continuity. (Champagne, 2004, p. 35)

To that end, the connection between of the educational success (e.g., graduation)

of the individual and the self-governance goal of Tribes is made. The literature shows

that Tribal people interpret educational success beyond the individual experience. They

see education through the conceptual lenses of sovereignty - the singular and collective

legal right to claim an education specific to their identity; they locate their own education

in terms of self-determination - the positioning of education into meaningful experiences

for themselves and their people; and they orient their education toward nation building -

the process of alignment by which individual educations are engineered to compliment

community needs of political, economic, social, and cultural identity and empowerment.

Tribal Community Colleges

An examination of Tribal higher education would not be complete without an examination of the Tribal College and University (TCU) system. The TCU system is an important component to Native and Tribal educational reform, because it exists as the alternative venue for Tribal and Native scholars to attain degrees while at the same time honoring the requisite conditions of sovereignty, self-determination, and nation building acknowledged and embodied by so many Native scholars (Benham and Stein, 2003; Oppelt, 1990; Stein, 1992; Belgarde, 1993; American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 1999; Pavel, 1998).

NCES (1998) identifies four goals common to most TCUs. TCUs exist:

1. To provide higher educational and technical opportunities to tribal members.

2. To preserve and enhance educationally the tribe's language and culture.

3. To provide community facilities for the advancement of tribal economies and other institutions.

4. To promote tribal self-determination.

Since the inception of the Navajo community college in 1968 (Bourdeaux, 2014, Benham and Stein, 2003), the phenomenon of Tribal community colleges has expanded as a national resource for Native scholars and scholarship, and higher education credentialing. These institutions serve as "cultural intermediaries" reaffirming Native identity and training for survival in a contemporary world (Szasz, 1999). Evident throughout the literature is a tone of hope and optimism that showcases TCUs as a viable education reform model for Tribal communities unable to attend traditional institutions of higher education.

TCUs are promoting a new mindset that is leading to renewed economic, social, political, cultural, and spiritual vitality through education. As a consequence, American Indian people are hopeful about regaining their greatness in America with TCUs leading the way. (Pavel, Inglebret & Banks, 2003)

The aspirations of TCUs are not just limited to the success of the individual.

Other researchers provide comment to the direct ways in which TCUs serve as

institutions of self-governance.

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) focus on the most important aspects of who we are as tribal nations--our languages, spirituality, economies, land, and our governments. Whatever approach we choose to support the health of our families and to build our nations, we are using the approach that works for us--it is community-based, honors traditional values, and encourages the empowerment of our people at all levels. We lead and we build leaders. (Bourdeaux, 2014)

Self governance has a direct impact on the work of tribal colleges, giving them an even larger role in their communities. In the future, the colleges will be expected to train more Native Americans to fill leadership roles in government planning, budgeting and administrating. Students, too, will demand more training for professional jobs, knowing that they will find local employment. (Casey, 1995)

At present there are 38 TCUs: 37 TCUs servicing 75 sites in the United States,

and one in Canada. Together, the TCUs provide access to higher education to over 80%

of "Indian Country" (AIHEC, 2015). Native student enrollment in the university is

estimated at 80% (AIHEC, 2005). Today TCUs serve about 88,000 students in academic

and community-based programs annually (AIHEC, 2015). In 2011, AIHEC reported that

Tribal Colleges enrolled approximately 19,300 students. AIHEC reports that Tribal

College students are typically nontraditional students, with more than half over age 25.

Additional demographics show that 35% are single parents; 63% are female; and 60%

attend college on a full-time basis (AIHEC, 2012). Though primarily organized to offer

two-year associate and certificate degrees, 13 TCU programs offer bachelors degrees, and

5 TCUs offer masters Degrees (AIHEC, 2015).

What is most important to realize about the TCU system is that despite its presence as an academic alternative, and despite its unique role to provide and promote Tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and nation building, within higher education, the empirical evidence continues to show an absence of substantive change in terms of the numbers of successful and credentialed Native graduate and professional students. Native still roughly represent less than 1% of higher education graduates (Grinder & Kelly Reid, 2013, NCES, 2013). This stagnation appears to be reflective of several potential factors.

The first potential factor affecting TCU graduation rates might relate to the lack of Tribal faculty. In a 2003 survey of 35 Tribal colleges and universities, researchers found that 61% of faculty self-identified as White, while 37% self-identified as Native American (Voorhees & Adams, 2003). This study brings into question the fact of whether or not predominately non-Native faculty of TCUs can meet the culturally oriented missions of Native students and Tribal communities.

The second potential factor affecting TCU graduation rates may be reflective of greater systemic processes in the way that TCUs relate to traditional Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). TCUs are viewed as entry points of an educational process that still terminates with a degree within the traditional IHE system. Native graduate students pursuing advanced professional and graduate degrees still must navigate and negotiate increasingly isolated non-Tribal university degree program in which there still remain a virtual absence of representations of Tribal culture, identity, or people.

Systemic Explanations of Native Graduation Rates

The comparative education outcomes of Native students in TCUs and IHEs may indicate the presence of systemic processes. Within the following section examines systemic explanations of social and cultural reproduction, including cultural capital, social mobility, and credentialism. Combined, these factors may help to explain and identify the generational conditions of exclusions that have affected and continue to affect scholars, Native education, and Tribal self-determination.

Social and Cultural Reproduction. The general topics of social and cultural reproduction were chosen as explanatory lenses to locate and interpret the potential self-replicating effects of education upon non-dominant populations like Native American Tribal communities. Combined, these theories of reproduction represent a potential mechanism to understand why Tribal people appear to be affected by systemic disadvantages within schools, why Tribal people fail to graduate and pursue higher education in relation to their non-Tribal peers, and why there is a lack of Tribal credentials in contemporary Tribal communities and governments.

Beginning with the seminal works of Bourdieu and Passeron (1964; 1977; 1986), the mechanisms of social reproduction are established. Laying an empirical claim of the centrality of a class reproduction in terms of non-economic capital present within the meritocratic educational system in France, authors claim that upper and middle classes within a hierarchical society possess more desirable forms of capital which favor and foster forms of reproduction within schooling. Their contention is that a child's educational (and social) outcome is reflective of their expression of "cultural capital," as explained by the reproduction of cultural outlooks and dispositions that children receive

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from their home environment and then invest in formal education. Their contention is that the more desirable the expressions of cultural capital possessed by a population, the greater degree of upward social mobility.

Similarly, in "Learning to Labor" (1977), Willis provides an ethnographic examination of counter-culture youth in "Hammertown" to examine class resistance and class reproduction in a contemporary industrialized setting. Willis's primary point is that symbolic resistances exhibited by the "Lads" mirror social messages of their class, further solidifying the systemic structures that limit social mobility of some working class students.

Though the application of a French elementary education system or British counterculture to Tribal higher education outcomes appears tenuous, there does appear to be some form or mechanism of reproduction evidenced by the educational data for Tribes. For decades, as impoverished minorities, Tribal people comparatively lacked the economic, social, and appropriate cultural capital, required to succeed in public and state education systems. As such, the collective outcomes of the Tribal graduation may be explainable in the fact that they did not succeed as a population because they did not possess "desirable cultural capital," as they had no "desirable cultural capital" from which to reproduce.

Lareau (1987, 2002, 2011) provides additional refinement to the theories of social reproduction with the additional conception of activation as a requisite operation to cultural capital and educational success (e.g., graduation). Through her multiple examinations of race, class, and education, Lareau contends that the differences in educational outcomes between similar groups are not so much determined by the

possession of desirable forms of capital, as they are determined by the ways in which members within those groups activate and leverage capital to produce favorable outcomes.

In terms of application to Tribal populations, the concept of activation may explain why, Tribes still have not been able to leverage successful education outcomes in either the public school or higher education settings. Tribal people might not have enough familiarity with formal and informal systems within education and might not know the appropriate organizational pressure points to leverage success for their people. That stated, Lareau's explanation of capital activation may not fully account for additional forms of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005), or effects of cultural resistances and experiences of institutional racisms that affect minorities (Ogbu, 2002).

Theories of culture mismatch are also used to explain systemic exclusion for non-dominant minority groups. Villegas (1988) promoted a cultural mismatch theory as a way to explain educational outcome as produced by the discord between cultures of school and home. Villegas argues that cultural mismatch explanations actually extend into the macrosocial space, manifesting in a systemic racism experienced within school settings. Echoing Bowles and Gintis (1977), Villegas offers a structuralist critique of education. However, unlike Bowles and Gintis, Villegas makes claim to a culture-based (rather than class-based) critique of education, in which she contends that schooling operates as a cultural sorting mechanism that hinders minority groups from challenging dominant cultural hierarchies. Villegas views the locus of educational reform as grounded in policies of racial protection rather than in the promotions of multicultural familiarity.

As long as school performs this sorting function in society, it must necessarily produce winners and losers… Therefore culturally sensitive remedies to education problems of oppressed minority students that ignore the political aspects of schooling are doomed to failure. (Villegas, 1988, pp. 262-263)

Reflecting back to Tribal applications, the promotion of cultural mismatch theories offers a measure of applicability to explain effects of a cultural based and biased structuralism within education. Despite the apparent utility of these theories, culture-centric theories of educational success also appear hobbled, as they require a degree of essentialism within a static cultural group in order to explain relative successes between populations. As applied to Tribal populations (as with every other culturally non-dominant group), there is not one educational experience among Tribal people to account for the panoply of different settings (e.g., urban v. suburban v. rural), different schools, and different classrooms that interact with a culturally-oriented system and reflect the dismal education graduation rates.

Credentialism

Extending structuralism to a functional explanation to link social reproduction, education, and occupation provides a unique link to explain the absence of educational credentials within Tribal communities. In *The Credential Society* (1979), Collins provides an empirical examination of different social strata and earnings data of aggregate measures of the US workforce to show how academic credentials affect social mobility. Collins posits that we are steeped in a unified (globalized) technological society and that social outcomes are largely affected by the ways in which professions and technological elites affect educational systems. Collins contends that professional groups limit and control education through an informal system of credentialism. Collins

explicitly argues that the current system of education is not so much geared toward reproduction, as it is towards systemic exclusion. Collins discusses the ways in which US education system has added (and continues to add) extended qualifications and time for the same professional credentials. His primary point is that social mobility is a function of post-secondary education and that professional education systems are more caste-oriented than meritocratic.

Although Collins limits his conclusions to the professional-oriented disciplines, his primary point of systemic exclusion within a singular educational system does explain how Tribal people, not having representation in the technological and professional elites, have been excluded from gathering the professional and technical credentials they need to govern themselves. Tribal people (as well as other groups) remain at an apparent disadvantage because of their collective history of dependence and exclusion, which prevented them from earning appropriate and status-worthy diplomas needed to enter ever-winnowing professional ranks within a cascading system of technological complexity and imposed scarcity. Furthermore, if and when Tribal people gain the credentials needed to enter the system, their outcomes remain less than certain. At any time, professional elites may arbitrarily limit the numbers of candidates or extend training regiments for certain professions. The result is that there are fewer people with credentials not because there are fewer competent and capable people, rather, because there is an engineered scarcity to a finite set of credentialed slots.

In *New Careers for the Poor*, Pearl and Riessman (1965), discuss the role of credentials upon Indigenous non-professional populations. They examine situations of poverty within minority communities and scaffold an apprenticeship/higher education

training program to bridge the gap between non-professional and professionals within these communities. Though Tribal self-determination is not explicitly identified as subject, the identification of professional credentials as central to community reinvestment and development parallels the same underlying causes operating within Reservations.

Finally, Brayboy binds the subject of credentialism onto a specific Tribal context. In his book, *Post Secondary Education for American Indians and Alaskan Natives* (2012), Brayboy illustrates the primary difference in the ways in which individual educational credentials are leveraged within Tribal communities.

> Graduate and professional school is not simply about adding letters behind one's name; it is about being positioned to serve one's community in ways that may not be possible without having attained that success. We need look no further than the American Indian and Alaska Native PhDs, MDs, and JDs that we know - these individuals mentor other Indigenous students at all points along the pipeline, they create and direct programs that meet countless community needs for culturally responsive teachers and other professionals, they advocate and shape policies and practices that are in the best interest of Native communities, and the list goes on. (Brayboy, 2012)

It is to this final point that Brayboy provides a nuanced context to the issues of cultural reproduction and credentialism in education in Tribal communities. Tribal people realize that a credential is key to their individual upward mobility. However, unlike their non-Tribal counterparts, Tribal people are confronted with an additional decision of whether or not to use their credential to help their people. It is to this duality that creates a differential experience of tension that confronts both Tribal scholarship and Tribal graduation rates. What do they study? And for what end? Do they choose a course of study to get a credential that will guarantee them a lucrative career – thus allowing them to escape the poverty of the Reservation? Or do they study towards an

occupation needed within their community in order to build collective capacity? It is to this tension where the gossamer frontiers between education as a singular or social good are revealed.

Summary

Empirical data appears to indicate that Native students disproportionately do not complete their education or gain valuable credentials needed for their communities. The lack of these credentials impacts Native sovereignty, self-determination, and nation building within Tribal governments and communities.   These results appear to reflect expressions of social and cultural reproduction within traditional models of higher education.

Little data or inquiry has been done to examine Native graduate and professional education as it relates to capacity or wellbeing of Tribal governments and Tribal communities. In addition, there has not been any study identified within the research examining the ways in which education perceived among Tribal leadership or how credentialing specifically manifests within Tribal government and Tribal services. As such, the research topic of educational perception inventory within Tribes remains an untapped vein of academic research; and a key to understanding the ways in which education and credentialing interact to create systemic forms of social reproduction within contemporary Indigenous groups.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

The methods associated with this project represent an extension of my formal

educational training, professional experience, and cultural knowledge. The following

subsections help to explain the rationale behind the specific choices I made in order to

frame this study in a Tribal context. Included within these subsections are discussions

relating to ontological and epistemological assumptions; details regarding specific

research design and justification; descriptions of research setting; procedures for

providing informed consent; methods for data collections; and strategies for coding data.

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

The primary ontological assumption I associate with my study involves my belief

that contemporary Tribal experiences are reflective of humanist/constructivist ontological

orientations, and that contemporary Tribal people exist within a world of familial and

community narratives. It is this orientation that foundationalizes a pan-cultural

psychological tension stemming from multiple experiences operating within and between

Tribal and non-Tribal contemporary spheres. I associate this tension with an informal

reflection of four competing epistemological viewpoints within Tribal communities:

1. Experiential – knowledge from personal experience.

2. Abstractive – knowledge from the experience of others.

3. Traditional – knowledge from oral history and cultural participation.

4. Formal – knowledge gained from school.

It is to these four epistemological viewpoints that I have constructed the following

research method. My design was to provide a space for the interjection of personal and

collective educational narratives. This has been done to provide a framework for

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academics to understand the interactions of higher education upon Tribal people, but also as a means by which to provide for individual opportunity for catharsis into an aspect of Tribal experience that has been so damaging, to so many, for such a long time.

Research Design

I chose an ethnographic case study model to examine personal and collective attitudes, perceptions, and cultural interpretations of education. This ethnography was located within the specific context of the development of a Tribal community college in a Pacific Northwest Tribal community. This ethnography focused on the distillation and development of narratives of Tribal community members and employees to examine for perceptions of higher education processes and products and to understand the effects of higher education credentials within a Tribal community.

Methodology Justification. I chose an ethnographic methodology for this study for several important reasons. First, an ethnographic design was important because it provided additional cultural and historic contexts to frame and explain nuances within the data collections that are typically not included within a case study design. As opposed to a traditional case study design, where data collection is largely limited to specific discrete observations, ethnographic research allowed participant narratives to be situated within larger and more comprehensive social and cultural settings and contexts. To this point, this broadening of research focus potentially provided greater insight to the unobservable social and cultural themes that underlie and explain participant attitude, responses, and actions.

Second, an ethnography promotes an increased collaboration within the research project. As any Tribal researcher is (or needs to be) keenly aware of, there are certain

expectations, prescriptions, and prohibitions that need to be respected when working closely with Tribal groups. Though I am not a Tribal member of this community, my pre-existing relationships helped to inform the informal expectations of research within this community. It remained unspoken throughout the project, but I was keenly aware that I could not force a research project on this Tribe or any of its members or employees. With this understanding, I think that the ethnographic design promoted and preserved Tribal voice and breath, which in turn allowed for the development of nuanced narratives. At the same time, the ethnographic design allowed me to claim and preserve my own independence and criticality as a Tribal academic and scholar and not surrender my voice when and where I thought something should be challenged. It is within this nuanced understanding, that I found the ethnographic methodology superior in its ability to differentiate Tribal research that is done "with" and "for," rather that done "on" or "about."

Finally, I chose an ethnographic design because I thought it allowed for interpretations based upon the previous personal and professional experiences of the researcher. As a former planner and grant writer for this Tribal government, I already possessed a great deal of knowledge about the policies, process, personalities, and priorities of both the governing body and the general community. I have existing relationships within the Tribal council, departmental leadership, and community and enjoyed a (semi) privileged position as a Tribal scholar. In addition, I have nearly 11 years of subject matter expertise across six different academic disciplines (i.e., Education, Public Policy, Political Science, Economics, Anthropology, and Geography). In terms of

this specific project, my cultural and academic capacities offered an informed position to direct, interpret, explain, and connect cultural nuances to larger social justice issues.

Research Setting

I conducted the majority of research activities for this project at Tribal offices, museums, and the Tribal Council Chambers at the Tribal Center. Interviews were gathered over a three-week period from 08/16/2015 to 09/15/2015. Interviews were conducted during normal business hours.

Study Participants

I have chosen to omit the specific name of the Tribe associated with this study. I have made this choice in collaboration with the participating Tribe primarily because of concerns I had following data collection. Specifically, I found that several participants shared powerful experiences of trauma and abuse that could put them in personal and professional peril if their identity were to be revealed. Furthermore, in terms of the collective, an identification of the Tribe might potentially jeopardize relationships with non-Tribal entities and actors currently in relationship or in negotiations with the Tribal government or Tribal enterprises. As such, I have agreed to provide only general demographics of this community.

In terms of general demographics, this Tribe has an enrollment of approximately 1,200 members; of which 350 live in the reservation communities. This Tribe is within a 30-minute commute of a major urban center. In terms of economic development, this Tribe is relatively affluent for Tribes in the region and has a relatively high level of collective economic development across several industries, including a casino and resort.

Sampling

I chose a logical sampling strategy for this project. This decision was based upon the intention to interview persons within the organization that held or had held positions of power important to the development or execution to Tribal treaty rights and Tribal education policy. I also sought to focus upon the people who I believed possessed a diverse personal education and cultural experiences, as I thought that this focus would more closely reflect the type of educational narratives active within the community.

Member Checking and Participant Representation. This project included participation from a diverse array of community members employed in Tribal government or actively involved in Tribal education. Within the research sample were 13 Tribal and community members consisting of 7 women and 6 men. Within the subsets was approximately 500 years of cumulative community experience and 200 years of cumulative Tribal governmental experiences. Table 2 represents the list of research participants involved with this project.

Table 2

Table of Participant Demographics

Participant	Position	Level of Education	Age	Years in Reservation Communities	Years of Tribal Employment	Enrollment Status
DD	Council	MA	50-60	59	29	Study Tribe
FQ	Council	AA	30-40	25	9	Study Tribe
GN	Executive	HS	50-60	63	34	Study Tribe
XJ	Executive	MA/MS	50-60	20	11	Other Tribe
TM	Director	HS	50-60	60	35	Study Tribe
AK	Director	PHD	50-60	11	2	Other Tribe
KR	Consultant	PHD	40-50	20	5	Other Tribe
OJ	Director	MA	50-60	10	12	Non-Native
PS	Manager	HS	50-60	39	34	Study Tribe
WV	Staff	BA	50-60	59	25	Study Tribe
SU	Staff	HS	30-40	22	15	Study Tribe
RU	Staff	HS	40-50	44	10	Study Tribe
EF	Staff	MA	50-60	55	25	Study Tribe

Compared to the general Tribal populations the subset of participants included in this study were arguably among the most educated, most culturally active, and/or most politically active people in the community. I sought these types of people because I thought this project could and should include as many luminaries within the community as possible (i.e., I believe these are the people in the Tribe who have decades of experience promoting and lobbying about similar kinds of education and self-determination issues in this community). Moreover, these people represent the pinnacle of Tribal education policy makers and embody an important diversity of educational and cultural experiences central to the topic of contemporary Tribal education reform. Additionally, the experiences and messages that they promote and present are distributed within other Tribal governments and communities within other Tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

The Inclusion of Non-Tribal and Non-Native Participants. Included within the subset are several people in key positions of power within the governmental organization that were interviewed and are not enrolled in this community. I decided to include these voices within the project for several reasons. First, those people were identified by other Tribal community members as important to Tribal education execution or development. They are people that understand the needs of the Tribe and the role of education within the development of Tribal leadership and larger community capacity development. Second, those people have multiple years of Tribal experience working within and among the other Tribal governments and as so, offer a multi-Tribal perspective that aids generalizability. Third, some of those people are/were family of Tribal members and have had similar experiences to Tribal members. While they might

not have the blood quantum necessary for enrollment in the Tribe, they do have the community experience as spouses or parents of Tribal members and know the issues and the problems associated with higher education in this community.

The inclusion of these people also serves as a point to show how my personal Tribal experiences have influenced this project. I believe Tribal identity and Tribal education are both grounded in cultural experiences; the genesis of this experience begins within the individual, extends to their Tribal families and to the other coexisting Tribal families, who are all located within a shared and specific geographic space. Furthermore, I do not believe that blood quantum and enrollment are as important in comparison to cultural experience when it comes to working with Tribes. Because of these beliefs, I thought it made much more sense to include voices of people with personal experiences living among Tribal people than it does to solicit opinion from a Tribal member that may be enrolled but might not have a personal higher education experience in this community.

Informed Consent

Research for this project was done accordance with the cultural and governmental requirements of the participating Tribe and after approval by the University of Oregon's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (please reference Appendix A for a copy of the IRB approval). Tribal approval for this project was given from both the Tribal Higher Education Board and the Tribal Cultural Cooperative following two public meetings. Subsequent to formal authority by those two advisory boards, individual informed consent was also documented for each research participant.

The process for developing individual participant informed consent involved formal documentation. At the initial meeting, each research participant was provided an

approved research script and presented a list of questions for the interview. At that meeting, clarifications were given before any data collection activities. Participants were informed of their rights of participation as identified and required by the institutional review board policies of the University of Oregon. Their rights were explained as: the right not to participate; the right to rescind participation at any time; the right to request data; and the unconditional right to research incentives regardless of full participation.

Data Collection

The data collection portions of this study were organized around one-on-one open-ended interviews with Tribal Council and Tribal Government leadership and staff. Study activities were designed to:

- Offer a leadership perspective on the importance of education as a means to collectively self-direct.

- Provide a day-to-day perspective on the ways in which education credentialing affects institutional capacity.

- Provide a critical and experiential examination of the ways in which education perspectives frame processes of Tribal self-determination, to include an examination of the ways in which credentialing affects contemporary system of higher educations and reifies power relationships within Tribal communities.

- Provide cultural context to identify and analyze the educational tensions that confront Tribal persons located within dual educational promotions of contemporary and cultural forms of education.

Interview Structure. The specific interview structure for this project structure involved one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were focused

on a written questionnaire that included 8 research prompts. Study prompts included:

1. How is formal education important for Tribal members?

2. How is formal education important to Tribal community development?

3. What formal educational credentials are most important to the operations of the Tribe?

4. What do you think formal educational credentials represent?

5. What tensions exist between a formal education v. cultural knowledge?

6. What do you think should be the ideal process of Tribal higher education?

7. How well do you think the current educational policies and practices of the Tribe complement self-determination?

8. What are the goals of a self-determination education?

It is important to note that the interview prompts for this project were expanded from an original 6 questions agreed upon by the dissertation committee. This was a result of negotiations with the Tribe, the following of which, additional questions and refinements were proposed to increase the focus upon intersectional research space between higher education, credentialing, and self-determination. Furthermore, prompts were changed to provide a more direct application and examination of Brayboy's (2012) higher education work examining sovereignty, nation building, and self-determination within Tribal communities.

In total 13 participants provided approximately 18 hours of audio recordings. One-on-one interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 3 hours, 07 minutes. Following initial interview, and transcription, participants were contacted through emails and provided original interview transcripts for edits, clarifications, expansions, deletions,

or redactions. None of the participants in this project expressed a desire for edits, clarifications, expansions, deletions, or redactions. Data collection for this project concluded 10/31/2015.

Data Familiarization and the Process of Data Interpretation. The process for data familiarization involved three separate activities including: conducting the initial interview; reviewing raw interviews; and transcribing the interviews. I found that each activity produced markedly different experiences, leading to different types of interpretations and organizations of the data.

During the first phase, conducting the interview, I found I was less focused on analysis of theoretical concepts in favor of active listening. Throughout the interviews, I was trying to maintain rapport, while at the same time looking for conversational spaces to inject follow-up questions when and where I thought there were clarifications needed or omissions presented. I also found this phase of data familiarization exhausting; primarily due to the unexpected presence and prominence of personal trauma within the participant answers and recollections of abusive educational experience.

It was difficult to try to maintain an air of objectivity while listening to the candid and personal details of the participants, for two reasons. First, I consider many of these people my friends and hearing their stories instantly caused an empathetic reaction that I had to confront. Second, many of their stories paralleled the educational stories of people in my own family, and as such, I found myself mentally slipping in an out of conversations while I reflected on my own experiences.

The second phase of coding involved reviewing the weekly interviews. The driving distance between the Tribe and my home is about 5 1/2 hours, which turned out

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to be just about the same time as to replay the cumulative weekly interviews. From this phase of familiarization I was able to draft about 35 pages of notes.

Each time I would return home, I would spend my entire trip re-listening to the interviews for that week and search for commonalities, themes, and place to locate the narratives within academic literature. To do this while driving, I used the dictation feature of my phone to record my impressions of collective themes, commonalities in the tensions, and additional questions that I might want to include as follow-ups for the next batch of interviews. I found this to be my most intellectually productive activity, as I was able to look beyond the individual interviews and imagine theoretic models of education, power structures, and potential models of reform. I was also able to link many of my personal experiences with what I was hearing, which produced some of the most powerful epiphanies I have ever had about Tribes, Tribal people, and why things are the way they are on reservations.

My final activity came during the transcription phase of the project. At 18 hours of materials, my initial plan was to farm the interviews out to other people to perform the transcription. However, the more I thought about that, the more I realized the insights the Tribe and the participants gave to me were special. I was not meant to be just a listener, I was meant to be a witness. For me, this realization meant that it was my duty to sit for four and a half weeks and listen to and type out every single word that was shared with me. This extra step caused me several extra weeks of work, but I found that this extended time with the interviews and the narratives also provided an opportunity to immerse myself in the data.

To this end, I found transcription to be a cathartic activity. The process of transcription allowed me to situate the shared trauma that I had experienced from participant narratives, and as such, I also began to realize patterns and connections within the different interviews and participants. Had I not done my own transcription, I would have not had the time to place narratives into the conceptual framework that had driven the outline for this draft.

Data Coding: Prima Facie Coding and Emergent Theme Development. As I previously discussed, I chose a modified example of grounded theory to organize the coding for this project. The decision to use a modified grounded theory was both a strategic and tactical choice; strategic, in that I recognized that I would have to structure my analysis to align with my research questions; and tactical, in that I would have to find a way to allow for the inclusion of my previous cultural and professional experiences within the study community and government that I felt were important to the interpretation of the findings. Accordingly, I chose to do a double coding strategy.

The first stage of this strategy involved a prima facie coding examining narratives for themes directly relating to my research questions. The second form of coding was to examine transcripts for materials beyond my original research questions. The following sections explain the process of coding in detail.

Prima Facie Coding. Primary codes for this phase included: sovereignty, self-governance, nation building, and credentialism. I chose these codes because they were most directly aligned with the primary references (Brayboy, 2012 and Collins 1979), which were also the genesis of my research questions.

My method for prima facie coding was iterative and protracted. As the data collections were gathered, I spent the travel time between my home and the research site listening to the week's audio interviews listening for references, examples, and potential anti-examples of my primary codes. I also used this experience to perform an initial quality control check of responses to understand how participants were interpreting the research questions. In several instances, this phase of coding informed and modified follow-up interview questions. An example of this was when I asked participants about self-governance and I would begin to hear narratives focusing on the individual interpretation. At that point, I would ask a follow-up to ask them the same question but specify their answers in terms of a collective connotation. Both narratives were kept, but the push was made to distill answers that would more closely align and be applied upon the academic framework of Akoto (1992) and Brayboy (2012).

Emergent Theme Development. Shifting beyond the research questions, during the emergent coding phase I focused on distillation of the narratives of education that extended beyond the research questions. During this phase of coding I focused on the potential interactions beyond individual interviews to look for important contextual cues that could possibly extend into collective patterns. My intention of this phase of coding was to apply an organized interpretation of the text by understanding how the speaker was framing the responses in both emotional and analytic terms, and examining for collective narratives beyond the limited conceptional bounds of the research question. Several important questions were cycled during this phase of coding. What did this interview mean to the body of observations collected to date? What statements appeared in common between participants? What statements were in conflict? Were there patterns

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between participants with similar educational levels? Did participants identify structural patterns and barriers? Were their answers located within other literature I had read?

Accounting for these questions, I opted to follow the grounded theory coding guidelines as discussed by Charmaz (2006), coding transcriptions blocks for primary themes, and then further subcoding those themes for additional nuances. Several coding meetings were held with members of my dissertation committee. From these meetings four primary codes emerged. Emergent codes included:

- Utility of higher education within Tribal government - What are the individual and collective benefits of higher education?

- Tensions associated with higher education - What are the psychological and social perceptions that affect higher education graduation in the context of a Tribal community?

- Obstacles of higher education - What are the structural limiting factors that affect higher education graduation in Tribal communities?

- Reforms of higher education - What are the programmatic remedies can be offered to reduce psychological and structural obstacles affecting higher education graduation in Tribal communities?

Summary

This project was designed around an ethnographic methodology examining Tribal leadership perceptions of education and credentialism at a Pacific Northwest Indian Tribe. Data collection for this project focused upon one-on-one open-ended interviews with Tribal leadership, Tribal employees, and Tribal community members. Data was transcribed and coded based on a double coding strategy that included a prima facie

coding (associated with my research questions) and an emergent coding (for other themes beyond my initial research questions). The results of this coding provided narratives associated with empirical literature, as well as created sets of exploratory narratives examining conditions beyond the bounds of current research. The following section provides further examination of the specific data gathered from this study.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Results from this project represented a unique mixture of anticipated and unanticipated findings; the combination of which provides for an extremely nuanced understanding of the perceptions of Tribal higher education from a Tribal perspective. Findings present narratives that both offer refinement to existing conceptual models, as well as uncover additional themes yet to be identified or discussed by theoretical literature.

The following sections provide for a basic demographic description of research participants; establish an examination of research questions involving perceptions of sovereignty, nation building, and self-determination; and showcase emergent themes to include utilities, tensions, obstacles, and reforms of education as expressed by Tribal participants. Additional findings have also been gathered and organized to understand the presence and effects of credentialism within Tribal communities.

Primary Findings

This project includes two types of primary findings. The first set of findings directly relates to the explicit research questions this project was intended to address. The second set of findings in this study relate to the emergent themes that were beyond the original focus of the explicit research questions. Data indicates that both sets of findings exist to offer different account of Tribal higher education, providing examination of educational theory and practice, as well as providing for understanding of the grounded perceptions that continue to frame Tribal higher education participation and graduation. Tables were used to delineate between the narratives sections of findings.

Research Question 1: What Are the Perceptions of Education as They Relate to Sovereignty, Nation Building, and Self-Determination? The first set of primary findings involved the examination of participant responses regarding conceptions associated with the Tribal secondary education study of Brayboy (2012). To recap, Brayboy examines Tribal higher education reform according to three defined conceptions:

1. Sovereignty – as associated with a legal right to claim a right to education product and process.

2. Self-determination – as explained as the aspirational and asymptotic goal to which education is oriented.

3. Nation building – as the unifying praxis that bridges the sovereign right of education to the self-determinate goal.

Table 3 provides an overview of narratives of the first set of research question themes.

Table 3

Narrative Themes Relating to RQ 1.

Research Question	Themes	Sub Themes
RQ 1: What are the perceptions of education as they relate to sovereignty, nation building, and self-determination in a Tribal community?	Sovereignty	Claiming treaty rights.
	Self-Determination	Encouraging educated Tribal members to return to the reservation.
		Recruitment of Tribal members for Tribal jobs.
	Nation Building	Promotion of Higher Education as a means of healing.
		Role of the Tribe in education advisement.
		Role of the Tribe to remove obstacles.

Sovereignty. Within Tribal governments the concept of sovereignty is associated with right of a Tribe to make, enforce, and alter rules for its people and resources, on its own lands. Conceptions of sovereignty are important to Tribes because they reflect a right of self-direction and self-development that are vital to the existence of the collective. One of the primary rights that Tribes have sought since contact has been to maintain the right to direct the kinds of education that reflect cultural identity while at the same time providing technical utility.

With regard to this project, a distillation of narratives resulted in a near-absence of references relating to conception of sovereignty. In total there were only 10 references within the narratives that either identified sovereignty or discussed an associated treaty right of Tribes.

One participant offered an indirect narrative to promote the importance of legal education to invoke treaty rights as a means to describe sovereignty.

Another research participant expressly identified sovereignty as it related to self-determination.

> Sovereignty is critical, but it also is a responsibility. So, if you are a sovereign nation, you have a responsibility to the members of the nation. If you are a sovereign entity as an individual, and you are recognized as that by your Tribe… I think it comes with the responsibility to be the best, to give the best… to your community or Tribe. (AK, interview, 09/01/2015)

Beyond that specific reference, other participants provided narratives toward non-education treaty rights (e.g., Boldt Decision for Tribal fisheries, Tribal gambling, Tribal preference).

> I mean, you told, you told people in the 80s that we had the same jurisdictional abilities as the state… People would just laugh at you. They would just… I don't know what you are thinking. You're just some crazy

Indian. You don't have those rights… Yeah we do. We have these rights. We just aren't using them. We don't have the ability to use them, but we have the same rights as a state. As a sovereign nation, we are right up there. I mean, [the Tribal Chairman] and Jay Inslee are at the same level government-wise. Nobody sees it that way, but we finally have… without the lawyers suing, and getting us those rights, over and over again… I mean, it took Tribal members to push for those rights… (PS, interview, 08/20/2015)

To this finding, the conception of sovereignty may be located in a theoretical realm beyond the lived experiences of Tribal employees or Tribal community members. Additionally, the associated and recognized educational rights of Tribes - having the right to demand self-directed, meaningful education products (as promoted in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (2005)), have yet to be filtered into Tribal narratives regarding educational rights.

Self-Determination. The second dimension examined within the narratives involved references to self-determination. As previously discussed, Brayboy (2012) describes self-determination as the aspirational horizon towards which actions are oriented. In terms of an educational goal, the conception of self-determination is defined as the ability to create an education system that provides for individual readiness and collective technical skill development, while at the same time promoting and centralizing cultural identity.

In my professional experiences, the conception of self-determination has been regularly promoted throughout Tribes as the ultimate goal of an independent nation. In fact, the language of self-determination is used as boilerplate verbiage in nearly every official Tribal resolution, agreement, and/or document that Tribes produce.

Despite this ubiquity, during this project I discovered that asking participants for a definition of self-determination was extremely challenging. What I found were many

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different individual and collective connotations embedded within the ideal of a unifying

goal of a Tribe, most of which are antithetical and amorphous. With regard to this

project, I sought to uncover a macro-scale conception of what I thought were the most

important dimensions to self-determination, specifically existential continuation and

capacity-building. This orientation produced two unifying goals in relation to higher

education, both of which are described in greater detail in the following sections.

1. Encouraging Tribal members to get their education and return

2. Recruiting Tribal member for important positions in the Tribal organization

    Encouraging Educated Tribal People to Return to the Reservation.

    …You go out and around in the world, and that you find your way back,
    either here or in a similar community, where you can do those things, that
    allow you to demonstrate and talk about it. That you have some kind of
    wisdom, that people either want to use up… listen to… piggy-back on…
    or help you create some type of a thing that you can all be proud of. (OJ,
    interview, 08/27/2015)

    One of the most prominent themes within this project was the promotion of higher

education as an indirect measure of self-determination. Narratives relate to collective

perception of higher education as a central factor in the development of institutional

capacity for the Tribal organization. Narratives demonstrated that these perceptions

appear targeted at younger generations who are on the cusp of eligibility for positions

within the Tribal organization. As one participant stated:

    RU: You have such a young generation coming up… and them knowing
    they could go anywhere… Or even me now. Going somewhere and
    coming right back home.
    (KB: So then providing clarity of a path of education is really important
    then?)
    RU: Oh yeah. It is. You know they always want people to come back and
    live where they're from… It's telling a lot to the young people. We're
    trying to get these young people to stay here. Get education. Work for
    your Tribe. Every Tribe is trying to do that.

(KB: Would you encourage them to come back to the community though?)
RU: I do encourage them to do that, but I tell them to get an education. (RU, interview, 09/03/2015)

The types of narratives relating to self-determination appear to indicate that formal higher education is perceived as preparatory for personal empowerment and for training the Tribal workforce. What also appears present is the generic sense that any formal education credential, no matter what the type, will be of value to the Tribal organization.

Recruiting Tribal Members for Tribal Jobs. Additional narratives extended an expectation with regard to an expectation of Tribal government to actively recruit Tribal members with higher education credentials. Here the emphasis is toward the derivative goal of leveraging individual educations into the collective capacity development of the Tribal organization. Within these perceptions are narratives reflecting the link between presence and power. It is not just important for Tribal people to come home but it is also *vital* for them to hold important positions of power within their own communities.

> …Being able to train your own people to do those kind… have those kinds of careers instead of a job… and that's fantastic. And that should be the goal, because we're all trying to get to this level of self-determination, where we have people that understand the community that understand the options that are available, and the possibilities that are out there, and is able to combine all that together and is able to make that logical decision… (KR, interview, 09/17/2015)

Associated with these narratives are also perceptions relating to an implicit role for Tribal government to provide employment possibilities for Tribal members upon graduation and return. The implicit goal is to encourage self-determination through the development of community capital.

> If I look at the bigger [picture] here, in this community, bigger departments or look at it from a bigger perspective, I think the commitment to hiring Tribal members and training them up in to positions, is important. (AK, interview, 09/01/2015)

What is apparent from those narratives is a perceived linkage between degree and employment. Along with this linkage is the establishment of a tacit social contract that sets an expectation on the Tribal organization to create, find, and fund positions for any educated Tribal member that returns. What appears missing from this expectation is the realization that not all educations are directly transferrable to the business of the Tribe, or are they necessarily preparatory for key positions of power in the organization.

Nation Building. The final facet of self-determination discussed by Brayboy involved the conception of nation building. As paraphrased from Brayboy (2012) the conception of nation building is conceived as the praxis between claiming a right of a meaningful education and working toward the development of an education system that fosters self-determination. Those conceptions of praxis appears to be embodied within the collective; in this case the Tribal government. With regard to the conception of nation building as an educational process within Tribal communities, narratives produced several themes including: healing; advising; and identifying and removing obstacles.

Promotion of Higher Education as a Means of Healing.

> …Nowadays we're afforded the opportunity to send all of our kids to school, anyone that wants to, even our adults, people like that, that just want to get a formal education, they have all the access in the world to do that, so… It's very important, if for nothing else, just to better their life and make them feel good about themselves. Hold their heads high. (FQ, interview, 08/28/2015)

Mental health issues remain as one of the most serious existential threats to Tribal members in "Indian Country" today. It is a sobering fact to learn that suicide remains the

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second leading cause of mortality of Tribal members within Tribal communities (CDC, 2008). These rates of suicide appear correlated to equally dismal comparative metrics of Tribal graduation. The lack of education appears to be a contributing factor to the health, safety, and wellness of all Tribal people (Borowsky, 1999; Bender, 2006).

With regard to this issue, mental health appears to coexist with parallel narrative higher education as a means of healing. These narratives of healing are reflective of the importance of encouraging and developing wellness as a form community development and nation building. To this point, several participants discussed the link between higher education as a means to foster and bolster coping skills other Tribal members needed to overcome the collective historic trauma that still exists in Tribal communities.

> (KB: How is formal education important for Tribal members?)
> DD: Well, I think it is helpful to give them skills to survive in the society that we live in today… and also for fostering self-esteem for our people who have suffered historical trauma and dysfunction within their families… (DD, interview, 08/26/2015)

Another participant offered similar account to education as a means of mitigating historic trauma, describing the link between mental health and Tribal educational success (e.g., graduation) in the following manner.

> The big handicap that I see… we're still stuck in the… a lot of the times… The self-esteem… People… I see it in kids… I see it in adults… They don't have the self-esteem to think that they can do it. They get discouraged. Or are struggling with addiction issues. Or family issues… Mainly because of past trauma that they are dealing with. It gets in their way of their dreams and their education. In Indian country I see a lot of that. I've even seen ones that are educated and successful in their careers, but still struggle because of mental health issues. That's part of the assimilation process that's left a scar on Native communities. Trying to heal that, and I think I've been really encouraged by our government here is that they are recognizing the mental health aspect… how important that is to the community. And we're building that into the community as part of the healing process… because education is just one part of it. (TM, interview, 08/19/2015)

Finally, another participant provided personal account to the emancipatory potentials of higher education relating a story of how higher education was key to her ability to overcome physical abuse.

> EF: …This is the coolest thing about college. So you go there and I was a battered wife and a controlled wife and every day I was at school, with every grade… well, there weren't grades, but… With every success… with every paper I wrote… with every book I read… Every seminar I was in… Every small group that I participated in… I just got more and more powerful. More and more…
> (KB: Confident.)
> EF: YES!! I knew in my personal life, he was going to have to change… He was going to have to be not how he was… Or I was going to leave him in the dust, and that's in fact what happened. Halfway through the second year, I took my three kids and I moved into a domestic violence shelter in Olympia and still went to school every day. And got, you know, only better after that. So, empowerment. You don't just become competent, in the competency of the subject that you are learning. You become competent in the competencies of life. And I, in fact, say that, that was the harder, more valuable lesson that I learned in college. (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Narratives appear to indicate the transformative and emancipatory roles that higher education can offer to Tribal members. What is important within these narratives is the establishment of linkages between education experiences, personal empowerment, and wellness – the effects of which, embodies the central aspirations of nation building.

Role of the Tribe in Educational Advising.

> I think, there's a lot of kids, especially Tribal kids, that come out of high school and they don't know what they want to do…. I think, if we get to build our program right, and build our high school, we'll have more and more kids, leaving that part of it knowing what they want to do… and not in that limbo stage. That's where I think we can make the improvement. (TM, interview, 08/19/2015)

Another important facet of nation building relates to the perception that education advisement is a perquisite of individual professional development and collective capacity building in Tribal communities. Findings suggest that participants perceive the Tribal

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organization as the default entity to provide and promote educational advising within the

Tribal community. Narratives also suggest that educational advisement remains an

activity of nation-building that is currently under addressed. What also becomes apparent

is that the lack of educational advisement in this community appears to be a long-

standing condition.

> Not all kids want to go into college or university. Some want vocational schools, and other types of training. And help them to find these things that are really geared to, and what they really enjoy doing…. If I had somebody there pulling for me, back a long time ago, and I could have gone to college, I think my life would have been a lot different. (WV, interview, 09/03/2015)

Finally, participants also forward narratives that suggest the effects of the lack of

advisement on the post-education career for Tribal people. What becomes evident here is

that there appears to exist a disconnect between graduation and career readiness.

Associated with this disconnect is the apparent presence of a backlash towards the Tribal

organization in terms of Tribal members with degrees not working in careers relating to

their fields of expertise. What appears to be at issue is the perceived return on investment

of an education to the community. Additionally, narratives appear to suggest that

educational advisement is crucial to the process of leveraging individual education into

collective capacities as associated with the processes of nation building.

> RU: People go away and get education, but now then I see them, and I knew they went away, they're part-time something, and it's not even in the area they went to school for. Why not? Is the Tribe even helping them? Are they encouraging them? You need to help them. You need to encourage them. You need to be like, Yeah, you're going here. What's your plan when you come back?
> (KB: So, do you believe that the Tribe doesn't do enough counseling?)
> RU: I don't think so. Because what I've seen. Some people have gone on successfully. Some people didn't. (RU, interview, 09/03/2015)

Narratives appear to indicate that Tribal members are concerned with the lack of higher education counseling within Tribal communities. Narratives indicate that the current conditions of higher education within the Tribe are producing Tribal members with educations who are not positioned or prepared to return and contribute. In terms of the active process of nation building, narratives also appear to indicate that participants perceive that one of the central responsibilities of Tribal government is to serve as the de facto center of educational counseling and advisement.

Role of the Tribe in Removing Obstacles. A final set of narratives indicated the removal of obstacles as another perceived nation building role for Tribal government. Though lacking specificity, several participants offered parallel narratives discussing perceptions focused primarily on the redress of financial support for higher education, that which until recently represented the primary obstacle for Tribal participation in higher education.

> I think it's our role, while we are able, to have what we have… to provide them… take away those obstacles. To provide them the needs that they need met to go get their education, and leave it up to them on what they get…. You want to give them the best possible chances of going out into this world and staying into this community and succeeding. Hopefully by the time… if we provide all these things, and take away all these obstacles to get them the funding, support, and education that they need… hopefully, by that time, they will be sufficient enough in themselves to go out and conquer the world. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

> …Our job is to reinforce that and assist them in their goals to get to where they need to be. Where they want to be. Whether they use it here or somewhere else is no big deal. It's just trying to assist them to get to where they need to be. (GN, interview, 08/28/2015)

Within these narratives there does not appear any direct call for educated Tribal people to return to reservation communities. To this point, narratives indicate that education appears conceived as an individual good rather than a collective Tribal good.

Summary of Research Question 1. Findings associated with Brayboy's

conceptional model of self-determination provide dimension to describe the ways in

which higher education is valued and promoted in contemporary Tribal communities.

With regard to the conception of sovereignty, there is a general set of narratives that

reflect the importance of higher education as a means in which to claim and protect treaty

rights. In terms of the conceptual goals of self-determination, narratives indicate general

support for higher education as a means for individual emancipation as well as a means to

seek out the credentials and skills that are needed in the community. At the same time,

members discuss the importance of recruitment as a means to bring back those that have

gone out into the non-Tribal world. Finally, with regard to the active process of nation

building, narratives discuss the therapeutic value of higher education as an opportunity to

provide healing for Tribal members. Additionally, narratives relating to nation building

also provided a set of perceptions and expectations toward Tribal government identifying

the supportive roles that participants perceive the Tribal government should do in terms

of providing educational advisement and removing obstacles which appear to thwart

individual advancement both in and outside of the community.

Research Question 2: Are There Differences among Perceptions of Education

between Groups (e.g., Traditionalists v. Credentialists)? The second set of analysis

for this dissertation involved the examination of narratives to identify potential groups

coexisting in a Tribal government setting. Participant narratives demonstrated the

presence of several pairings of groups, including Tribal v. non-Tribal; Tribal v. Native;

and Family v. Tribe. A distillation of these narratives provides a basic understanding of

the how education is experienced as a source of tension within Tribal government

settings. Table 4 provides and overview of the narratives associated with specific groups and additional dimensions.

Table 4

Narrative Themes Relating to RQ 2.

Research Question	Groups
Are there differences among perceptions of education between groups (e.g., traditionalists v. credentialists)?	Tribal v. Non-Tribal
	Tribal v. Native
	Tribal v. Tribal Family
Additional Dimensions	Specific Standpoints
*Dynamic Standpoints	Practical Experientialist
	Cultural Experientialist
	Formal Credentialist

Tribal v. Non Tribal.

EF: I have a masters degree… I am a Tribal member… I have been here all my life… and how many white directors, men or women, has my life been affected by, who were just stopping by?.... Who were just stopping by, for however long… But made decisions that has affected us. (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Within nearly every Tribal organization there exists non-Tribal staff that directly serve Tribal people. Typically possessing superior educational credentials, this group of non-Tribal personnel has historically been imported into Tribal organizations to provide advanced educational credentials and technical and managerial skills not present within the Tribal membership. Despite their intended role, examples of participant narratives show that some Tribal people perceive non-Tribal persons as counter to the educational needs of the community and to the greater mission of self-determination. Implicit within the narratives is the tension between the Tribal and non-Tribal members in terms of the promotions of formal education, practical experience, and cultural knowledge.

SU: …We now have a bunch of language teachers or other folks, you know, that we've sent to school, and they've got their teaching credentials and they're teaching our language. And then the non-Native principal and superintendent of the school, alienate them and make their lives so miserable, they quit within a year. That happened this year here. And so, who knows where she's going to go teach now. But, she didn't want no part of this. And so here we have this great Lushootsed speaker, who can teach our kids… oh my God.

(KB: But can't do it in the classroom.)

SU: Right.

(KB: But can't give credit in that classroom because…)

SU: The bullshit. Yes. Yes. I mean, this girl was doing great stuff. They came and Christmas caroled us in Lushootsed this last winter.

(KB: Wow.)

SU: It was very cool. And I have a strong feeling that that's not going to happen this year because that gal left us, you know. And it's like, we paid for that college… She went to the language… She came back and got a job… and the people over here are such boneheads, not Tribal thinkers. 'Cause when you're not from here, you don't necessarily think like we think. (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

Participant narratives also discuss the tensions between Tribal employees and non-Tribal management. Narratives appear to indicate that Tribal people not only perceive non-Tribal members as separate, but sometimes also see them as antithetical to their advancement into positions of power in their own Tribal government.

Way back in the '70s and '80s, here at the Tribe, any non-Indian that was hired, there was a paragraph in their hiring papers that said, It was their responsibilities to work themselves out of a job, by training their replacement. And, my first director in the first museum, told that to me, and she wasn't proud. She was angry. (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Tribal v. Native. Another grouping within Tribal communities involves the nuanced difference between Tribal and Native peoples. Narratives indicate that the primary difference between these two groups resides in a relational quality reflecting the fact that Tribal people have a communal and cultural affiliation that Natives largely do not embody. It is this association with community identity that represents a qualitative difference in terms of the experience of identity and the promotion of collective priorities

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most often associated with Tribal self-determination.

To this point, there appears an unacknowledged tension between Tribal people and Native people that is often overlooked by non-Tribal academics. The differences between these two groups becomes most noticeable where interactions between identity and education affect experiences within institutional contexts. The following sample of narratives provide account to the types of nuanced differences that are present between these two groups.

> EF: ...Yeah. And there was the daughter of a reservation Indian, who worked for the State of Washington. And so she… Her father was born and raised on a Reservation in Minnesota or wherever, but she was raised in Olympia, and her dad was a bureaucrat… An amazing one. And the list goes on. We were as different from each other as the adopted ones, who were raised by white people, who were trying to find…
> (KB: Their identity…)
> EF: Yeah. And they were broken. I mean, they were broken. And I stood there knowing I was a light skinned, half breed, but I knew exactly where I was from. And that those people all around me might think, OK. White girl, who do you think are, until I open my mouth. And then here's these guys who were raised by white Catholics, and who look in the mirror and are Native as all get-out. But they were shattered inside, because they had no idea where they were from. The didn't know what Tribe. They didn't know East coast/West coast… Canadian/American… They didn't know. They looked in the mirror and saw a Native and that's where it ended. And they were broken… (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Narratives also show that in some cases, the tension between Native and Tribal groups exists within membership of the same Tribe. The following narrative provides additional insight into the ways in which Tribal group identity appears to transcend enrollment status.

> (KB: Aren't you concerned about the perpetuity of the Tribe, if we don't have the right people, with the right educations, in the right positions of power?)
> PS: There's always going to be… there's always going to be other Tribal members that want to do this, that want to do that. Then there's always going to be a percentage of Tribal members that go to college, that get 4 or

8 year degrees… Get PhDs… Whatever… and never come back to the Tribe… Never want anything to do with it. We've had people that go out and get their degree in [redacted] and never…
(KB: They get their degree to escape.)
PS: Yeah. To escape. But then we also have someone who got a degree in [redacted] and didn't want anything to do with being Indian, whatsoever, when they were growing up. I went to him when I was on Indian ed… When I was president of the Indian Club, I went to him every year and asked him, Do you want to be a part of the Indian Club? I'm not Indian… Get the fuck out of here. Who you talking to? So he gets an [redacted] degree and can't find a job and comes back to the Tribe… (PS, interview 08/20/2015)

Extending the examination further, other narratives show that the perceived differences between Tribal and Native groups can even manifest between members of the same family.

There's a kid that's going to be head of our construction company… wants to be… he's my cousin and I don't know him. I met him in the council chambers one day he came in they introduced him and well, who the heck are you? I've never seen him in my life, but he's one of my uncle's sons, who I knew my uncle. I saw him all the time, and it was just to me it was a shock… and to him it was a shock that he comes back and he's got a job now, but nobody knows him and he's trying to introduce [himself] to the community, and all that fun stuff and I think he's going to struggle with that for a little while. (GN, interview, 08/28/2015)

Tribal Government v. Tribal Family. Harkening back to the introductory Tribal primer in which I discussed the premise that an Indian Tribe is a functional entity established for Tribal families to create a government-to-government relationship with the federal government, another set of group identities becomes apparent. Within a single Tribal community there can exist a factional rift between the Tribal government and individual Tribal families. Within this derivative grouping there can exist a tangible divide between the collective priorities of the Tribe and those of the family and individual in the context of higher education. This conflict involves the issue of educational prioritization between the needs of the Tribes and the wants of the individual or family.

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Though I was only able to find a singular reference to this Tribal/family split within the narratives, it is important to include as it reveals the culturally prescribed limits of Tribal organizational power vis-à-vis family and individual agency.

> (KB: …Do you believe that is one of the roles of the Tribe is to help these community members identify a good educational path? And appropriate educational path?)
> FQ: I'm not so sure. I think that… I think that, for me, is more of a family dynamic. Which I know can be tough to leave that much responsibility on a family, especially with some of our families… It's a start, so it's not nothing new. We have a high rate of alcoholism. We have a high rate of domestic violence. High unemployment. So sometimes it isn't… the greatest thing that we leave that all up to the families, but at the same time, you being Tribal, you know how families are. You just don't go in and interfere. I don't go walk up to auntie so and so and say, Hey…
> (KB: You know what you should do..?)
> FQ: …You should have cousin so and so jump into an engineering degree… Who the hell are you to tell where to guide my kid? You know. And Culturally, it still needs to come from the family…. If we ran like a dictatorship, we could start assigning degrees. You will go to school to be this. But, we can't. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Summary. Within this sampling of narratives it becomes apparent that there are many different groups and subgroups within the seemingly homogenous Tribal entity. What the narratives indicate is a contested space between Tribal, Native, and non-Native interests and groups; all of which who embody differing forms of education and experience. Additionally, within this dynamic Tribal families also exist as an informal groups that protect individual Tribal member rights against the encroachment of the Tribal government. Together these separate agents act and interact to set the agenda of Tribal business and to affect expressions of self-governance and self-determination.

Dynamic Standpoints within Tribes. Beyond the discrete groupings identified in the previous section, I also found within the participant narratives another dimension of differentiation that appears to exist beyond the limited conceptions of group. This

additional dimension accounts for a peculiarity that I experienced during the interview

process. Specifically, what I noticed was the tendency for some participants to adopt

multiple positions or to shift their position several times during an interview. As

indicated by the following narrative, one participant appears to both laud and discount the

values of formal education and practical experience in the same interview.

> I want to put the best qualified people into the jobs. Now, if we get a…
> assuming we have a job opening and we have the option of to choose
> someone with no education that may not know a lot of the stuff that's need
> to excel at that job, and then we have them going against someone that has
> a BA that is proven that they'll put in four years of dedication to a craft….
> Odds are if they studied that long, they probably have a basic knowledge
> that will help them translate well into a good employee…. I think the best
> and the brightest sick around. They don't leave and get school. They just
> come up the institutional ranks and work their way in the top jobs like [the
> executive director]. He never left. That dude's just been here. 35 years or
> whatever. He's just been here working his way up. (FQ, interview,
> 08/27/2015)

This collective behavior lead me to conclude that not only were logical groups not

the only metric present, but that they were also probably not as responsive to and

reflective of the perceptions of education that I was seeking to undercover and

understand. In regard to this finding, I concluded that there are three standpoints which

are present in the narratives that provide more understanding to the dynamism and

intersectionality as expressed by the participants. The general theoretical operation of a

standpoint is to offer a socially constructed, partial view of world, and to understand the

differences within and between the various viewpoints that are active (Collins, 1990;

Harding, 1987). Extending this conception into Tribal contexts and drawing from the

data, three epistemological standpoints appeared present within the narratives.

Standpoints included: Practical Experientialists; Cultural Experientialists; and Formal

Credentialists.

Practical Experientialists.

> I think street smarts is probably about 70% of education when you're dealing with a community versed in that versus a formal education… I am a firm believer that you come home, you know 100% of the book work, you take about 80% of that and throw it in the garbage. Start getting a little more street-wise and you know, you figure out how to deal with folks, just through community contacts. (GN, interview, 08/28/2015)

The first orientation I refer to as practical experientialists. People assuming this standpoint promote practical experience as vital to Tribal leadership and management. Practical experientialists appear to reflect the views of an older generation of Tribal members that did not have relatively many opportunities to pursue higher education. At present, practical experientialists appear to represent the majority of views of the Tribal people in positions of power in this community. Practical experientialists seem to exist in the theoretical space somewhere between the non-Tribal credentialed employees and the up-and-coming generation of Tribal members returning home with higher education degrees and credentials. The following dialogue provides a sample of viewpoints from the practical experientialist standpoint.

> TM: I think the educated person needs to recognize they can learn a lot just from his personal, hands on experience. And… the people that work for me, I think they all understand that… and value that experience.
> (KB: So, there's a symbiosis between the cultural and the contemporary…)
> TM: Mmm Hmmm.
> (KB:… They each have a place and can improve each other.)
> TM: Yeah. And that's why I got, why I'm kind of in this position. Not because of my education on fisheries management… or education running a department. My experience was being in the field and knowing exactly what goes on as a fisherman. And those… I know how the fish are caught… When, where, all that aspect that you don't learn in school. And so, I was able to bring that experience into the co-management end of it. And then the technical folks are spitting out numbers or spitting out how this is going to work. You look at it and that's not realistic. That's not going to happen that way. Sounds good, but that's not going to happen this way because of this, this, and this. (TM, interview, 08/19/2015)

Underlying these the narratives of practical experientialism appears an implicit view that formal education and practical education are somehow mutually exclusive of one another. Associated with this perception was the notion that practical education somehow produces "common sense," although formal education degrades this commodity. What appears to be indicated here is a sense that formal education creates a rigidity of thought that is counter to fluidity and dynamism needed for effectiveness. Here again, the narratives show the presence of this condition.

> I've met some pretty dumb doctorates, to be quite honest with you. So that's why, I mean, I have this… I wouldn't way its unique, but I have my own perspectives on education, because I've met some people that have far more education than me, where I'm in a room thinking, God, how did they make it? Man, I should be a lawyer. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

It is this realization that one could conclude that the mutually exclusive positioning between formal and practical education may produce competing social narratives which potentially thwart higher education efforts and educational reforms in Tribal communities.

Cultural Experientialists. Similarly to the practical experientialists, cultural experientialists offer an additional standpoint to explain the way in which those with those with cultural experience place a higher value on traditional knowledge and cultural experience as a requisite of leadership. Again, the purpose of the cultural experientialist narratives appears to offer a counter context to the credentialists that promote education as a superior commodity within Tribal communities.

One of the most common tones within the narratives relating to cultural experientialist involved discounting the value of higher education within "Indian Country." This discount appears reflective of the promotion of respect over technical

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skills or external status.

> The experience within Indian Country is such that, I don't place a lot of value on a masters degree or a PhD or a bachelors degree. I mean the… there are, I believe, significant differences between Indian country, Indian communities and the… because of the value structure, spiritual beliefs, you know, the cultural aspects that are unique to an organization, like the [this Tribe]. And you compare that to what's outside, well somebody with a PhD coming in here, and is expecting to fit in right away… not always going to happen. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

In addition, several participants offered parallel narratives which appear to argue

for an informal equivalency of a formal degree for those community members that

possessed cultural knowledge. Again, this appears as a move to argue for parity of

knowledge between academia and those with Indigenous skillsets.

> I have a person that works for me here… she's 56… she's an elder. She's a carver. She has a high school diploma, but she has no other degrees beyond that. But her degrees come in the world of common sense and wisdom and the practicality of knowing how to do things that are of value, they have a value to people. She knows how to harvest cedar. She knows how to find a log that will be good for a canoe. She knows how to carve. She knows how to make carving tools. She knows how to paint. She knows her own language. In a way, she's got a PhD or even better in the natural world. It's not book learning. It's experience and life learning. If you have some of that, and people are aware of you, and they get to know you… that is very, very valuable. That's as valuable as the PhD. (OJ, interview, 08/27/2015)

What appears most interesting about the narratives relating to this orientation is

the fact that they are generated not from Tribal people without formal education, but

rather from 3 participants with advanced degrees. Also of interest was the lack of

critique from participants from the practical experientialist standpoint, alluding to a

degree of crossover among the two standpoints.

Formal Credentialists. The final standpoint present in the narratives involved the

formal credentialists. Participants expressing standpoints from the formal credentialist

orientation place formal education as the most important quality for leadership. Though a

minority orientation within the Tribe at present, there is the expectation that more Tribal

people will adopt the formal credentialist viewpoints as the numbers of Tribal people

pursuing higher education increases. Participants expressing this viewpoint appear to

position themselves as a check against the informal leadership practices of the practical

experientialists.

> I've been an admin assistant or executive assistant to boards, none of which had an education. None of those people sitting there had an education. They had experience. Maybe they were in the military or maybe they were a fisherman for however long or whatever, but… or owned a fireworks stand. But when you talk about how you do this process, they didn't know. They didn't know they were not… They didn't know they weren't doing it legally… Tribal legal or other… (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Though formal credentialists appears to exists as a counter to both the practical

experientialists and the cultural experientialists, narratives show that there also exists a

small subset within the Tribe that appear to occupy all three standpoints. As the

following narrative indicates, to this unique subset, the critiques relating to the lack

"common sense" among formal credentialists appear moot.

> Some people have that "it" factor, that I was talking about earlier. Like your uncle. He had that "it" factor. Where you just can't define it, but you just know this person is the person that I want to follow into a trench. I want to follow this person. I will let this person make decision for my Tribe…. I'll use [Tribal Chairman] as an example. He went off and got his college degree, but he did it in a way where he stayed in the community…. he went and got a degree and he still has that thing where you still will follow him. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Summary of Research Question 2 and Dynamic Standpoints. Findings

associated with the second research question appear to indicate the presences of three

primary classification of groups within Tribal communities. Groups include Tribal,

Native, and non-Tribal interests. In addition to the primary groups there also appear to

exist a secondary expression between the collective Tribal entity (Tribal government) and

the informal associations of Tribal families. Together these groups represent a gross landscape of agents that explain and frame Tribal dynamics.

Narratives also indicate the presence of epistemological standpoints that transcend groups within the Tribes. The primary epistemological standpoints indicated within the narratives include: Formal credentialists; Practical Experientialists, and Cultural experientialists. The different standpoints represent the epistemological differentiations within actors who promote certain kinds of knowledge as more valuable than others. The effect of the standpoints reflects a dynamism and nuance of perceptions that helps to frame the ways in which certain experiences, including higher education, are lauded and discounted within the community.

Emergent Theme Development. The next section of findings involved an emergent analysis to distill for themes that were not expressly addressed by my research questions. Findings for this subset were generated using the modified grounded theory framework as directed by Charmaz (2006). To remind, this method of coding included intensive examination of the narratives for emergent themes shared within multiple narratives.

In this section, I sought to understand how education is perceived within Tribal communities? What are the utilities of higher education within Tribal communities? What are the tensions involved within the processes of higher education? What obstacles are present that prevents Tribal graduation? And what reform areas were discussed by Tribal people to address those obstacles involved with higher education graduation in Tribal communities? To do so I developed a framework and coding schemata to examine for the dimensions of:

- Utility – What perceived benefits do Tribal people think higher education offers.

- Tensions – What are the psychological and social tensions that potentially impact Tribal graduation rates.

- Obstacles – What are the material and structural constraints preventing Tribal graduation rates.

- Reform – What structural conditions and policies (both on an off reservation) that should we address in order to provide Tribal people the best possible chance for graduation.

Furthermore, within this framework I also sought to uncover the perceptions and narratives that could illuminate about the potential presence of credentialism within Tribal communities and, if so present, what different dimensions does credentialism play in terms of the effects of staffing of positions of power for the twin goals of self-governance and self-determination in relation to non-Tribal entities.

Utilities of Higher Education in Tribal Communities. Examination of education utility for Tribes reveals important perceptions that explain the ways in which the processes of higher education can be viewed as beneficial to Tribal members. Examination of narratives for educational utility revealed important sub-themes that provide context to the ways in which higher education serves as a way for Tribal people to locate themselves in a larger cultural context, increase their individual and collective skill development, and provide themselves with the opportunities for individual empowerment and collective emancipation. Sub-themes for this topic include: Increased perceptions and worldview, goal setting, professional skill development, and increased opportunities. Table 5 provides an overview of the various emergent themes and

subthemes associated with those findings.

Table 5

Emergent Themes of Utilities of Higher Education in Tribal Communities.

Emergent Theme	Sub Themes
Utilities of higher education in Tribal communities	Increased perceptions and worldview
	Goal setting
	Professional skill development
	Increased opportunities

Increased Perceptions and Worldview.

> The concept of formal education, I think is important because it allows you to see then, a bigger world. It allows you to see things in a different kind of perspective. And it's only when you have a perspective… well people ask me about, well how do you feel about this and that, and I say, well I have mixed feelings about these things, but let me tell you why… (OJ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Tribal people appear to recognize that they live within a relatively cloistered world. Since the inception of reservations, Tribal people have been innately aware of the invisible political boundaries separating their communities from the non-Tribal world. Narratives reflect the perception that higher education operates as a cross-cultural mechanism to bridge Tribal existence with the non-Tribal world. In addition, narratives also appear to reflect the perception that Tribal leadership would benefit from learning and importing the skills of the non-Tribal world and leveraging these capacities back into Tribal communities.

> I think it is important in that, Tribal leaders are educated. Not only… not in any one specific area… but in the sense of… knowing both ends of the… of the community. As far as, if they are not educated to know what's best for the community… there's a whole lot they don't know about… education and what benefits it would bring to the community. With an education, they would have a better sense of what's important to build a community. And… they understand the corporate worlds and what's on the outside… (TM, interview, 08/19/2015)

Offering a comparative explanation, one participant described the perceptional differences between an employee with formal education and an employee with practical experience through the analogy of a basketball team.

> They've got court-vision. That's what we say in basketball. They've got court-vision. Court sense. So they can see the floor. Where somebody else can only see the ball, and they have to look where the ball is going to go next, the other one see the floor, sees everything.. All the moving parts. And so, if you can combine the higher education of that person, with that vision, then you've got a really good employee. And I think that sometimes what happens is that the people with the court-vision go, this system and this school is not worth my time. I already know the floor, I don't have to go there to have them teach me that. But, maybe it would be better if they went and did that repetitious working out, you know working on the passing drills, dribbling drills, all those things, so that they are even going to be better equipped when they get out on the floor of life. (DD, interview, 08/26/2015)

Implicit within these narratives is the message that those with experiences of higher education have an advantage over other Tribal people because formal education in some way broadens perspectives in the ways that reservation life cannot. It also appears that this increased perception is perceived as also imbuing an employee with innovation and clarity not developed in those Tribal people who have limited themselves to experiences on the reservation.

Goal Setting.

> It gives them a goal, and like, they want to pursue this career, and they know there's something there for them to go to. (RU, interview 09/03/2015)

In addition to increasing worldview, narratives also show that higher education offers an important practice of goal setting for Tribal people. From my own experience, I can speak to the case that Tribal life offers relatively few milestones for one to gauge individual success. Narratives appear generally reflective of this perception, discussing

the benefits of a defined process and structure with a recognizable metric of accomplishment. Furthermore higher education appears promoted as a positive experience associated with goal setting, which also can serve as important examples for rebuilding self-confidence.

> There are people who have dreams. And in order to fulfill their dreams, they have to go through this goal-setting process that I have explained to people many, many times. OK. You have a dream of getting a degree. High school degree…AA degree… BA, BS degree. What and why is that important? It's important because that is a real confidence-builder. (OJ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Other narratives indicate that goal setting is also an important facet for understanding and developing institutional capital. The implicit point is that the process of higher education provides an example of structure and process that is believe key to Tribal graduation across venue.

> I think [higher education] is important for Tribal members because it gives them an opportunity to make better decisions. And also, assist them, at least it helped assist me, in setting goals for what I wanted to achieve. OK, so understanding the particular objectives of what a class were… be it history… be it math… be it literature… Whatever it might be… understanding the objectives that I was trying to achieve in that classroom, helped my set goals of what I needed to do to help me effectively attack those objectives and to achieve the ultimate goal of getting a grade out of that class… (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

Professional Skill Development. With regard to professional skill development, Tribal people appear to perceive higher education as beneficial, primarily due to the belief that the experience of higher education provides opportunity for professional skill development not typically present in most Tribal communities. Narratives appear to indicate a priority towards basic communication and office skills needed for entry-level positions.

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FQ: …You get a base of knowledge that you wouldn't necessarily get by just living day-to-day, working at the Tribe. When you work at the Tribe, you get a lot of on-job training, but you might not get some of the extra knowledge or know-how that you would get at a college…

(KB: Like technical knowledge?)

FQ: Yeah. How to write… I mean, there's no real-world setting where someone teaches you how to write a proper essay with proper grammar. You know, there's no office setting that's going to teach you how to do basic algebra. There's no office setting that's going to teach you how to do some of the basic things that a lot of jobs are going to require of you, you know, whether it be technical writing or just basic English 101/102. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

I think the only way [higher education] is improving [my skills] is, maybe helping me to write things a little bit better… to maybe file things a little bit better format… Do data entry a little bit better. (WV, interview, 09/03/2015)

What these types of narratives represent is a perception of an unmet educational need resulting from lackluster public education experiences. It also appears that participants are endorsing basic skills in order to maintain parity with the non-Tribal workforce. Furthermore, the predilection for acultural professional skills appears to represent a shift from indigenous education and towards perceived skills needed for participation in a globalized economy. This shift appears expressed in the types of degrees that participants promoted as important for Tribal self-determination (e.g., accounting and business degrees v. Native studies and Indigenous language degrees).

Increased Opportunities.

…All a degree does is maybe get you through a door that you wouldn't have gotten through before. So, a high school diploma, is good in itself, unless you are going to do something else. So you are only as good as what you've done last. So, once you get that high school diploma, you go through another door. And then in this area that this other door represents is this broader scope of the world, and what you can do inside there. And then if you go beyond that, you open another door and then the field opens up even greater. So what you're doing is, is you are opening up your field of opportunity. (OJ, interivew, 08/27/2015)

Finally, higher education appears to be valued by Tribal people because they perceive the completion of a degree will provide them additional opportunities both within and beyond the reservation. With most reservation communities having a limited amount of economic opportunities available, most Tribal people perceive that they are entering an extremely competitive Tribal workforce. To this perception, a higher education credential is often promoted to Tribal members as a means to provide for themselves, their families, their people, or other Tribal communities.

> I think, in the big picture, formal education is very important for Tribal members to provide multiple opportunities and pathways to achieving their maximum potentials as individuals, and the extent that they want to, bringing that potential back to serve either their own community, or other Native communities. (AK, interview, 09/01/2015)

Narratives also indicate that Tribal people perceive higher education as a means to leave the reservation. Here, narratives indicate that the value of education is tethered to non-Tribal occupational opportunities that are perceived as requiring a degree as a means of qualification.

> …Having that formal education. It open a lot of doors. You know, having a masters degree in counseling and a masters degree in counseling and a masters degree in computer science, I mean, those doors never would have opened up in that world, you know, had I, had I not had those. Because you put that on your resume and that's the first thing they look at. Oh yeah, you know. Let's bring him in and we'll talk to him and stuff. Now I didn't get every job I applied for, but it opened doors that allowed me to experience things that I would not have experienced and prepared me for opportunity. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

Tensions Associated with Higher Education in Tribal Communities. The second theme to emerge from this project involves the associated tensions that Tribal people experience in relation to the process of higher education. These tensions include the psychological and social psychological effects internalized before beginning the process of higher education, the tensions they experience while away from their families

and communities, and the tensions that they are confronted with once they return to the

reservation and seek meaningful employment. Table 6 provides an overview of

narratives associated relating to the psychological and social/psychological tensions as

expressed by participants.

Table 6

Emergent Themes Affecting Psychological and Social Psychological Tensions.

Emergent Theme	Sub Themes	
Tensions of higher education in Tribal communities	Psychological/ Social psychological tensions	Trauma
		Identity Crisis
		Assimilation
		Alienation

Psychological and Social Psychological Tensions. Tribal life is rife with a

menagerie of psychological and social psychological tensions. Many reservations have

increased rates of physical abuse, substance abuse, crime, and poverty that have existed

for generations. The presences of these factors create conditions of mental trauma that

affects the health, welfare, prosperity, and educational potential of many Tribal members.

The following narratives provide account for the various types of conditions that Tribal

people must account in life and in the pursuit of higher education.

Trauma.

> We've been in such a crisis mode for so long that a formal education and a degree gets you out of that crisis mode, so you can raise your kids not to be in a crisis mode. That's how… I like looking at it, that it'll give you enough money so that you are not struggling from day-to-day just to put food on the table, just to get it done. You can actually start developing your family, you know, your kids can decide who they want to be and what they want to be, instead of just having to survive. (PS, interview, 08/20/2015)

It is difficult to speak about Tribal education without also acknowledging the

centrality of trauma within reservation communities. In some form or another, trauma is

the one unifying experiences that transcend all Tribal people, urban or rural, rich or poor, casino or not. The sad fact is that right now, at the time of this writing, there are multiple reservation communities in the United States where Tribal people live with a real fear of being attacked and killed by packs of wild dogs (Rickert, 2015; Neary, 2014; Tupper, 2014). It is to this sobering reminder of the ubiquity of tragedy and fear that I would like to promote the subtheme of trauma, not as a symbol of the pathology of reservation communities, but as a foundation for educators to understand the types of existential conditions that continue to affect Tribal member participation and higher education graduation.

Sometimes the kinds of trauma that Tribal people experience appear diffuse; experienced through years of cyclical familial dysfunction bequeathed to younger generations of Tribal people. Though not as visible as physical abuse, these sources of trauma extend into the psyche of Tribal people and erode at their self-worth and self-confidence which potentially affect other aspects of a Tribal member's future. As the next sample of narratives indicates, some of the most damaging experiences of trauma begin in the home.

> I was walking through the world… 'cause I was always told I wasn't shit, wouldn't amount to shit, I was just an idiot, you know… why are you so stupid? A lot of those things that people say to their kids, and like… some of it's not as drastic as that, but just subtle phrase like, what were you thinking? You know, little stuff like that to a kid's mind reinforces they're dumb, reinforces they're not worthy. You know, there's a lot of those little phrases that, unfortunately you hear a lot on… in Tribal communities. 'Cause I remember I would ask stuff… like my dad… he was an alcoholic too. And he'd get all fed up and be like, What the fuck is your problem? You know. Stuff like that. And I didn't know I had a problem. Well what is it? I guess I do have a problem. I don't know what it is. You know, I was fortunate to get into recovery and rebound, 'cause I had self-esteem issues. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Beyond childhood, trauma can extend into adulthood as well. In these cases, the sources of trauma can be much more directed and savage. It appears that higher education can represent a catalyst of spousal abuse, as the potential of self-improvement and personal emancipation through higher education may be interpreted as a direct threat to the power dynamic within the family.

> So, when I got [to college] I had a white husband… and I had been on the Centennial commission, and hung out with Gov. Gardner and his wife, Jean Gardner, and Ralph Munroe and all these people… And they… when I left the Centennial commission to be a full-time student… They each bought one of my books and gave them to me, and signed them, put money in there, whatever… as my going away present from leaving the Centennial commission. So when I got home, my white husband took those books, put them in the burning barrel and set them on fire. And so my great amazing gift I just got, he burned it up. (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

As distasteful as these narratives are, they serve as a backdrop to understanding the ways in which education frames and is framed by abuse and trauma in reservation communities. It is to these conditions of abuse and trauma that education needs to account for, if not for anything else but to avoid adding additional destabilization where none is needed.

Identity Crisis.

> I remember my dad saying one time, you know, your cultural background, and your cultural identity, than this education that your… When I was going in to high school… This education process that you're going to go through. He said, it's more important that you maintain, the cultural identity, the spiritual beliefs, than it is that the education that you are going to get. The highest thing that you can't forget is who you are, where you come from, and who stands behind you… that has gone before you. And I never forgot that. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

In his article 2006 article "Mental health, welfare, and the quest for and authentic American Indian identity," Native scholar Joe Gone introduces the notion of "empty

center" to suggest that individual and collective mental health in reservation communities

is derivative of a contemporary identity crisis of Native people. Gone's primary point is

to argue that Native people embody an incompleteness to their individual identities that

negatively impacts their confidence and wellbeing.

Echoing the conceptions of Gone's article, participant narratives also highlight the

internal conflicts present within Tribal people in this community.

> There is a severe identity crisis with Native people. There is… myself
> included. I'm white by all accounts. Like I can go into a white community
> and no one bats an eye at me, you know. So growing up here, you know…
> That whole question of what it is to be Indian, and there's that whole
> contemporary experience of today, where we might not have the long hair
> and the brown skin, but we're still carrying the breath of those who came
> before us… and how do we give that to the people beyond us? (FQ,
> interview, 08/27/2015)

Other participants extended the application of identity crisis into off-

reservation communities within higher education. Here, it appears that the

dissonance between one's physical appearance and cultural knowledge serves as

indicator of mental health. As was discussed previously, the primary theme

seems to revolve around the perceived experiential differences between Tribal and

Native peoples. The following extended narrative provides example of this

tension.

> EF: There was 12 of us there at Evergreen [State College] that needed
> each other badly. I wouldn't have got through… I mean, I would have
> gotten through. I would have graduated. I just would have… It would have
> been harder for me to graduate.
> (KB: You would have hated it every day.)
> EF: Yeah. And once I knew there was an Evergreen Indian Center and
> there was 12 of us, and we all needed each other…
> (KB: … And you had a community…)
> EF: Yeah. And there was… like the radical AIM guy… AIM guy from
> San Francisco, who didn't have a reservation but was an AIM guy.
> (KB: He was an urban Indian.)

EF: Yeah. And there was the daughter of a reservation Indian, who worked for the State of Washington. And so she… Her father was born and raised on a Reservation in Minnesota or wherever, but she was raised in Olympia, and her dad was a bureaucrat… An amazing one. And the list goes on. We were as different from each other as the adopted ones, who were raised by white people, who were trying to find…

(KB: Their identity…)

EF: Yeah. And they were broken. I mean, they were broken. And I stood there knowing I was a light skinned, half breed, but I knew exactly where I was from. And that those people all around me might think, OK. White girl, who do you think are, until I open my mouth. And then here's these guys who were raised by white Catholics, and who look in the mirror and are Native as all get-out. But they were shattered inside, because they had no idea where they were from. The didn't know what Tribe. They didn't know East coast/West coast… Canadian/American… They didn't know. They looked in the mirror and saw a Native and that's where it ended. And they were broken… (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Narratives appear to indicate that the complexity of identity remains a central condition for most Tribal people. Narratives also allude to a relative culture blindness within higher education, in that Tribal and Native students are treated as equivalents student populations. In reality, these two populations represent different groups and might not benefit from a singular categorization of treatment.

Assimilation.

I think on other reservations it might be more pronounced where it actually could get discriminatory, where there would be lack of trust of an individual who went out and came back, cause like, wait a minute, you went back, went to the enemy. You know, drank their Kool Aid, and now we can't trust you anymore. (DD, interview, 08/26/2015)

One of the primary fears within Tribal people is the perception that time away from the reservation results in a loss of cultural identity. Associated with this perception appears the parallel notion that formal education will in some way supplant the cultural priorities of the Tribal student in favor of the non-Tribal world. To this point, there appears the perception that involves a general mistrust of educated Tribal people who return home to their reservation communities. As indicated in the narrative of the

following hypothetical, until otherwise proven, the Tribal scholar can sometimes be viewed as "tainted" by association with non-Tribal institutions such as the university.

> …They tried to turn me into something that I am not. And so, so they go back and they practice what they've always done. They speak the language. They participate in these cultural activities, in the ceremonies, and all of that. And then somebody else goes out there. And they're thinking the same thing. Their thought process is, they're still trying to make them white, white people. And then this guy comes back, and he's got all these great ideas, and guess where he learned them? Out there in the white world. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

Additionally, there also appears a derivative fear that Tribal students who attend higher education will come back home, bringing back contagious forms of knowledge harmful to the cultural or traditional values on the reservation. Again, the general theme shows the tensions that exist between learning and application of knowledge in Tribal communities.

> I think that where it gets difficult is understanding what's a valuable education for understanding human systems, that is not prefaced… or resulting in assimilation. So I want to go out and learn this human system that's "successful" in other societies and then I can bring those values and those techniques to the Tribe and then turn out that's eliminating culture, or tradition, or history, even though it may be efficient. Those are things that make me… Concern me about sending people off to learn a foreign system and bringing it back. It's just being able to quantify things… and not quantify but analyze and assess those systems in formal structures, in a way that filters out negative aspects of those. Because I really believe that…. I think education is assimilation. (DD, interview, 08/26/2015)

The tensions of assimilation appear to reflect a relatively unstable position for Tribal scholars to hold. On the one hand Tribal scholars are expected to leave the reservation to seek the educations needed for positions of power. While on the other hand, should they do so, they find they automatically differentiate themselves for doing so. It is this condition that I posit creates a double narrative about the importance of higher education in Tribal communities.

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Alienation.

> … You can think of a number of people who have gone out and they got an education, and then come back to their community, and they don't always fit in… They have all this knowledge. They have this, this sheepskin they can hang on the wall sort of thing. And it can be difficult for community members to sometimes… who maybe don't have the education level… that other people have. And I don't know if it's jealousy, or if it's they didn't like the persons in the first place, or anything like that sort of thing. But it does… I think it does offer some skepticism to people who have not left the reservation, not been out in the world. When you do come back with that, and you try to implement things that are going be of benefit to the community, and the community rejects it. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

Similar to the tensions of assimilation are the associated tensions of isolation that can present to Tribal scholars following an extended absence during their higher education. For Tribal people there appears to exist a perception of skepticism towards the Tribal scholar, especially in cases in which they come home and advocate for progressive changes. In some cases, this skepticism is actualized into differential treatment for the Tribal person, affecting their position and influence within their communities. As one participant described with a personal example, the Tribal scholar needs to take great care when reentering the Tribal community after graduation.

> I had a friend at WSU, the same time I was there, and he was Nez Perce. He went back to Nez Perce. He was going to save the Tribe… lead it out of, you know, the doldrums and the next thing I knew he was calling me up, Hey, you know where I can look for a job? He said, Tribe doesn't want me back here, [Laughter], and stuff. And we talked about that. And he said, I don't understand. You know, I've gone up here. I am one of the first Tribal members to, to go on the college and stuff like that, and I come back, and for some reason, I don't fit in. So, we talked about that, and one of the conclusions that we draw… we drew from that was that we didn't take the time to reacclimatize ourselves with the cultural values, of the, of the Tribe. We came back with this degree. We had all these great ideas. Nobody wanted to listen to them because they didn't believe that we were still culturally relevant. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

Tensions Involving Competing Social Values. In addition to psychological and social psychological tensions, Tribal people with higher education also have to navigate a complex environment of social narratives framed by competing priorities within Tribal communities. These competing social values frame the multiple competing social messages a Tribal person must account for and traverse. Often times, it appears that an educated Tribal person finds that the technical skills stemming from formal education are devalued in favor of informal practical experience. This can lead to various forms of informal discrimination within the work place. The following section presents a sampling of the narratives related to the competing social values that affect Tribal higher education. Table 7 provides an overview of narratives associated relating to the psychological and social/psychological tensions as expressed by participants.

Table 7

Emergent Themes of Competing Social Values.

Emergent Theme	Sub Themes	
Tensions of higher education in Tribal communities	Competing social values	Credential v. Experience
		Enablement v. Empowerment
		Tribal preference v. Best qualified

Credential v. Experience.

> I have witnessed certain people say, I don't want any employee that's smarter than me. I've heard that be said by Tribal members who were on Tribal council. They said it out loud. I don't want an employee who is smarter than me. (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

Within Tribal communities one of the greatest tensions exists between those Tribal employees who have higher education credentials versus those who do not. At the center of this schism involves a power struggle between who should count and why. The primary question appears to ask: Should the Tribal decision-making rest with those who

have gone away and gathered the formal skills, or should it rest those that have stayed in

the community and have worked their way up the ranks?

Narratives relating to this topic appear to argue a point that experience is an

important component of Tribal decision-making and that a formal education creates

rigidity within employees that is counter to the qualities of an ideal Tribal candidate.

> We have people that say, I don't need a degree. I know how to do this. It just comes natural to me. The other person goes, wait a minute. I have a credential that says, say I can do this job, or I can do this. And then you get them out in the work and they say well, wait a second. That's not in the manual. So there's a… there's definitely a difference in some cases, and that one of the things we have a challenge with. (DD, interview, 08/26/2015)

Another participant discussed the tensions thorough the indirect example of those

that have formal knowledge but lack emotional stability and organizational experience

needed for effective decision-making and management.

> You can have somebody that knows the management end… the biology end… that knows all aspects of fishing, but if they have emotional issues, or can't treat people right, or don't understand the importance of interacting with somebody… They're not going to do very well. And I've seen that happen. I've seen that happen with other Tribes. These folks know their business, but man, they sure cannot interact with anybody on a positive note. (TM, interview, 08/19/2015)

These findings indicate the perception of a potential disconnect between

theoretical and practical knowledge. Implicit within this perception appears a call for

increased opportunities for experiential education between higher education and Tribal

communities.

Empowerment v. Enablement.

> I've also see folks who've seen it as… our higher education now… oh I lost my job. I can't keep a job… this and that. I'm going to go to school. Where they'll pay my housing, give me a living stipend, and all of that. And this kid, goes to school and gets a degree and then he comes back out

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and he goes to work for McDonalds. Or, you know, he doesn't even use that degree. He used it for that time being, you know, to get an income. So, higher education should not be looked at as an income. I would change that today… you know… If I could. (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

Another tension that Tribal people have to deal with involves the gossamer line between empowerment and enablement. With the rise of Tribal casinos and the influx of enormous profits, Tribes have experimented with various ways to financially support their memberships. Some Tribes have voted for and approved per capita profit distributions providing direct payments to all enrolled members of the Tribe. Other Tribes (such as the study Tribe) have not.

In terms of educational support within Tribal communities there exists a real fear that too much assistance somehow acts as a quasi-per capita payment; providing a corrupting influence on membership. Narratives appear to indicate that the results of these policies offer conflicting priorities of wanting to address material needs, while at the same time avoiding creating a system that fosters dependency.

> …Everyone shouldn't be given a house, but everyone should have the opportunity to a house. It works… I think, when it comes to things like per caps and to even housing, the way it's structured. It handicaps the community in something the way it is given and not earned. They didn't do it themselves. (TM, interview, 08/19/2015)

Other narratives mirror this concern, discussing a quasi "bootstrap" to argue for a degree of hardship as a form of character building. Implicit within this narrative is a perception that younger Tribal generations have been coddled to the point of aimlessness, and that too much support can be as damaging as too little.

> I think self-determination can be moved along easier if at a young age, you give them the loving and nurturing that they need, but also give them the discipline and boundaries that they need, 'cause, sometimes you get people that are too loved. I hate to say it that way. That are just so catered to, they don't have any drive either, because they've just always had

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everything given to them. They've never had to work for nothing. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

As Tribal wealth continues to wax and wane, Tribes will continue to readjust policies to find the appropriate mix of financial support to remove obstacles necessary for graduation. As this process of social engineering continues to unfold, policies of Tribal higher education reform and support will most likely remain at the forefront of debate.

Tribal Preference v. Best Qualified.

LRT: …Successfully completing your degree, does not mean that you are necessarily prepared take on a position. So, and I know I am treading in really murky territory here, but…
(KB: It's all very murky…)
LRT: But… I would never expect that I finish my doctorate… I never would expect that my Tribe would create a position for me. I think I need to earn my position. (AK, interview, 09/01/2015)

Tribal preference policies exist as one of the most contentious and dividing issues in most Tribal country today. Publicly, Tribes openly support hiring their own members for position in their own communities. However, Tribes also operate under the competing perception that for certain technical positions of power, superior candidates might exist beyond the boundaries of the reservation.

At present, federally recognized Indian Tribes are the only minority group in the United States exempt from Title VII's non discrimination principles (EEOC, 1988). Under this exemption, Tribes are allowed to provide preferential consideration toward the hiring of Tribal members for Tribal positions. This exemption is typically extended to Tribal people through the awarding of additional points during the application process with Tribal Human Resources. In regards to this policy, there have been many questions in terms of the fairness of application, as well as the impacts upon Tribal self-governance and self-determination.

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Narratives indicate a general support for the ideals of Tribal Preference.

However, narratives also indicate varying degree of acceptance of this policy even within

Tribal populations. In the following dialogue, Tribal preference is valued as sacrosanct,

superseding all other qualifications for employment.

> SU: I'll assert myself and then also go for Tribal preference, because I am a Tribal member. I know how empowering it is to work for your own Tribe, and how good it makes you feel in the long-run of what you're doing here, and so to see other folks to not get that opportunity, just because they may not have went to college… It is infuriating a little bit, because I know the training and… I am not saying any Joe Schmo Tribal member can go back and be an attorney tomorrow… I am just saying, why does this particular position, let's say, youth center worker or something, Why is it specific they have to have this degree or that degree and why is it viewed as somebody with a ton of Tribal experience, not getting consideration for the job because they don't meet the qualifications? So they don't technically have to be interviewed even.
> (KB: Hmmm.)
> SU: And so it's bizarre. I've seen it were people want to be… they've been in this track this whole time… and then boom. Oh, you didn't go to college, so you're not going to be qualified to apply for a director position, or anything like that, because you need to go to college… at least go get your associates. I really don't even understand why that is, you know…
> (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

Other narratives appear to evidence a degree of qualification for the application of

policies of Tribal preference. Here, the emphasis for Tribal preference softens, shifting

toward a call for a demonstration of test skills as the deciding factor of employment. In

this case, a Tribal person thinks that an individual's right of preference should be

discounted in favor of the quality of service for the collective Tribal community.

> I think I need to… Again it goes back to the maximum potential in capacity. So… So that preference can lean towards between a non-Tribal and a Tribal person with the same paper degree… preference could lean toward a Tribal person, but it shouldn't completely rest on that. That there should be demonstrations that that persons qualified and ready for that position. Because otherwise you are creating another opportunity for failure… Individual failure and failure to serve the community in the way that you could. So, you can come back with a degree, but if you're not ready for that position, everybody suffers. The community suffers…

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Everybody they are serving suffers… that person suffers…   (AK, interview, 09/01/2015)

Finally, another narrative shows a near rebuke of Tribal preference policies. Here, the primary qualification is not so much technical skills, but rather a personal passion for the work.

> I go to school and I get my masters in social work… I can get that job because I'm a Tribal member. But I fucking hate kids. I don't like families. I'm getting my tubes tied. I'm never having one. So, but, we want someone passionate about that… to go into that job. And I would rather see someone more passionate, if it is not a Tribal member, if my alternative is a qualified Tribal member that don't give a fuck about kids. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

To these findings, it appears that the application for Tribal preference policies is not absolute. Though it appears embraced for certain unskilled positions in the Tribe, for more technical positions there appears a general shift towards degree as an indicator of suitability. To this finding, it is difficult to conclude whether the additional points from Tribal preference policies are enough to overcome the technical prerequisites of many positions of power.

Obstacles of Higher Education within Tribal Communities. Shifting away from the examination of tensions within Tribal communities, in this section I pivot to uncover the structural obstacles, produced by policy or condition, which prevent and exclude Tribal people from attending higher education. I have limited the scope of this theme to include only those examples of internal education policies that affect contemporary Tribal higher education participation and graduation. For a copy of the current set of Tribal Higher Education Policies, please refer to Appendix F: Tribal Higher Education Policies.

I have also excluded historic examples because I find little utility in arguing for

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education reforms for conditions that no longer exist. I have also limited narrative

examples of higher education obstacles to the policies of the participating Tribe. This

limitation was adopted because this set of narratives is contexted to a specific set of

policies for this specific Tribe. Table 8 represents an overview of the emergent themes

associated with the structural obstacles of higher education as discussed by participants.

Table 8

Emergent Themes of Obstacles of Higher Education in Tribal Communities.

Emergent Theme	Sub Themes	
Obstacles of higher education in Tribal communities	Structural effects of Tribal education policy	Effects of higher education funding formula
		Impacts of funding policies on non-traditional students
		Funding difficulties for vocational education options

Structural Effects of Tribal Higher Educational Policy.

> …It's become a difficulty of access, and the right programs that, that people would want to take. So, for instance, our abilities to have a working relationship with other colleges and universities is limited, so that's why Northwest Indian College is the one that has been meeting most the needs, and we're not so sure that that's the best place where all of our students HAVE to go to. So we are looking at how do we work with Olympic College, and now that Western Washington has a campus in Poulsbo… Even though it's limited. (OJ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Effects of Higher Education Funding Formula. Within the details of this Tribe's

Higher Education policy is a funding formula based upon a cascading hierarchy of venue.

Within this hierarchy, higher education programs within the same county as the

reservation are awarded more financial aid than those within the rest of the state.

Similarly, higher education programs within the state are given more financial aid than

those outside of the state. The effects of this policy appear to translate into an obstacle

which both creates artificial preferences which may discourage Tribal people away from

certain schools and degrees. The following narrative discusses perceptions relating to the

obstacles created by policy.

> … So you are limiting their education. Why would you do that? If you had a kid that wants to go somewhere and be a brain surgeon… and we're not going to support them?! And they get these offers to go to these colleges and you're not going to support it? Come on! You got to, you know… If it was my kid, I'd be on council… I'd be on general council, just rotting away going, You're limiting a Tribal member from being one of the best things in the world… Because he doesn't want to go to Poulsbo to go to school? Really? Really? No. That's just totally wrong. And, yeah, it needs to change. They need to look at the future. (RU, interview, 09/03/2015)

In a separate dialogue, another study participant provided additional refinement of

this perception, situating a critique about the way in which the current higher education

policies of this Tribe create a morale hazard in which financial aid becomes the driver of

education rather than individual passion or community need.

> (KB: How well do you think the current educational policies and practices of the Tribe are complementing self-determination? And then that's predicated on how do you personally define self-determination? What is that to you?)
> FQ: Well, I think there is room for growth in our Tribe on that. I think… So we give them all the tools and funding they need to go to college and get the degree that they want. Now, sometimes are more willing to… they would rather go to a college with a little easier workload. So they are not taking the gamble of losing their funding. So, I think there is some room for growth on the self-determination fact, like people maybe they don't necessarily believe in themselves enough to go after a legitimate, like a tougher workload, tougher school. They'd rather go to an easier college and get a Native American Studies degree, than go to a tougher college and fail. So I think there is room for growth where maybe… I've brought it up where maybe we reward some of the students for going out and getting a tougher degree. We actually have kind of done that lately. We used to have really, really high standards for GPAs to maintain funding, and we've lowered those recently to try to encourage people to get out… let's say I'm a student. I can go to this school where I know it's kind of a cakewalk… and maintain my 3.0 and keep my funding every month. And then, go to this school, where I might struggle and lose my funding, because I can't keep… maybe I miss a quarter and can't keep maintain that 3.0. Maybe I get a 2.7. Well, we lowered it down a little bit to give those people and incentive to go there. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

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Within these narratives and dialogues exist an understanding of the ways in which Tribal education policies create structure, how that structure creates certain obstacles, and how those obstacles create exclusions for Tribal people seeking certain higher education degrees. It is to this understanding that provides a basis for the types of internal policy reforms that need to be confronted and embraced in order to design meaningful education for future iterations of Tribal scholars.

Impacts of Education Funding Policy on Non-Traditional Students.

> … As a single parent, I would have loved to go back to school and learn more about computers… but, they stopped me right there. I wanted to take online classes. I could go to these bosses and say, Hey, I want two hours a day. I am going to be doing this. I did it. I had to do it on my own time. But, higher education would not support me. They would not pay for those classes. They would not help me get the classes. So, I am like, What's that telling you older people? I mean, some of us don't have cars. Some of us, you know… (RU, interview, 09/03/2015)

One of the more overlooked aspects of higher education reform in Tribal communities appears to do with the Tribal policies towards non-traditional Tribal students. Simply stated, older generations appear overlooked as potential beneficiaries of higher education. Unfortunately, the older generations and other non-traditional demographics also appear to represent the majority of the populations of potential learners in this reservation community.

Funding Difficulties for Vocational Education Options. In addition, this Tribe also seems to emphasize policies and support for traditional higher education programs. It was a shock to find out in the interviews that the Tribe does not appear to provide the same levels of assistance to Tribal members seeking vocational degrees. As the following dialogue explains, this predilection appears primarily a result of the up-front

tuition costs that vocational programs charge v. the per credit charge levied by

community colleges and universities.

> (KB: Do you think the Tribe puts too much emphasis on the academic credential, in terms of the BA, BS, MA, MS, as opposed to offering these alternative tracks of occupational development… err… occupational educations, such as mechanics…)
> EF: Right.
> (KB: …Or welders or things like that.)
> EF: So, well, we will… so the answer is yes and no, and here's why. Because colleges can… you can sign up in a college and take one class… per quarter… forever… and get a degree, like that. If you wanted to. You can do that. I don't know how they do that in a vocational school. Because the vocational schools that we've ever sent anybody to… they want all the money. Right now. And if that person… and it's full-time, and when that person drops out… they keep all that money. And we have had a battle with those vocational schools all along, because when we send somebody to college, they can choose full-time, part-time, or one class at a time.
> (KB: And you only pay for that one…)
> EF: And we only pay for that one class.
> (KB: …So you are able to have a bit more…)
> EF: So, vocational schools… I don't know how to get out of throwing all the money there, and then when they are three months in, deciding that they don't want to be a diesel mechanic… (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

It is to this narrative, that situates a need for a Tribally managed vocational

institute/program. With so many Tribal people facing unemployment upon graduation

from public school, it is my professional opinion that the Tribe may want to reexamine

vocational education as a source of community development - not only for their own

people, but for all the other Tribes in the region facing similar problems providing skilled

training for their memberships as well.

Reforms of Higher Education in Tribal Communities. Shifting focus from

perceptions to praxis, these next sets of narratives provide attention to the ways in which

Tribal envision changes to higher education. The general tone of theses narratives is that

there remain incongruencies between the current models, processes, and products of

higher education, and that the combination of these factors should be addressed to encourage greater Tribal higher education graduation. The general tone of these narratives is that programs of higher education are oriented around educational product and processes that are of little utility to Tribal communities. The following critiques unveil a sample of narratives from Tribal people toward the current system of higher education.

Critique of the Products of Tribal Higher Education.

> … If it is my kid, I'm pushing them into fields where they can excel 'on-rez' or off…. I don't think we're going to show preference to the one that has got the Native Studies degree, from Northwest Indian College, as opposed to someone that got a business administration degree from Olympic and Tacoma Community College, or whatever, or Seattle U. We're probably going to give the preference to the one from Seattle U, quite frankly… because they have a broader base of knowledge. I think that's just more beneficial. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

One of the most interesting sets of narratives to come out of this project were the sets of narratives that spoke critically about the Tribal community colleges, associates of arts degrees, and Native Studies programs. Quite surprising, I found that the general perception toward higher education products customized for Tribal students appeared tacitly supported by most participants. In some cases, participants reported that these products were interpreted as harmful to Tribal students seeking advanced skills needed for positions of power. As the following narrative indicates, one of the primary critiques relates to the perception that Tribal community colleges and the associate of arts (AA) degree pathway might create a disincentive for students wanting to continue towards a 4-year or graduate degree.

> …And letting them know that an AA might not be the best idea, I mean it sounds good. You're like two years… I could totally do two years. And maybe it's the time commitment that makes people freaked out about the

four year. Because they think, four years. I have little kids and I have all these things and I still have work, all of that…. And so, I think letting people know the process of each type of degree would be really helpful because, then people going into, taking classes at Northwest Indian College, they'll say, OK maybe I should just enroll in that four year instead of going through an AA and then having to do a direct transfer. If you explain, that's a whole lot of paperwork. You've got to make sure everything transfers. You've got to make sure you're in this path. (KR, interview, 09/17/2015)

Other narratives appear to indicate disapproval for Native Studies degrees. This critique appears counter to the potential purpose of this degree. As the following dialogue indicates, the rebuke of Native Studies degrees appears related to an apprehension that these degrees have limited utility beyond the boundaries of the reservation.

FQ: I personally don't… I'm not sold on [Native Studies] degrees, just because, I want our Tribal members to not just excel here, but excel in the world. Let's say hypothetically, the federal government, we get an unfriendly party in the presidency, in the Congress, and in the Senate and they decide to come after sovereignty. Let's say hypothetically…
(KB: Casinos…)
FQ: …Yeah they try to just demolish Tribal governments, you know. Which, I mean, you never know…
(KB: It's happened. It's already happened.)
FQ: Yeah. So, let's say they revamp that and we don't have any more of this privilege, our sovereignty and what not. I want our Tribal members to have the degrees that are going to be able to put them out in the regular community as well. Let's say we've got 150 Tribal members with Native American Studies degrees, or Native American Sovereignty degrees. What good is that going to do them? I would still recommend to get regular degrees. I just… I want our people to persevere and be adaptive. And when all hell breaks loose and we don't have none of this anymore, I want them to be OK. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

Despite this apparent rejection of Tribal-centric education programs and projects by Tribal participants, additional data analysis appears to counter some of the study narratives. An examination of the Tribal higher education degree demographics for the study Tribe (2015) presents another picture of higher education priorities. According to

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the data, 21 of 52 students (40%) are pursuing their AA degrees. Additionally, 13 of 52

students (25%) are pursuing an education at the Northwest Indian College. Finally, 8 of

52 students (15%) are pursuing a Native Studies bachelor's degree.

To these demographics it is difficult to assign a firm conclusion on the

widespread condemnation of Tribal-centric education products. It is possible that the

participants I spoke with were outliers and that Tribal-centric education is widely

embraced in the community. It is also possible that these Tribal-centric programs are the

primary educational options being marketed to this community at this time. To that

potential interpretation, the demographics possibly are not so much reflective towards a

certain degree path. Rather the demographics might be more reflective of a lack of

options, resulting in Tribal people pursuing what educations are available.

Reforms to the Process of Tribal Higher Education. Accounting for the critiques

associated with higher education, the following narratives discuss potential reforms to the

process of Tribal higher education. Included are examples and narratives of alternative

models of higher education for Tribes, as well as narratives about the needs for

acclimation, embedded learning, and post-education reacclimatization. The purpose of

these narratives is to identify and address the conditions and processes of education that

can offer transformative changes to the process of higher education for Tribal student

populations. Table 9 represents the emergent themes relating to higher educational

reforms as identified by study participant narratives.

Alternative Conceptual Models of Higher Education. One of the primary

interview prompts asked participants to discuss thoughts about an ideal process of Tribal

education. One participant (LF) sketched an alternative model of higher education, that I

thought was so well designed and so well thought out that it warranted a section unto itself.

Table 9

Emergent Themes of Reforms of Higher Education in Tribal Communities.

Emergent Theme	Sub Themes
Reforms to higher education in Tribal communities	Alternative conceptual models of higher education
	Cohort/Cluster Models for Tribal students
	Acclimation period for Tribal students
	Embedded learning within Tribal communities
	Post education cultural reacclimation period for Tribal Students

The participant (DD) explained that this education model (Figure 1) was one of the products to come out of a Tribal education conference that he attended. He explained the mechanics of the model as follows. Tribal students around the 10th grade level should be given the option of choosing an education pathway that best fits their goals and their abilities. (No specific reason was given for 10th grade as a starting point).

Following entry into this model, four pathways were detailed to include:

- Direct pathway to education (e.g. Upward Bound, Running Start)

- Traditional pathway to higher education (e.g., high school diploma to higher education) for people that require additional preparation

- Vocational education training

- Immediate on-the-job training
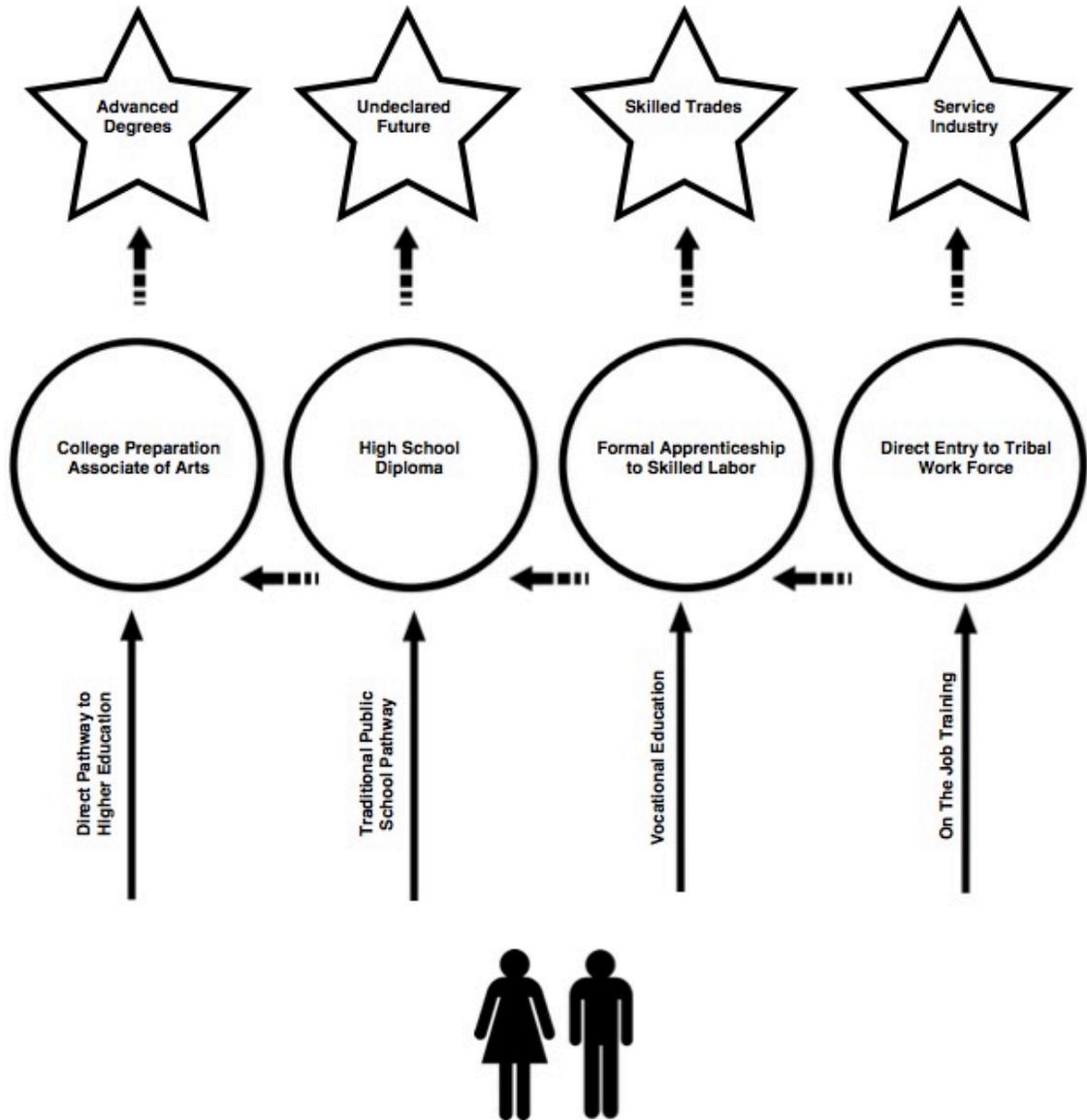
Figure 1. Conceptional Reform Model of Tribal Higher Education

During this initial stage, the mechanics allow for lateral movement into other forms of higher education. Following completion of a program of study, graduates are assisted to higher levels of education or mapped to employment fields. The purpose of this model was to link education to employment for Tribal people. It is also important to note that this was explained as a model of education for youth in the process of completing their K-12 educations. No models were offered for non-traditional students.

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Regardless of the present limitations, it is my opinion that the promotion of this model represents a quantum leap in terms of the ways in which higher education can reimagine degree processes for Tribal people. The design expressed within this model evidences a type of reform that can increase inclusion and expand educational support not currently available for Tribal communities. I would argue that the promise of this type of process reform represents the potential for lasting changes in Tribal communities. Furthermore, the inclusiveness inherent within has the potential to translate to greater numbers of skilled workers, which should also increase the numbers of Tribal people eligible for positions of power. The cumulative effects of which, I believe could also create more robust expressions of self-governance.

Cohort/Cluster Models of Higher Education. The perception of a shared community identity is a staple of the reservation experience. This sense of community appears key to Tribal graduation as well. Several participants provided example to the importance and potentials of cohort and cluster models of recruitment for Tribal people. The following dialogue and narratives discusses the importance of cohort as a means of connection meant to bolster graduations.

> (KB: In terms of people going off to higher education, how do you think the ideal process of higher education ought to be?
> GN: Go in teams. Go in teams. Send two, three, four people to that same school, so you have that crutch, at least that connection to each other, that kind of connects you to home, so, so and so will hear about home, or grandma will call, or this or that, if you share those experiences rather than you're just dumped in a Spokane all by yourself. Going to school and you don't know a soul, stuff like that. It's a lot easier. (GN, interview, 08/28/2015)

> I think the ideal process is in cohorts or in clusters. And so that way people can go through it and there's that camaraderie that is just part of it. You know, and I think… the amazing thing about my experience as a cohort was that information science is so broad that it allowed us to go

through it together…. it really helped us to be together and we could talk about commonalities. (KR, interview, 09/17/2015)

Implicit within these narratives is the notion that there may exist a disconnect between recruitment and retention of Tribal students in higher education. Narratives also indicate that other collective models of recruitment might be more successful at building on existing relationships which underlie retention issues. To this fact, higher education needs to reorient Tribal educational design away from individual models of inclusion and towards collective designs that reinforce and building upon pre-existing community relationships.

Acclimation Period for Tribal Students. For students leaving the reservation for the first time, exposure to the non-Tribal world can be a traumatic experience. Within the narratives, one participant offered an important but overlooked Tribal-centric reform with regard to this trauma; specifically a reform that involving an increased period of acclimation for students. Though his example involves an occupational training experience at a federal police academy, from my personal experience the message holds for Tribal academic student populations as well. Leaving home is hard for Tribal people and an extended acclimation period might mitigate the effects of culture shock for Tribal students.

> …When I went to the police academy… I'd never been in any military kind of regime. It was totally militaristic. It just stunned me. I just didn't know how to handle it… how to take it, you know. Standing in formation in the morning, I mean, snow and stuff. I'm in Utah in the desert in the middle of winter, going, what the hell am I doing here? Made a couple phone calls. Talked to my wife and she's going, well, come home if you want. And I talked to me dad and he's the one that said, No. You're there. You might as well stick it out. You can handle this. You know I talked to him a couple of times and he's the one that kept me going. After a while I didn't want to come home. I was having so much fun. It was great. I started getting into the swing of it. Once you get adapted… figure things

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out… You know that the world isn't ending, it becomes a lot easier. But I tell you, that first week. I was ready to hop on the next plane and come home. I was done…. Yeah, I wasn't ready for it, so…Nobody prepared me for it. (GN, interview, 08/28/2015)

Embedded Learning within Tribal Communities. Another potential education reform involves the importance of creating programs that feature opportunities for Tribal students to work within their Tribes. Narratives indicated a disassociation that can occur when Tribal students leave the reservation for higher education. As the following dialogue indicates, the disassociation appears accompanied by a question of collective Tribal value for an individual member's education.

SU: A lot of the degrees are where you have to do those internships, or you have to do those hours. And so, it's like… I get that too, but why can't they do that here while they are getting their degree? And so, cause I've seen it personally my sister is… My sister went back to school at 45 to become a licensed massage therapist. And she did. And she went to a school… she don't drive, like me. She commuted by bus to Seattle everyday for two years. Got her training and her certification and all that. Then she had to go volunteer for six months. Free work. Basically…
(KB: …But they didn't do it here in this community…)
SU: Yeah. Yeah. That's right. And so I would say that type of stuff should be allowed to be done within your own community, especially if your own community is the one that sent you to school, and the one paying for your education. Get a return on our investment! (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

It is to this perception of a return on investment that embedded learning within Tribal communities has potential for meaningful reform. I believe by realigning the processes and products of Tribal people to address Tribal needs helps maintain a person's cultural connections and relevance in the community. I also think this type of reform addresses both utility and mitigate the potentials for assimilation and alienation.

Post Education Cultural Reacclimation Process for Tribal Students. As has been discussed earlier, Tribal people who leave the Tribe and return with an education often face mistrust among their Tribal peers. To counter the potentials for mistrust, one

participant focused on a reacclimation process that appears very salient for those Tribal

students seeking to return home and use their educations in their communities. As

previously identified in this study, the following dialogue offers double duty to example

to showcase the potential benefits of a reacclimation period as a pillar of Tribal education

reform.

> XJ: OK. You've got this degree, but there's a reclamation process that needs to happen, before you start pounding the drum that I've got this degree and I've been out there…
> (KB: I'm going to change the world, now!)
> XJ: I'm going to change the world. And I think that, that's what a lot of people… forget, is that, I go out. I do my 4 or 5 or 6 years, or 7 years, you know, out there in the academic world, and stuff… and then I come back and, well… how do I refit myself back in here? Do I still participate in the, in the cultural activities? Is my spiritual belief still intact with what the community expects? …I had a friend at WSU, the same time I was there, and he was Nez Pearce. He went back to Nez Pearce. He was going to save the Tribe… lead it out of, you know, the doldrums and the next thing I knew he was calling me up, Hey, you know where I can look for a job? He said, Tribe doesn't want me back here, [Laughter], and stuff. And we talked about that. And he said, I don't understand. You know, I've gone up here. I am one of the first Tribal members to, to go on the college and stuff like that, and I come back, and for some reason, I don't fit in. So, we talked about that, and one of the conclusions that we draw… we drew from that was that we didn't take the time to reacclimatize ourselves with the cultural values, of the, of the Tribe. We came back with this degree. We had all these great ideas. Nobody wanted to listen to them because they didn't believe that we were still culturally relevant. (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

Perceptions of Credentialism within Tribal Communities. Beyond the emergent

analysis of the perceptions of higher education in a Tribal community, I also have

included an additional analysis towards understanding credentialism in Tribal

communities. To recap, credentialism is the theoretical phenomena predicted by Collins

(1979) to explain the arbitrary design of technical education systems to produce systemic

exclusion of lower class populations to inhibit social mobility.

In terms of this project, I have included an examination of credentialism to assess whether or not this phenomenon extends into Tribal communities, and if so, how does it affect self-governance and staffing behaviors within the Tribal organization? I posit that the extension of credentialism within Tribes is an important, as the understanding of which appears to also provides insight to the ways in which education affects not only those who have degrees, but the communities that they serve. The following sections offer example to the internal and external presence and application of credentialism within Tribal contexts.

Internal Dimensions of Credentialism.

> Formal education is important for Tribal members because it let's us take the lead on projects that we are already or intimately involved with… And it also allows us to play this… degree game, that we are kind of brain-washed to play. So we feel like somebody needs a bachelors or need a masters or need a PhD to do their job, and maybe they've been doing their job for 20 years…. I think we've been brainwashed. We have adopted that. We've assimilated that way to value the degree, and to see the degree as qualification, and then the experience becomes supplementary. Because then you can say that this person has 20 years of experience in their home community and they have a masters in social work, and as soon as you say that they say, Oh yeah. OK. Totally qualified. You know. It's just that extra padding to make someone worthy of a hire. (KR, interview, 09/17/2015)

Narratives indicate that credentialism manifests within Tribal organization as a means of systemic exclusion for Tribal members. This exclusion manifests through the preferred credentials required for positions of power. As most of the Tribal people lack advanced degrees, many of the positions of power being held by Tribal people from other Tribes who have degrees, or by non-Tribal people who have degrees. As the following narratives and dialogues indicate, the effects of credentialism within Tribal communities appears to be realigning preferences away from experiential knowledge and towards

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higher education credentials as the metric of qualification for positions of power.

> I think now, and this is just me noticing even with ours, the job applications that you have to fill out to get jobs to become a working part of society, requires a lot of this now. Where in the past it was, are you 18? Got a driver's license? You're pretty much hired. Now [a credential is] part of everyday life. It's part of every application. It's required for just about anything you want to do in life. So, it's important to go that route and get that. It's a requirement. It's not just something you can coast through anymore. (GN, interview, 08/28/2015)

This perception appears shared by other participants. In the following case,

another participant discusses the effects of credentials on positions of power within the

Tribal government.

> …It's becoming more and more a minimum requirement of most of the higher paid positions and management positons, as well as when it comes down to like the political board appointments and things. They definitely seem to be hinging on folks if they have [credential] or not. It seems that have that [credential] are getting appointed… and the ones that are not, are not. (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

Narratives also show that the application of credentialism is creating internal rifts

within the Tribal organization and Tribal communities. In the following extended

dialogue, a participant discusses the personal effects of credentialism within this Tribe.

> LS: …To see other folks to not get that opportunity, just because they may not have went to college… It is infuriating a little bit, because I know the training and… I am not saying any Joe Schmo Tribal member can go back and be an attorney tomorrow… I am just saying, why does this particular position, let's say, youth center worker or something, why is it specific they have to have this degree of that degree? And why is it viewed that somebody with a ton of Tribal experience, not getting consideration for the job because they don't meet the qualifications? So they don't technically have to be interviewed even…. And so it's bizarre. I've seen it were people want to be… they've been in this track this whole time… and then boom. Oh, you didn't go to college, so you're not going to be qualified to apply for a director position, or anything like that, because you need to go to college…. When did it become so important in Indian Country that now we all have to have degrees, and everything? It's… You ask them to do stuff for Tribal members at different levels, but they say… Their first response to that is, Oh your trying to make a second class of Tribal members, and stuff.

(KB: Do you believe that your lack of credentials makes you a second-class employee then?)

LS: Kind of. Yes. Yes. In the eyes of some of my leaders for sure, because why else would they say, you need to go to college. You need to go do this. (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

Finally, one of the more interesting examples of Tribal credentialism involved the case of an employee that was apparently forced to vacate her directorship positions because of her lack of higher education credentials. Her situation was first brought to my attention within another interview.

> … The former museum director had like 30 years of museum experience, a whole bunch of that time as museum director. When she was, when they were building the new building, the Tribe made it known that the next museum director needed at least a masters, and she didn't even have a bachelors. I thought, on the Tribes part, that was kind of a crude way of saying, we want to get rid of you…. They said they want at least a masters. And so, she's probably going to go get a masters… and then come back with that. They are going to be… I don't know what they are going to say. My uncle has a phrase of, kill the dragons when they're still frogs. And they didn't… the Tribe didn't do a good job of killing that frog. She's going to come back a dragon with a masters degree and then they are going to be in for it. (KR, interview, 09/17/2015)

Several days later, I had the opportunity to interview the former director of the museum. The following dialogue provides an account of Tribal credentialism in the participant's own words.

> WV: The hardest thing was when I was told, after working so many years in one position, because I didn't have a degree, I had to move to a different position or lose my job.
> (KB: …Up to that choice, how many years of professional experience did you have doing that job?)
> WV: 18 ½.
> (KB: Are you trying to get the credentials to get your old job back?)
> WV: I would like to have my old job back.
> (KB: And do you think what you are doing, at present, is going to allow you to apply for that job?)
> WV: I would like that to happen. In fact, when I first started back into college, I says, Once I get my degree I'm going to slap that degree down and say, I want my job back. But, now I've kind of mellowed out a bit.

I've been encouraged to go on a little further in my degree, or even look into maybe teaching… or other things. (WV, interview, 09/03/2015)

This example of Tribal credentialism clearly shows an explicit preference for higher education credentials for positions of power, the findings of which invoke a need for a deeper (re)examination of Tribal power dynamics. This appears important not only to provide for an understanding of the linkage between credential and power, but more importantly to develop policies that can mitigate against arbitrary exclusion of Tribal people by Tribal organizations.

External Dimensions of Credentialism. An entirely different phenomenon appears produced by the external application of Tribal credentialism. In this dimension, education credentials are used not as a means of exclusion of Tribal people, but rather as a means of providing proof of legitimacy for Tribal participation in non-Tribal governmental and policy arenas.

In one extended dialogue a study participant explained the unique way in which credentials are used as a means of qualification. In this example, a director with exceptional practical experience and without educational credentials uses non-Tribal employees with credentials as a mask in order direct policy development for an international fisheries negotiation.

> PS: I think we use degrees to make the Tribe "look" better. I think it gives us… gives us better standing in the non-Indian community. When you can say that… When my fisheries director, who's completely traditional and has been fishing his entire life, and had his own companies, and had his own staff… he's had staff up to 20 people in the past. But he doesn't have a degree. So, when he goes out and does negotiations with the state, and the feds, and Canada, and everything else, he takes three biologist with him. Now, he's the one making the decisions… he's the one that actually…
> (KB: But he takes the credentials along…)
> PS: He takes the biologists along with him so that his biologists can tell

the people, because they are the ones with the degrees. They don't have any… You know, they've never been out on a fishing boat. They've never… Most of… barely… actually right now, probably none of them has ever cleaned a fish, you know. They hardly done anything. They don't have any on-the-water time. So you need… but to be taken seriously, he has to bring them along to tell them, I have all these degrees behind me and this is what my bio… And he'll say that… this is what my biologists are telling me. When in reality, he tells his biologists what he wants done, and they give it to him in terms that he can do. (PS, interview, 08/20/2015)

What this examples appears to showcase are the tensions within the differences in valuation between Tribal and non-Tribal groups in terms of subject matter expertise. To this example, it appears as though Tribal people implicitly understand that beyond the bounds of the reservation, no amount of experience is comparable to credential.

Summary. As this project has helped me to understand, the environment of higher education for Tribal populations involves a diverse and dynamic set of perceptions, actors, and epistemological standpoints. The understanding of these items frames the priorities, tensions, obstacles, and reforms that affect both Tribal participant and Tribal graduation rates. In addition, the understanding of the after effects of higher education on the Tribal individual and community appear equally important, as the knowledge of this area helps to reframe metrics beyond the relatively myopic educational measures of graduation or drop-out. To this point, the topic of credentialism provides a powerful analytical framework to examine the potential schism expanding between older generations of Tribal people in positions of power who are increasingly being challenged by younger generations who possess more valuable skills and sought after technical credentials. It is within this specialized topic of credentialism that reveals a fascinating glimpse of how higher education credentials affects the topic of self-determination in Tribal contexts.

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CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

I would like to begin this discussion with an acknowledgement that I am generally embarrassed to make. I believe the following discussion represents a once in a generation opportunity to understand the inner workings of a Tribal government. I have to acknowledge the fact that this work could not have been done by anyone else without my biography, experiences, or education. The fact is that it will be a long time before anyone else is in a position to do this kind of collaborative work with Tribes within their own Tribe, let alone as an outsider working with another Tribe. That stated, there are several caveats that I would like the reader to be made aware of that might affect the interpretations of the study or the conclusions that are offered.

Study Limitations

As much as I consider my biography a strength, I also consider it as the primary limitation for this study. Who I am and where I am from affects the conditions and responses within this study: from the design of the project; to the type of literature I have included in the review; to the questions I wish to ask; to the way I have asked them. I have had expectations placed upon me the moment I asked permission to do this work. Even as a Tribal person, coming from a well-respected family, coming back to a Tribe I once worked for, my presence is still most likely regarded with some semblance of suspicion. Until otherwise proven, I will remain a "university Indian." I am tainted with the "enemy's breath." I still sense that I am cautiously perceived as having an "agenda," somehow different from the Tribes.

As such, I have had to maintain transparency in all things. I have had to maintain respect to all the people and all processes. I have had to make sure that I created a product that is meaningful and useful, and if at all, expands treaty rights. I have had to make sure that I preserved the voice of my participants and refrain from forcing Western theoretical conceptions in places where they could pathologize Tribal people. I have had to do all these things while providing some quality of critique; knowing full well that I will have to personally account for all my words, for all my conclusions, to these people, for the rest of my life. To this end, I have to concede that there has been a degree of self-censorship in this project. There are dimension of this project that I did not discuss because they appeared harmful or traumatic to the participants of the study. Whether these concessions impact the generalizability of my work may be debatable. However, that is the way I have chosen to respect my friends and family within this research.

To this point, I urge the reader to abandon expectations of objectivity. As I explained to one of my dissertation cochairs, I can only offer subjectivity informed by a degree of critical reflectivity. The analysis and discussion of the study narratives associated with this dissertation are reflective of my personal and professional experiences working within this community and other Tribes. Therefore, I make no claim to "truth" in the empirical, positivist, quantitative sense, but rather openly make my claim that this work be viewed as a "thick description" (Geertz, 1988) of what I think is happening. As such should this dissertation should be considered a construction as much as it should be vaulted a document of record.

Beyond my individual limitations, other community limitations also affect the dimensions of this work. As with any Tribal group, there exists a representational

limitation of boundedness affecting dimensions of data generalization; specifically, the

limited expressions of Indigeneity within the study populations that might not translate to

larger conditions experienced by other members of this Tribe or other Tribal

communities. What I would like readers to understand is that this project is

representative of only one sample, of one subgroup, from one Tribal community, from

one Pacific Northwest Tribe. Furthermore, this sample is limited to approximately 18

hours of audio interviews, examining the narratives of 13 employed Tribal members,

working within Tribal government, who are between 30-60 years of age. As such, the

narratives and analysis are representational to the perceptions and priorities of a portion

of single subset. I fully recognize that beyond this minority population subset, there exist

other nuanced expressions of identity that are not accounted for in this project.

Therefore, I would urge the reader to guard against drawing specific and explicit

conclusions between the study Tribe and other Tribal communities. I would like the

reader to understand that each Tribe has unique structure, a unique historic, cultural,

political, and economic experiences, and unique relationships with the non-Tribal

communities that live within and intersect their reservation boundaries. This structural

and experiential mixture also produces unique degrees of assimilation between Tribes;

the presence of which affects the ways in which education is viewed, valued, and

prioritized. As such, it must be made clear that the narratives within this dissertation will

most likely be independent from other Tribal communities; even neighboring Tribes.

Again, I would caution anyone against drawing firm conclusions or generalizations from

this singular ethnographic project, as doing so might be viewed as both ignorant,

presumptive, and/or hostile, especially when working with other Tribal communities.

Discussion Overview

The following dissertation discussion is organized into two primary sections that include a prima facie discussion and an emergent discussion. The Prima Facie discussion section provides analysis to the findings with regards to the original research questions. In this section I reexamine Brayboy's model of the process of self-determination and reinterpret my original conceptual model examining group dynamics in Tribes. In the emergent section, I shift my analysis and critique towards the emergent findings that were distilled from the interviews that were beyond my primary research questions. I have limited the scope of this section to focus on those discussions that I think have not been expressly identified by current Tribal academic research. It is my aspiration, that once these interpretations are attended to, the reader will be left with a more robust understanding of Tribal education perceptions and contexts that frame the interactions between which education and credentialism as they affect Tribal self-determination through self-governance.

Research Question 1: What Are the Perceptions of Education as They Relate to Sovereignty, Nation Building, and Self-Determination?

Reexamination of Brayboy's Model of Self-Determination. The first finding that I think warrants discussion involved the near-absence of narratives relating to the conceptions within Brayboy's model of self-determination. To remind, Brayboy's model of self-determination conceptualizes sovereignty as the right to an education; self-determination as the goal of an education; and nation building as the praxis to unite the right with the goal. Where I think this model is most incongruent with Tribal realities is in regards to the non-Tribal theoretical assumptions required for the intentional actions

associated with nation building.

A reexamination of Brayboy's model of self-determination leads me to think there may exist a theoretical limitation to Brayboy's model that might account for the lack of reference to these conditions. With regard to this idea, I believe it is necessary to understand the genesis of Brayboy's model. Brayboy's conception of nation building appears derivative of Akoto's educational model of self-determination, which Akoto uses as an educational framework to call for postcolonial educational reform in African communities. Underlying Akoto's model appears a theoretical political foundation constructed upon post colonialist neo Marxist critical pedagogy. This critical pedagogy is used to call for a re-centering of educational design to favor western African cultural traditions. From this foundation, the establishment of the "greatest good" in terms of educational reform is the collective empowerment of a community or village. This collective "greatest good" is functional of a top-down orientation of power, in which the cultural elites in the community provide the direction for educational development of the community.

Brayboy appears to have adapted Akoto's model in an attempt to apply it to Tribal communities. However, I think he may have done so without understanding the limits of collectivism within some Tribal communities. Within regard to this point, what I found in the narratives within this project place the onus for educational planning on the individual and family, not the collective of the Tribal government. As evidenced by the following, Tribal people warn against the encroachment of Tribal government into the affairs of family business. When asked about the role of Tribal government in educational planning, one participant offered the following:

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I'm not so sure. I think that… I think that, for me, is more of a family dynamic… Which I know can be tough to leave that much responsibility on a family, especially with some of our families… It's a start, so it's not nothing new. We have a high rate of alcoholism. We have a high rate of domestic violence. High unemployment. So sometimes it isn't… the greatest thing that we leave that all up to the families, but at the same time, you being Tribal, you know how families are. You just don't go in and interfere. (FQ, interview, 08/27/2015)

What this type of response shows is that Tribal people appear to embrace a quality of individualism that negates the type of collective direction in educational planning that Akoto and Brayboys' designs require. I think the Tribal narratives associated with this dissertation exhibit priorities more reflective of classical liberalism, in which the "greatest good" is the sum total of the individual goods.

This conclusion appears mirrored in additional references speaking about the importance of what I can only describe as the "passion principle" of education within this community. In regards to this viewpoint, study participants provided narratives detailing the perception that the Tribe is best served when members seek an education that they desire, not necessarily by what is needed by the Tribe.

… You need to have the passion for [an education] as well. So, I think that's an important thing that sometimes gets lost on people is that, just getting the degree, you know and checking the box… we don't… I just don't think we want to replicate other governments where we hire people in and then they're just kind of robotic, and I don't think we want that, we want them to have passions, so that's important to me, and I think that's something that's missing. (DD, interview, 08/26/2015)

Another participant provided further account to the importance of passion through the discussion of a hypothetical reference.

Yeah. I go to school and I get my masters in social work… I can get that job because I'm a Tribal member. But I fucking hate kids. I don't like families. I'm getting my tubes tied. I'm never having one. So, but, we want someone passionate about that… to go into that job. And I would rather see someone more passionate, if it is not a Tribal member, if my

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alternative is a qualified Tribal member that don't give a fuck about kids. (FQ, interview, 08/26/2015)

It is to these findings that the active process of direct education planning as lobbied by Akoto and Brayboy does not appear to translate to this Tribal community. That stated, I think nation building could still be promoted, but only through a voluntary process that favors cooption over compulsion.

Beyond the theoretical, I also think the absence of narratives relating to sovereignty, nation building, and self-determination in this project might have also been affected by my presence and role within the interview process. The fact is that the research participants for this project already know me. They are my friends and former coworkers. They know what I think about, have heard what I have talked about, and have had to endure my opinions on Tribal higher education and of how I see higher education as an unaddressed pillar of community development in Tribal communities. With this in mind, I think that the lack of reference to sovereignty, nation building, and self-determination might have occurred in part because participants may have assumed that I did not want to spend an inordinate amount of time loitering over the subtle nuances of subjects for which they perceive I am already well-versed.

Research Question 2: Are There Differences among Perceptions of Education between Groups (e.g., Traditionalists v. Credentialists)?

Examination of Conceptual Groups. With regards to the second research question examining the various groups present in the community, study narratives presented three primary groups including: Tribal; Native; non-Tribal and two additional collective groups representing the interests of the Tribal government and the various families within the Tribe. Together these groups represented a basic set of agents within

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the Tribe. Delineation between the groups appears oriented around enrollment status. To recap Tribal people were the group that was from the reservation who were enrolled by the Tribe. Native people were Tribal people from the Tribe or from other Tribes who possessed requisite blood quantum, but not direct experience in this reservation community. Finally, the non-Tribal group consisted of those people without blood quantum or enrolled status.

With regard to a discussion, I posit that those groups I was able to distill represent a relatively gross landscape of Tribal interests, the examination of which provides little understanding of Tribal communities in terms of the perceptions and motivations of Tribal students. To this reflection, I think my original research question was inherently flawed. In hindsight, what I should have focused upon were the latent dynamic standpoints to understand how experience transcended groups, with the intention to understand the interactions between experiences and perceptions as they relate to a social good (e.g., self-determination). In an attempt to amend this flaw, the following discussion is offered to provide a greater attention to the importance of the various dynamic standpoints I encountered.

Dynamic Standpoints within Groups. My initial conceptual models for this project (Figure 2) involved a 2x2 binary box plot consisting of credentialist groups and traditionalist groups on one axis, and singular and collective narratives on the other.

Proposed Educational Narrative Matrix

	Singular Narratives (Personal Identity Statements)	Community Narratives (Group Identity Statements)
Traditionalist Narratives	Example: My culture is important because it tells me how I should live in the world.	Example: Our culture is important because we need to pass on sacred teachings to our children so they can live right.
Credentialist Narratives	Example: My school is important because a degree will help me get a good job.	Example: The Tribe needs more people with graduate degrees because there are certain jobs that require technical skills.

Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Group Matrix

My intention with this model was to try to locate what I thought was a logical split between those members that had gathered higher education credentials and those that were more oriented to an indigenous/cultural practices. Similarly, I thought that I would also be able to find groupings between individualists that view individual success as a proxy for community success versus the collectivists that view Tribal success as a metric for individual success.

My conceptions shifted rapidly once data collection occurred. I recognized that the Traditionalist category was a "charged" term, in that by naming something as traditional, I also invoked a negative condition of untraditional. I recognized that the reference of which could have been perceived as contentious within Tribal populations and would have affected the tone of the interviews. I also recognized that I was being presented a spectrum of identities to account for, most of which freely shifted and

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morphed within and amongst study participants; some within the span of a singular interview. Within these shifts of position was reflected a certain degree of contrarianism that I had also failed to account for in my research design.

Finally, one of the more apparent inadequacies of my initial conceptions occurred when I realized I had failed to account for an additional dimension of experientialist that emerged out of the non-culturalist, non-credentialist dyad I had originally envisioned. To my surprise (and embarrassment) I stumbled upon an entire subset of participants that, even with my many years of experience, I had not accounted for in my original conceptions of this project.

It was this realization that forced me to reexamine my entire model. I realized that my model begged for an essentialism of identity from my participants. Beyond that condition, I also realized that I had constructed a model that required my participants to maintain static identities. I concluded that rather than shoehorn a conceptual model for simplicity sake, I needed to rethink my assumptions and adopt a new approach to account for identity shift without redefining participants to fixed identity (that they most likely would not self-define). To that point, I abandoned the boundedness of "groups" for a more dynamic conception of "standpoints."

As indicated in the results section, three primary standpoints emerged out of my reorientation. These included formal credentialists, practical experientialists, and cultural experientialists. The differences between the standpoints reflect differences in the promotions of specific epistemology foundations. For example, those within the formal credentialist standpoint appear to promote formal education as the most valued knowledge product, and believe that formal education is preparatory for technical skills

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required for leadership. On the other hand, those in the practical experientialist standpoint appear to promote work experience as the most valued product, and view time on-the-job the most important commodity for leadership. They believe that their daily work experience provides an embedded knowledge needed for leadership. Finally, those within the cultural experientialist standpoint appear to value tradition knowledge and teachings over other forms knowledges, and believe that leadership requires the understanding and practice of culture as a means to honor the historic and cultural examples of leadership.

Together, these three standpoints represent a more realistic epistemological landscape that Tribal people locate themselves. I will address this issue in more detail within the section of the "Two World Myth" in the next section.

Discussion of Emergent Themes

Shifting from the relative dearth of materials that reflect my research questions, I pivot to provide an examination to the more emergent findings generated from this study. From the emergent category, I have examined narratives for connections and relationships beyond the scope of the original research questions. Within this section it is my aim to provide a deeper examination and interpretation of the contexts and conditions which, on the surface, present various sets of perceptions and behaviors that at times appear counter to the goal of self-determination. In effort to do this, I offer this critical examination as a way to confront a set of assumptions that create, present, and reify a false picture of Tribal higher education. I do this because I think this false perspective prevents the kinds of reforms that are required to address both success and meaning in Tribal higher education. Therefore, it is my intention in the next sections to focus

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sections around a critical discussion examining how the phenomenon of credentialism impacts the relationships and behaviors between and among Tribal people in the study community within the context of a Tribal government. Within this interrogation, I will address topics of identity, culture, power, and structure in an effort to ground individual experiences to theoretical concepts.

The "Two Worlds" Myth. One of the primary myths that I think affects Tribal graduation in higher education has to do with the narrative promotion that in order to succeed in education and in contemporary society world, a Tribal person must coexist within "two worlds." More of a mantra really, the basic idea of the "two worlds" model primes Tribal people for a confrontational battle between cultural and educational planes of experience. The tension associated with this model involve a choice between cultural and contemporary identities, requiring Tribal people to find a balance between the cultural teachings of the Tribe or the lessons of the non-Indian world.

What I found in particular with regards to this model as applied to this community was the fact that during the interviews most Tribal participants unquestioningly embraced the "Two Worlds" model as matter of fact. Within the interviews multiple participants, from all levels of education spoke about the importance of walking the "two worlds" within their own personal and professional arcs. What I found peculiar was the lack of acknowledgement to the value of practical experience. However, I found that as soon as I evoked dimensions of credentialism in terms of degree as a signifier of leadership, there was a palpable shift in tone to the issue and importance of practical experience. I found that participants readjusted their valuations of qualification conceding to the importance of on-the-job and community experience. Many even went so far as to promote practical

experience into a superior position above cultural experience and formal education.

It is to this behavior that I reconstructed my concepts as they relate to how education and experience relate within Tribal groups. Figure 3 represents what I believe shapes the different valuation of experience within Tribal communities. Within this model, I do not think that specific positions are held. Rather, I think that this new model operates similar in fashion to the process of triangulation that occurs with terrain association or land navigation. It is my belief that a person operating in accord with this model use specific standpoints as conceptual azimuths to help locate themselves and others within a larger epistemological landscape. The following sections offer a brief explanation for the differences that I conceive exist within and between these three conceptual directions.
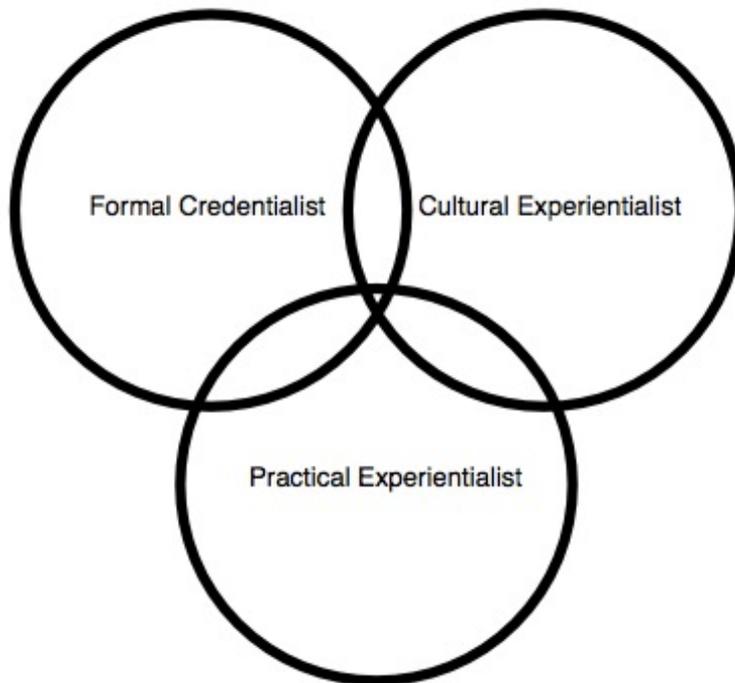
Formal Credentialist   Cultural Experientialist

Practical Experientialist

Figure 3. Conceptual Model of Epistemological Standpoints

Practical Experientialists. Within respect to this final standpoint, Tribal people are also expected to maintain presence within their communities. They are expected to develop leadership potential through meaningful work for their communities. At the same time, they are also encouraged to enter the non-Tribal workforce in order to gather the professional pragmatic experiences that they can then bring back to the Tribal organization. Of most importance are the managerial skills needed to plan, organize, and prepare the business of the Tribe for future development.

Cultural Experientialists. With respect to this standpoint, Tribal people are expected to know their history; know their geography; know their culture; and if possible, know their languages. Tribal people must ground themselves in the cultural and historical past of their ancestors, and use these teachings as a framework to inform the principles and norms required for culturally respectful governance.

Formal Credentialists. From this standpoint, Tribal people must pursue and gather the technical education, degrees, and skills of the non-Tribal world. This is promoted as necessary in order to provide technical advice to the positions of power. In addition, it is also central to the task of maintaining parity, standing, and respect in Tribal dealings with non-Tribal entities. Tribal people must use formal knowledge as a means to protect the Tribe and promote treaty rights, but only so far as they enact and enforce the cultural principles provided for by their cultural teachings.

It is to this new and unrecognized landscape that one can more fully assess the unique educational and experiential needs of Tribal people. Of note, within this design exists a relatively smaller area for those members that traverse all three standpoints, owing to the perception that there exist few Tribal people who can occupy all three

spaces at once. Again, I think this smaller intersectional space parallels the identic

conception of the "empty space" as referenced by Gone (2006). In that work, Gone

speaks to an incompleteness as a concept of self-perception within contemporary Tribal

people. His contention is that this condition impacts levels of collective wellness within

Tribal communities. I think the emptiness that Gone refers to relates to the relatively

difficult task it is for a Tribal person to coexist within the different experiences located

within the central intersection of the three experiential standpoints.

It is also within understanding these perspectives that it appears that the current

offerings of academia may lack a completeness in both product and process for Tribal

people; specifically with regards to how the institutions of higher learning appear to

discount practical experience. To this point, there is a need to recognize the importance

of practical experience in order to create and develop educations that teach not only

important skills, but also account for cultural and practical experiences that Tribal

scholars need for leadership positions within their own communities.

Tribal Critiques of Tribal-Centric Education Products.

(KB: In terms of the process of education, do you think that Tribal
people… that the current models of higher education, in that you get your
high school degree… and then you go away to college… and then you go
away… and then hopefully you come back… Do you think that's a good
process?)
PS: No, I don't think that process works. I still that… I still think that…
(KB: How would you change that process?)
PS: I'm not sure. Because, you were hoping that the Northwest Indian
College was going to do that… and it turns out that it's not… To keep the
numbers up… To keep the dollars that they need for the college to run…
They're just giving people degrees… Which isn't helpful… I mean…
They can't.. You know… You say you have a degree from Northwest
Indian College… That's not going to get you anything. (PS, interview,
08/20/2015)

The discussion concerning standpoints and epistemological landscapes provides a

natural transition to the next section of analysis which examines Tribal perceptions with regards to the Tribal-centric products of higher education. Specifically, this section addresses Tribal perceptions towards Tribal community colleges, Associate of Arts degrees, and Native Studies degrees. This topic is important because it examples the kinds of tensions that are experienced when the products of higher education do not reflect the changing educational needs of the populations they were designed to service. It is through the understanding of these critiques that the message is made clear: Tribal people have specific education needs and the current complement of higher educational degrees are not meeting their expectations or their needs.

Critiques of Tribal Community Colleges and Native Studies Degrees. One of the more fascinating realizations to come out of the dissertation project was with regard to the apparent disregard for Tribal-centric education products. On the surface it would seem that both of the Tribal community colleges and the Native Studies degrees represent educational advances that would be wildly embraced by Tribal people. After all, both seek to increase Tribal presence and graduation rates, as well as provide meaningful education experiences to students traditionally at odds with the process of higher education. However, narratives indicated that Tribal people were generally critical about these institutions and programs.

I spent a great deal of time asking myself why would Tribal people express such negativity towards these educational products that were specifically designed for their benefit? After some thought, I found that an application to historic and contemporary contexts of Tribal communities provided some explanation to this perplexing issue. In terms of the former, I think many of the negative perceptions stem from the relatively

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recent experiences between the Tribe and the Northwest Indian College (NWIC); the sole

Tribal community college in the Northwest. The primary critiques of study participants

centered around the perception that they do not believe NWIC is rigorous or preparatory

in terms of the technical skills that the Tribes are seeking to develop. Participants spoke

of NWIC as an institution that favors grade inflation in order to retain students (FTEs).

Some talked about their negative experiences in regards to the difficulties in their

attempts to transfer credits, to which they interpret as a sign of comparative inferiority in

relation to other non-Tribal centric schools.

Within this critique, I also found a parallel critique towards the perception of

value for the associates of arts (AA) degree; the primary degree offered by the Tribal

community college system. During the interviews, participants discuss their lack of

support for associate of arts degrees as they describe it as creating a false sense of

education. According to these participants, they interpret the AA degree as a slight

improvement to a high school diploma; meaning that technically it is a degree, but that it

lacks any real status or utility for someone seeking a skilled job. One participant spoke

about the AA degree as a limiting factor, in that it might present additional obstacles in

terms of transfer to four-year programs.

> I think letting people know the process of each type of degree would be
> really helpful because, then people going into, taking classes at Northwest
> Indian College, they'll say, OK maybe I should just enroll in that four year
> instead of going through an AA and then having to do a direct transfer. If
> you explain, that's a whole lot of paperwork. You've got to make sure
> everything transfers. You've got to make sure you're in this path. (XJ,
> interview, 09/17/2015)

To this concern, the presence of an AA degree might actually be thwarting self-

determination by preventing Tribal students from completing more advanced degrees

needed for the positions of power. One can only imagine the discouraging impacts upon

a Tribal scholar if/when they learn that many of the courses they have taken do not count

for anything beyond the singular AA degree. As such, I think it is in the best interests of

the Tribal community colleges such as Northwest Indian College to reexamine the

impacts of their educational products beyond the limited institutional metric of

graduation.

Native Studies Sidebar: Understanding the Impacts of Termination. With

regard to the critiques oriented towards Native Studies programs, I encountered one of

the more counter-intuitive critiques; Tribal people appear to dislike Native Studies

programs. To explain this preference requires a nuanced understanding of historic

experiences from the era of Tribal Termination that occurred through the United States in

the 1950's and 1960's that appear to resonate in contemporary Tribal communities.

However, before I address this matter, I must first delve into the esoteric differences

between other historic traumas and the era of Tribal Termination.

The effects of the Boarding School era on Tribal community health and

development have been a staple of Native education research for several decades. Many

fine authors have offered accounts about the impacts of forced assimilation through

education upon Tribal communities. Similarly, other authors discuss the Era of

Termination and the harmful effects that the federal abrogation of Tribal treaties had on

Tribal recognition, sovereignty, and self-determination. Most can agree that the effects

of both policies were extremely traumatic. However, what few people appear to realize is

that there is a clear difference in the two policies in terms of the lasting effects upon

Tribal attitudes towards the promotions of contemporary Tribal education.

Not to belabor the point, but the gist of the argument is as follows. Tribal people remain angry with both the Boarding School Era and the Termination Era. However, the clear difference is that unlike the Boarding School Era, Tribal people remain fearful of Termination, for the sole reason because they think it can happen again. For Tribal people, they still live in a reality in which another bout of Termination is expected. They openly speak about the fear of waking up one day and finding a future Congress or Presidency has come in to power and taken plenary action to snuff out their Treaty rights and protections.

To this concern, it appears that the contemporary fear of (re)Termination appears to directly affects the educational preferences of Tribal people toward non-Native centric degrees perceived as important for careers outside of the Tribe. As one participant explained in a conversation referencing Native Studies degrees:

> … I'm not sold on those degrees, just because, I want our Tribal members to not just excel here, but excel in the world. Let's say hypothetically, the federal government, we get an unfriendly party in the presidency, in the Congress, and in the Senate and they decide to come after sovereignty… They try to just demolish Tribal governments, you know. Which, I mean, you never know…. So, let's say they revamp that and we don't have any more of this privilege, our sovereignty and what not. I want our Tribal members to have the degrees that are going to be able to put them out in the regular community as well. Let's say we've got 150 Tribal members with Native American Studies degrees, or Native American Sovereignty degrees. What good is that going to do them? (FQ, interview, 08/26/2015)

When asked during the interviews about specific educational credentials, the majority of participants identified MBAs, CPAs, engineering degrees, biology degrees as most desirable. It appears, in part, that participants were prioritizing and promoting educations and degrees not so much as a means of Tribal community development, but as a means of preparation for survival once there is no more Tribe.

Another quality that I find most interesting is that this new set of degree preferences also appears to signify a shift in the direction of Tribal education. This shift appears to be moving Tribes away from the cultural emphasis that existed during the pre-gaming era, in which cultural studies, Native language, and anthropology degrees were highly prized and promoted. It is unclear what has caused this shift. My intuition says that it is most likely an affect of the increased regional economic role of the Tribe. In terms of the emphasis on financial education, it appears that the Tribe is reorienting education prioritization in order to provide for increased capacity for accountability, as they appear keen on finding out how to make more money as well as finding out where to track and identify financial leaks.

Understanding Tribal Credentialism: Identity, Education, and Power. In this next section of emergent discussion, I shift topics towards the analysis and discussion of credentialism as it is expressed within Tribal perceptions. Within this section, I examine the ways in which identity, education, and power interact to create complex social effects in a seemingly homogenized community. It is to the nuanced understanding of the narratives relating to credentialism that I think provides invaluable insight to the unacknowledged ways in which education affects self-governance and self-determination.

A Review of Credentialism. In 1979, Collins wrote *The Credential Society;* a seminal book about credentialism examining the impacts of the technical education system on the social and economic mobility of the American workforce. Within this book, Collins examined demographic and macroeconomic data to propose and detail the ways in which educational design in the United States is organized through the escalation of increasing levels of technological complexity within educational design. Collins

posited that within the educational design are cloaked arbitrary levels of technological stratification through which exclusion by degree is used as a means to bolster and protect upper class social privilege, economic advantages, and power.

In terms of this project, I employed Collins' works as a means in which to examine conditions of credentialism within a Tribal community. It was my intention that by doing so, I could provide a micro application and analysis to more directly explain the linkage between higher education and power within a bounded community as expressed through a Tribal government.

What I found in the course of this analysis was a system of credentialism that appeared to operate counter to the predictions that Collins had established. While credentialism was used as means to exclude, I found both internal and external applications that presented differently. Internal to the organization, credentialism appeared to exist as an obstacle to social mobility for credentialed Tribal people holding certain types of careers within their own communities. Externally applied, I found that credentialism was promoted as a means to provide credibility to Tribal efforts to affect and influence non-Tribal entities, opportunities, and threats. From this, what became apparent was that within these various applications of credentialism, there were many interactions occurring reflecting a multi-faceted system of identity, education, and power.

Higher Education Credentials and the Calculus of Tribal Identity. In "Indian Country" there exists a communal perception of social value for Tribal people who embody a richness of uncommon experiences and skills. Owing to this, within most Tribal communities there is an informal hierarchy that places prestige and influence among elders - for their longevity and wisdom; Combat veterans - for their bravery and

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willingness to sacrifice; Artisans - for their ability to provide connection between the historic and the contemporary; and Teachers - for their ability to prepare the youth with the lessons and skills needed to survive. Underlying this informal hierarchy is a common belief that collective survival and prosperity of the Tribe are functional of a richness of life experiences and skills that a community can gather and develop.

With regard to higher education, the completion of higher education and attainment of a degree affects the ways in which members are perceived and valued in their communities. The most apparent impact is within the informal shift in status that a higher education credential can create. Most commonly, this shift in status is manifested into an ongoing debate/struggle over who should count as a person of influence of the Tribe and what counts in terms of qualification for positions of power in the Tribal government and enterprise.

Pivoting back to the "Three Worlds" model I have discussed, I posit that what is occurring is a rebalancing of perceived social value between individuals. As graphically illustrated by Figure 4, I believe higher education credentials shift the comparative social capital balance towards those Tribal members that have degrees. To this graphic, I offer the conceptual explanation of the Calculus of Identity as a means to explain how I think higher education credentials affect the perceived power among Tribal members.
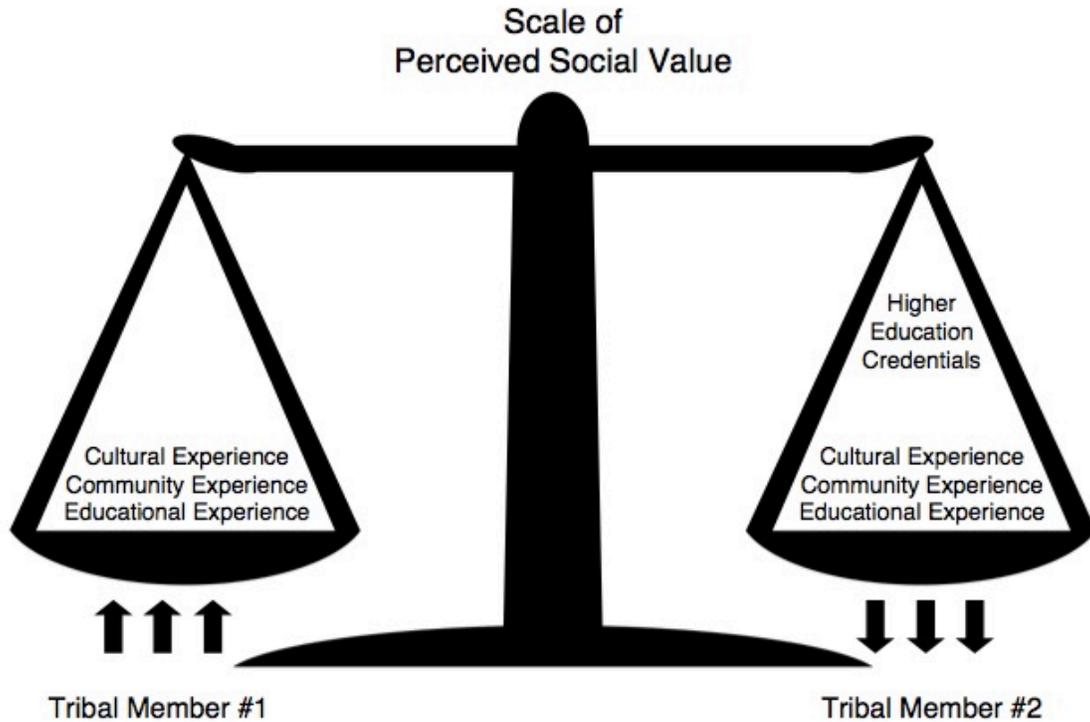
Figure 4. Effects of Higher Education Credentials on Perceived Social Value.

        The operation of the Calculus of Identity is as follows: There are two Tribal people. Both have equivalent life experiences in the community; both have equivalent levels of cultural participation and expertise; and both have basic levels of education as one another.

        In this model, one of the members leaves the Tribe temporarily to pursue higher education. The other stays in the organization and works their way up the ranks. After a few years, the Tribal member that left to get the degree comes back to leverage their education and work for the Tribe. However, when they return, they find that the job they left has been filled. They find there are no immediate positions to leverage their education and experiences. They find themselves struggling for a jobs in their own Tribe. So what has happened? Why are they not welcomed back to the Tribe and given a position commensurate with their newly developed skill set? Why are they treated

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differently? They have done everything that was promoted as important in terms of advancement and development? What explains this scenario and their experience?

As previously indicated, I think the explanation lies in the way that the degree affects the relative social capital between the two members. It is not as though the educated person is necessarily more qualified or more capable, nor the experienced member any less. Rather, the educated person is perceived as in possession of a credential that represents a formal acknowledgment of intelligence and technical skill that the other member does not have. In this case, the presence of a degree evokes a narrative of obsolescence to the non-degreed Tribal member. After all, it makes the most logical sense that all jobs should be staffed by the best and the brightest. However, in this model, this does not happen. What appears to happen is that when the degreed person returns, the practical experiential member that did not leave the reservation is immediately placed in a precarious situation in which they must acknowledge the importance of the education and skills in terms of qualification of employment, but only up to a certain point. At some point, the non-degree person must discount formal education as a lesser substitute for practical experience. Their only other option is to step-aside and let the more qualified person have access to their job. However, that is not in their best interests, so it does not happen.

The Calculus of Identity appears to extend to non-Tribal managers, Tribal employees, and Tribal members as well. The only form of social capital non-Tribal managers possess is an education credential. As such, their power is functional of the kind of technical skills their degree conveys. The more centrally important the technical skill is to the operations of the Tribe, the more relative power the degree reflects, and the

more relative power they possess in comparison to any Tribal member.

However, as I have pointed out, non-Tribal managers exist in a precarious situation in which they possess less cultural and community capital that the most uneducated Tribal member. The presence of any educated and credentialed Tribal employee is a direct threat to power and authority. They understand that nearly any Tribal person in a position of power can veto them, even if that person does not have an equivalent educational credential. They can be vetoed because the credentialed Tribal person in the position of power always has the ultimate trump card to overturn the non-Tribal manager; they have community experience. Non-Tribal managers know that Tribal people can invoke this power at anytime, and in doing so, can render even the most capable non-Tribal member inert. As such, non-Tribal managers appear to have a similar disincentive to hire and promote credentialed Tribal people.

I have found that the Calculus of Identity model explains a great deal of my own professional career in Tribal governments. I now understand that I can get jobs in Indian Country because I represent the type of candidate that is most attractive in Tribal governments: I come from a well-respected Tribal family; I am a combat veteran; I have advanced degrees from prominent schools; I have valued professional experiences working within Tribes and for non-Tribal levels of government; I have a track-record of Tribal community development accomplishments; and I have teaching and research experience focusing on Tribal issues and treaty rights.

However, more importantly, I think I am hired by Tribes not necessarily because I am most qualified, but because I am not perceived as a threat to those in Tribal leadership without education credentials. And herein, I think lies one of the most distressing and

sobering paradoxes that I have found in terms of education and credentialism in my

Tribal community, the study community, and the other Tribal communities I have worked

with: Higher education appears not preparatory for working in one's own Tribe. Rather,

higher education appears preparatory for working for someone else's Tribe.

This general perception appeared common throughout the narratives of other

participants as well. As one participant related,

> …It's complicated to work at home, you know? I know you know. It's complicated to work at home and when you have that luxury of being a Native person that is not related to people, that allows you to do your job easier when you are working in a community that is not your own. (KR, interview, 09/17/2015)

Another participant recounted an especially powerful experience of a Tribal

mentor discussing the effects of higher education on his professional career in Tribal

communities.

> … He said, 'Your formal education is going to take you away from here.' And I said, "I'm going to come back. My plan is to come back, because I want to work for the Tribe. I want to work…" He said, "You won't come back here." He said, "At one point in time, you will return to Indian Country, but it won't be here." (XJ, interview, 09/02/2015)

The "Goldilocks Zone" of Higher Education in Tribes. Even for those Tribal

scholars who are fortunate to earn a degree and return home, another interesting facet of

Tribal credentialism can still affect their experience within their own Tribe. This

experience has to do with the apparent presence of a "sweet spot" or "Goldilocks zone,"

in terms of the appropriate amount of higher education or level of a degree a person either

needs to be relevant or can possess without becoming isolated.

I think this condition has a great deal to do with the twin perception that

undereducated people will be discounted by external agencies for not having a

comparable degree, while at the same, highly educated people are viewed as a threat by some members. Several participants reported difficulties that they face either because of a lack of education or because they believe they have too much. For one participant, I asked if they believed their relative lack of education resulted in them feeling like a "second-class" citizen? To which they responded:

> In the eyes of some of my leaders for sure, because why else would they say, you need to go to college. You need to go do this… You know. And I am like, 'What did I do wrong? You know. What have I done wrong?' Because that was my first thing back to her because, it actually kind of hurt, because I thought this person really liked me, for everything… not just for one reason or another. And I didn't realize that they viewed Tribal members like that. And so it was an education in itself, in a point, you know. (SU, interview, 08/26/2015)

Another more educated participant reported a similar tension that she felt was due to her having too much education. When asked about her perception about having too much education, one participant reported:

> …And this is where I am a living reality of… I'm a living reality of… I had my masters degree and I applied for 17 jobs in every possible department of the Tribe, and [Tribal enterprises]… and I am not a [Tribal enterprises] person at all. 17 jobs with my brand new masters degree and I didn't get an interview. (EF, interview, 08/20/2015)

What I found most interesting in regards to these narratives and this phenomenon is the comparison between the study Tribe and my Tribe. Whereas in my Tribe, the lack of a degree creates a situation in which Tribal members are relegated to service positions by day and positions of power on Tribal Council by night, in this community those with an excess of credentials face same situations but for opposite reasons. This leads me to believe that there is an informal structural phenomena taking place that creates a situation counter to the functional predictions of Collins who posited that within a credentialed society, elites would use degrees as a tool of exclusion to protect their (and their

children's) social status and advantages. From this counter example, I believe that what is occurring is an interaction in which non-credentialed leadership and governmental structures are setting conditions and limitations that discount the utility of a degree and to affect the social mobility of the credentialed person in order to maintain their own power.

In terms of the specific operation of this phenomenon, I think there exists a cut-off for appropriate levels of education; somewhere between the undergraduate and graduate levels. I am also left with the impression that this condition is most directly linked to the presence of a generational gap between older generations of Tribal people in positions of power that did not have the opportunities for higher education, and the younger generations with more educational opportunities and degrees. What I think may be worth tracking are the longitudinal effects of this condition upon the transition of power as the older generations cede power to the younger. What I think will be of most interest will be to assess if the presence of more graduate degrees in the younger generations will widen the "Goldilocks Zone" in favor of increased inclusion, or will the presence of additional advanced degrees in leadership shift the expectations towards more advanced and technical degrees as was originally predicted by Collins?

Tribal Credentialism and the Paradox of Power. A final examination of counter intuitive conditions of Tribal credentialism involves the potential presence of a paradox that exists in which non-Tribal applicants are preferred for certain position of power over qualified Tribal people in their own communities. During this dissertation, I have found that it appears favorable for certain positions of power and authority, such as deputy executive director, chief of police, child services to go to non-Tribal applicants. I have found this situation manifested within other Tribes as well. At first glance, this appears

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counter-intuitive that the Tribe would give these important jobs to people that do not know the community. However it appears that what is occurring is that the Tribe is avoiding conflict by avoiding potentially pitting families against each other. One can imagine the kind of community fractures that would accompany placing a community member in a position in which they have to judge and decide about cases of employment, incarceration, or child placement.

  Echoes of the Stickman: A Cultural Sidebar on Positions of Power. I have also included a folklore reference that I believe exists to offer a cultural explanation to describe this paradox of power within this Tribe. Though this reference was not included in the explicit narratives for this project, during the pre-interviews and informal conversations several participants made remarks about some Tribal jobs that Tribal people just should not do. I include this story because I think there is a shared experience between my Tribe and the study Tribe that involves a common Tribal folklore that I have heard referenced by certain members in both communities; the reference is to a figure referred to in our communities as "The Stickman."

  This story of the Stickman was told to me from the time of my childhood. From what I gather, it was a common narrative throughout the various reservations in the Pacific Northwest. The story goes as follows. Back in the time of my great grandmother, there was a person that wandered throughout the Tribes known as the Stickman. The Stickman would carry a large stick everywhere he went. He would carry this stick on his journeys, walking form reservation to reservation. The story goes that when he would come to your reservation, he would walk among the houses in the community offering his "services." Tribal parents would greet him with respect, and if there were need he would

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be invited in by the parents to sit with the family. He would be given food and drink and would spend time talking to the parents about their children. At a certain point of the visit, the Stickman would either get up and walk out and go to the next house, or he would take up his stick, gather the children, and beat the "bad" children. The parents would sit passively as he did his business.

Now, on the surface, this tale is both violent and bizarre. However, underneath the abuse you find the Stickman embodies a customary and cultural practice in Northwest Tribal communities; specifically, his role was to mete out punishment, but to do so while providing insulation between the parent and the child. In this story, the parents are largely absolved of the physical abuse of the child. After all, they did not directly participate in the abuse. It was the Stickman. They simply told the Stickman of the bad behavior of the children and then he became the arbiter of punishment.

I offer this tale, because I think that there still remain echoes of the Stickman in the contemporary Tribal communities and in their governments. I think there are instances in which educated and credentialed non-Tribal people are hired in to positions of power into these communities because they are free to do the dirtier work that community members need to avoid. I believe the story of Stickman presents a cautionary tale to explain the ways in which education credentials can be leveraged in order to create discipline and to do the unsavory tasks that the Tribal people cannot do without causing serious blowback and fallout. Finally, for the record, I do not recommend this type of abusive behavior to anyone. In fact, if one finds them in the position of a Stickman in a Tribal government, my advice is to start looking for other work elsewhere immediately. You may have power for a relative short period, but beyond that your professional fate is

sealed. After all, there was a good reason the Stickman never stayed any place very long.

The Poison Pathway of Higher Education in Tribal Communities. Finally, I end this discussion with a final examination of interactions of credentialism that I believe predict the future for Tribal communities. Speaking from professional experience, I think the creep of credentialism into Tribal communities represents one of the most potentially damaging and dangerous social outcomes for Tribal people since the inception of the boarding schools. I posit that there is far more people entering into higher education programs than there are people vacating positions of power within the Tribe (Figure 5). Furthermore, if left unaddressed there will be in an imbalance created that can potentially threaten the foundations of collectivism and Tribal self-determination.
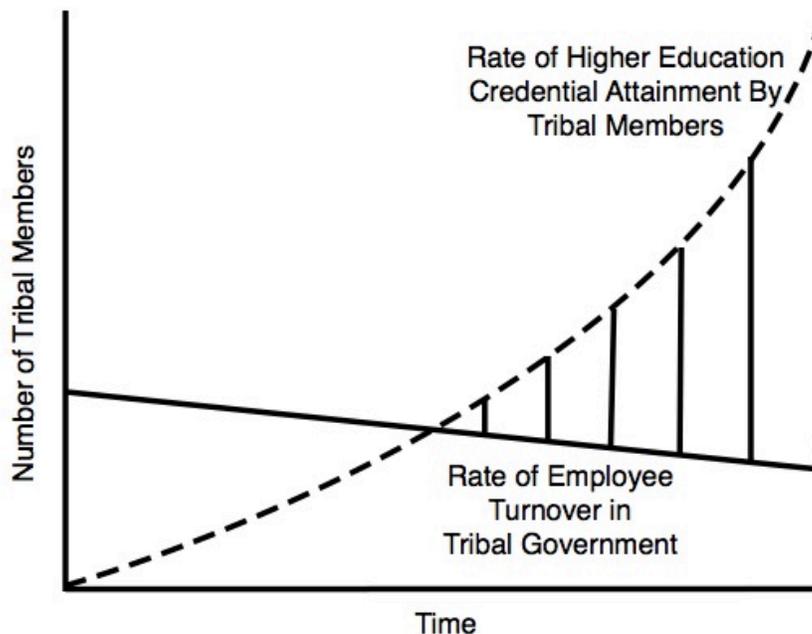

Figure 5. Imbalance between Higher Education Credential v. Tribal Employee Turnover

I think the primary tension is located in the implicit perception of a social contract between the Tribal government and Tribal member that links graduation with an expectation of full-time, meaningful employment in their home community. What I

predict is that as increasing numbers of Tribal people with degrees return home to confront a situation in which there will be fewer and fewer meaningful ways to engage with and contribute to their own governments. As the rates of higher education graduation compound, I think Tribal people will increasingly doubt the utility of a higher education. What I fear most is that if this perception left unaddressed, it may cause Tribal people to question their fealty to their own Tribal government. Once this perception becomes common, I predict there will also be an increased call for direct individual per capita payments to Tribal members. All this shift will take is a majority of members during a general council meeting to vote for direct distributions, at which time other facets of Tribal government programs and services will also be consumed. I think should this occur, the Tribal government will be solely focused on profit generation, and the Tribe will become no different than any other corporate entity. At this point the promise of collective self-determination through higher education may become unrecoverable.

Implications for Practice

Examination of the results and discussions reveals several important implications for practice; the primary of which is that there exists a genuine need for higher educational reform to provide for the unique products and processes within Tribal communities. It is my contention that these needs have largely remained unaddressed by the presence of the Tribal community college and university systems (as evidenced by the decades of relatively dismal graduation and unemployment rates for Tribal people). To this point, I believe that there needs to be more of an understanding paid toward the landscape of perceptions, priorities and policies that frame Tribal education in Tribal communities. Tribal education reform requires a reorientation of educational curriculum

to complement the various skills sets that a Tribal person needs in order to contribute to the health, safety, and welfare of their communities.

The following sections reflect my personal, professional, and academic experiences in Tribal planning, policy, and research discussions as they relate to Tribal education and self-determination. Reforms have been constructed to account for the common conditions I have experienced within multiple Tribal governments and communities. Though some of the materials extend beyond the scope of this specific project, I have chosen to include these, as I believe they function to provide a more complete picture of the internal conditions of a Tribal government and the unique educational needs of Tribal communities that I think are necessary for meaningful higher education reform.

Tribal Higher Education Reforms: Understanding Tribal-Centric Models of Higher Education. A synthesis of my professional experiences and the findings from this project produced a clarity of the internal design and function of higher education within Tribal communities. What the synthesis the experience of research has led me to believe that there are generally three different higher education models in operation within Tribal communities; the understanding of which provides reformers an orientation to the available attachments points that any effective and collaborative and complementary higher education reforms will require. The three models of Tribal-centric education include the: Balloon model; Kite model; and Boomerang model.

Balloon Models. The first educational model I encountered was the balloon model. The purpose of this model appears to create a system of policies and support mechanisms that remove barriers hindering Tribal graduation in Tribal community

colleges and universities. For the most part, the majority of the obstacles reflected within this type of model are associated with either finances or scheduling. The operation of this model allows Tribal members to travel for higher education outside of the reservation to take courses and pursue traditional degrees. There is no preference or priority mandates to direct the specific types of education or degrees. Underlying this model, there is also no emphasis for encouraging Tribal people to return to the reservation. Like a wayward balloon, Tribal members are left to float and wander wherever they go. The balloon model appears to be the primary educational model within Tribes at present.

Kite Models. Kite models are much different than balloon models. Kite models appear more reflective of an apprenticeship model of education. In a kite model, a person's educational pathway is tethered to the needs of a singular program. Typically this association is limited to Tribal enterprise departments (e.g., casinos). In the kite model, members are encouraged to get specific certifications and educations, with the intention that they are to gain and develop the additional skills and training necessary for increased capacity building and authority. The concern with kite models is that the orientation is on training and not education. In essence, these models train Tribal members for specific industry jobs and do not provide additional education for career development outside of that limited specialty. Owing to the fact that it is not uncommon for Tribal people to have four to five jobs in the span of a 20-year tenure, this approach to education offers limited return in terms of long-term employment or empowerment.

Boomerang Models. Finally, the boomerang model of education appears designed as the alternatives to the balloon and kite models. In this model, the intention is to create programs and policies to encourage Tribal people to seek out the educations that

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are most vital to the collective interests of the Tribe, while at the same time providing a post-degree pathway back into the organization so that gathered degrees can be leveraged into collective capacities. The ideal process associated with this model is to create educational options that do not require Tribal members to leave their positions of employment in the first place. Though not very common, this type of model has been shown successful past applications in Tribal communities; specifically with the New Careers educational model. More recently, this type of model has also been applied to members of the Pueblo Reservation, producing a matriculated cohort of 10 PhDs.

It is to these models, I think reforms of Tribal higher education need to reorient away from the relatively unsuccessful balloon and kite models and toward the boomerang design. I think that the best formula for increasing Tribal higher education graduation needs to encompass both the process obstacles that prevent educational access and post-graduation experience. In order to do this, higher education designers and reformers need to understand the applications of education and the dynamic environments in which they are intended to serve.

Perceptions, Processes, and Products of Tribal Education Reforms.

Acknowledging the Difference between Tribal and Native. Although understanding of the landscape of Tribal-centric education is the first step toward building effective reform, I think it equally important that Tribal education reformers also make a mental reorientation to understand the important nuanced differences in their Indigenous populations in higher education and to design reforms accordingly. Specifically, reformers need to realize that Tribal people are not Native people.

I have come to experience that Tribal education is not Native education, and as

such, the two need to be viewed and treated differently. I think Native scholars often lack the community connections and purpose that Tribal scholars have. I think a Native scholar comes to the university to get an education, a degree, and a career somewhere in non-Tribal society. On the other hand, I think a Tribal scholar comes to the university to get an education, a degree, and a career that will take them home and will empower them to serve their people or address a community problem. To this point, an education oriented towards Tribal people needs to be centered around collective Tribal needs, not individual career goals.

 Shifting Tribal Recruitment to Cohort and Cluster Models. There have been positive advances made by higher education in recent years to foster and buttress Native-centric campus community development. I still think however there remains an absence of basic understanding to the unique experience of Tribal people that continues to affect and discourage Tribal graduation on-campuses. From the narratives, one of the most central reasons that prevent graduation is alienation.

 What remains underacknowledged in the university is that Tribal people come from relatively closed communities. Within these enclaves, Tribal people are immersed in social landscape in which everyone knows everyone. When they come to the university campus they typically come alone, experiencing an unfamiliar world, operating at an unfamiliar pace. As such, their individual experiences can become isolating and alienating. For some this alienation becomes so palpable that they drop out and go home. Indeed, this perception appeared ubiquitous within the research community. During several research pre-design meetings with the Tribe, every single participant on the higher education committee reported a similar experience of isolation and alienation

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during their first quarters in the university system. For many, the only salvation was when they had a chance encounter and found another Tribal person to share their isolation.

Speaking to this point, one of the most important reformations has to do with the way that higher education recruits Tribal people. I think the current practice of recruiting single Tribal applicants sets up social conditions that cull Tribal members from their communities. I believe this practice sets up a confrontation for Tribal people, forcing an artificial choice of identity; Tribal member or university scholar.

Tribal people throughout this community stated that they would be much more successful is they had others from their communities to ground their experiences. It is to this perception that university recruiters might want to reexamine the singular admission models marketed to Tribes. I think there would be increased rates of graduation if the university would shift tactics and recruit cohorts, clusters, or groups of Tribal people from the same Tribe rather than individuals. This does not preclude that they necessarily have to have the same academic interests in mind. Rather, the only requisite should be that they know each other before leaving the reservation. Should this happen, more and more Tribal people will see the university as a place of community, rather than a locus of psychological conflict and alienation.

Centralizing Embedded Design in Tribal Education.

A lot of the degrees are where you have to do those internships, or you have to do those hours. And so, it's like… I get that too, but why can't they do that here while they are getting their degree?.... I would say that type of stuff should be allowed to be done within your own community, especially if your own community is the one that sent you to school, and the one paying for your education. Get a return on our investment! You know. Because college is not cheap and not getting any cheaper. And so, where is the return on that. (SU, interview, 08/19/2015)

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One of the central critiques echoed throughout this project were the perceptions that the current design of higher education requires Tribal people to leave the reservation for extended periods of time and that this absence affects their relationships with their communities and their abilities to find meaningful work when they return. Pivoting on this perception, one of the most effective reforms that can be done to help Tribal people is to relocate higher education within their own communities. The fact is that in this day and age, with this level of technical availability, there is little reason to require Tribal people to leave their communities in order to seek the educations that are already being offered through distance learning options. Furthermore, I also think that it is also vital that higher education program designers work with Tribal communities to learn more about the ways in which education can be leveraged in reservation communities to provide immediate impact.

This type of reform is neither new nor untested. In the 1965 Pearl and Riessman established the New Careers apprenticeship program to provide for an alternative degree pathways for impoverished (primarily minority) populations through the United States. The idea behind this model was to create an embedded program of higher education using a paraprofessional pathway. In this model workers and community members were accredited for learning and executing skills on-the-job, in the communities they served. During the tenure of the New Careers program, they were successful in several Tribal communities; establishing successful teacher paraprofessional programs for the Sioux, Lummi, and Blackfeet Tribes which credentialed hundreds of Tribal students. The New Careers model is still widely in use today and has extended beyond just teacher educator into other specialty fields including nursing and social services. As such, there is no

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reason why the New Careers model could not be revamped to provide for the unique educational needs of contemporary Tribal communities.

More recently, this type of embedded higher education design was used to graduate a cohort of ten doctoral students from the Pueblo Reservation. In a recent discussion, Dr. Brayboy explained his process for accomplishing this feat (interview, November, 10, 2015). Dr. Brayboy described how he would travel by aircraft once a week to the participating Tribal villages to offer the graduate courses to a graduate cohort. Dr. Brayboy explained the reason behind this extraordinary program was to provide an education that kept his students in their communities. I think his model and his success provides further proof of concept that both a student and community's Tribal higher education success is functional upon the centrality of maintaining presence in the communities in which they live and serve.

Creation of Tribal Community Development Degree. Finally, one of the most important reforms that remains unaddressed in the process of higher education involves the creation of a new type of education and degree for Tribal scholars; specifically there needs to be a degree in Tribal community development.

The fact remains that there still does not exist one degree program within higher education to train someone on the depth and breadth of requisite theoretical and technical skills that a Tribal person needs to know in order to perform the important duties of their jobs in "Tribal Country." Recalling my own professional experiences in Tribal organizations, I have had to know and use the skills of policy and planning, law, budgeting, finance, research, technical writing, grant writing, computers, graphic design, and public presentation in order to effectively do my jobs. While I had to informally

compile these skill sets along the way to my PhD, there is no legitimate reason why these skills could not be taught to other Tribal people within a formal degree program. Furthermore, a degree reform of this caliber could send a powerful message to Tribes that the university is willing to help Tribal people create more meaningful and empowering products of education central to the development of their scholars and to the self-determination of their communities.

Implications for Research

With regard to the potential research products that this project produced, I think that the intersection of Tribal government and credentialism remains a fertile topic of inquiry. The understanding of these topics is beneficial for many different academic disciplines to include Education, Political Science, Public Policy, Anthropology, and Native Studies. Further inquiry into this field is necessary because understanding the perceptions, values, relationships, obstacles, applications, and structures of higher education for Tribal communities will inform other minority and Indigenous groups seeking education and credential as a means to protect their identity while also maintaining a presence within a globalized, connected society.

In terms of this dissertation, there are several research projects that I think are required to understand the perceptions of additional subgroups and Tribal communities. First, a future iteration of this project needs to expand the study subpopulation beyond the Tribal government/employee setting. Though I think the participant subpopulation I worked with was representative of many of the conditions within a Tribal government, I do have to concede there are other voices in the community that can provide insight to other dimensions of Tribal education. To this omission, I would like to see an effort

made to extend the project to account for their experiences. Two subgroups that come to mind include generational groups and sex/gender groups.

With regard to generational subgroups, a future study needs to seek out the perceptions of the younger people in the Tribe. I think there needs to be additional emphasis to find out what they think higher education is, how it will empower them as individuals, and how it can be leveraged back into the Tribal organization. I believe this is needed because younger generations of Tribal people have been indoctrinated into a connected globalized world in which higher education (credentials) are vital to social mobility, job-preparedness, and wellness. Furthermore, this younger generation of student appears steeped within a world of technology that exists far beyond the conceptual contexts of their predecessors. Their relationship to information is different and as such, so probably is their promotion of the modern norms and customs external to Tribal cultures. It is within this differential space that I think resides the majority of discontent and conflict within the power structures of contemporary Tribal communities and organization. Coupled with the realization that many of the positions of power are still held by members of the older generations, there appears a positioning of older generations to protect their status and power. As has been inferred in this project, younger Tribal members traverse a very tenuous pathway, having to extoll higher education as a collective good, but only so far as they do not appear a threat to entrenched power. As such, there is much to be gained from a research project that focuses on the younger generations and to the conflicting educational spaces they are facing. Of specific interest, I think it important to uncover younger Tribal people's perceptions concerning how they seek to gather and hone technical skills needed to modernize and empower the

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Tribe, while at the same time avoiding disrespect to the older generations, or perceptions of threat to traditions and cultural manifestations heralded as sacrosanct.

Another subgroup that I think needs to be emphasized in future iterations of research involves sex/gender groups in the Tribe. Within the responses there appears to be a latent narrative that perceives gender as a factor affecting the valuation of higher education within Tribes. Relying on my own understanding of the traditional sex/gender roles in this community and culture, I expected more of these types of statements in this project. However, these references did not occur. Still, my intuition tells me that higher education is probably more important to women than men in Tribal communities, as it appears that a degree is more important for the social mobility of women to gain the credibility needed to enter the power structure. It is to this intuition that I would like to conduct a future project investigating the ways in which higher education is differentially experienced between men and women in Tribal communities could reveal an additional dimension that was only tangentially reflected in this project. Specifically, what I would propose is an examination and analysis of the distribution of higher education credentials in terms of males to females in Tribal populations v. the distribution of males to females in positions of power. Additionally, I would like to see established a clearinghouse for these types of data to store and present aggregate distributions of male/females to examine for longitudinal shifts as compared to macro-scale Indigenous and Tribal education reforms.

Beyond the refinements of the project with this Tribe, I think it would also be beneficial to extend the research questions of this dissertation project to the neighboring Tribes in the region. The most logical expansion would be with the neighboring Tribe

that is located less than 10 miles away from the study Tribe. During the interviews, one participant spoke to the differences between Tribes in terms of integration and assimilation between the research Tribe and the neighboring Tribe. Pivoting on my own knowledge of the Tribes in the region, I think this participant was touching on an important yet understudied topic; specifically the effects of micro geographic differences among Tribes in the region, and how the proximity to certain geographic conditions (e.g., urban centers, transportation corridors, etc.) produces differences within priorities that could potentially be manifested in preferences for certain types of education. It is to this topic that a study of the neighboring Tribes would represent a fascinating comparison between the two Tribes, potentially uncovering additional social differences that could reflect a nuance within Tribes that is rarely addressed within current canons of research.

Another area that I would like to reinvestigate involves a social network analysis to examine where information is located in the Tribal community. The idea of a social network analysis stems from Moll's contribution of community "Funds of Knowledge" (1992) and Portes's work on social capital (1998). The general idea is that within a social community there exist people that possess, can provide, or who know of someone that can serve as educational resources to other community members.

Where I would like to see a future research project developed is in terms of the assessment of a Tribal community's social capital, followed by an examination of bounded social capital (within the Tribe) and bridging social capital (beyond the Tribe). Originally I had conceived of social and cultural reproduction as a means to anchor narratives of social capital, but following analysis I found that references to structural reproduction theories were largely absent. I think this had more to do with the degree of

agency expressed within Tribal perception. That stated, I remain optimistic that references to systems of social and cultural reproduction may remain occluded within social spheres and social networks of the Tribe, and that a social network analysis may be the vehicle to access these narratives.

Finally, the last item that I prescribe relates the missing treaty right that this dissertation has been based upon: the Tribal right of accreditation of their own higher education products. I think in order to claim this right, there needs to be a policy analysis done upon the various higher education accreditation agencies, policies, and boards that affect Tribal higher education to find out how to provide Tribal representation to the current accreditation system. If successful, this type of research project will be useful to the creation, and avocation of higher education policies. It is to this final project that I believe holds the most promise for Tribal educational reform as any reform will be of benefit to multiple Tribal communities. I think only when Tribes take back the historic power to create and direct their own processes and products of education will they finally be able to claim the promise of self-determination that has remained otherwise illusory.

Conclusions

I began this project with the purpose of understanding perceptions of higher education within Tribal communities. I wanted to know how higher education was promoted, valued, and employed within Tribal communities. I wanted to know what was preventing Tribal graduation in higher education and how that affected the levels of Tribal people in important positions of power within their own government. I wanted to explore for the presence of credentialism, and if I found it, I wanted to understand the impacts that credentialism had within a Tribal government setting.

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What I found during this research was an incredibly dynamic system of identity and power, embedded within larger social, cultural, and historical contexts. My examination yielded a complex picture of interactions between higher education and credentialism within a Tribal community. I was able to look to the dynamism within Tribal government and place and interpret the many intuitions, perceptions, and experiences occurring within contemporary Tribal communities. Even with over four-decades of personal experience and nearly two-decades of Tribal professional experience, many times I found myself confronted with perceptions, behaviors, and outcomes that did not appear to make sense in and of themselves. I think this project answered many of those questions. I think it has also produced many more.

All in all, I was relatively successful in my investigations into the ways in which education, identity, and power work in Tribes. To that point, I believe this dissertation provides a solid foundation to other Tribal scholars to extend this study of credentialism and self-determination out to other Tribes, villages, rancherias throughout the United States and Canada. I also think this dissertation was able to collect some valuable data that could be leveraged into other dissertations beyond the field of education research. Within the 18 hours of audio, I recognized PhD materials for a Political Science study examining comparative power differentials within Tribal governments as well as a study examining Tribal conceptions of sovereignty, nation-building, and self-determination; Psychology study examining for the contemporary presence and degree of trauma as affected by the experience of formal schooling; and Native Studies project examining the contemporary perceptions of Tribal identity formation and development juxtaposed between maintaining indigenous identity of a place while operating in a global economic

marketplace.

In closing, I am very proud of this project. I am proud because I can honestly admit that not only is it a good project, it is the best project that I could have done. I was able to create a meaningful and collaborative study with a Tribe, shepherd those ideas through the university machinations and Tribal reviews to confront a problem within education that I think has been very harmful not only to the study participants, but also to my own family. To this final point, I am eternally humbled to all those Tribal people that have looked beyond their own personal traumas to help me realize my potential and take my place as Tribal scholar.

APPENDIX

IRB APPROVAL

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DATE: August 06, 2015   IRB Protocol Number: 04202015.021

TO: Kevin Bourgault, Principal Investigator
            Department of Education Studies

RE: Protocol entitled, "Tribal Higher Education Perceptions and Profiles: The ▮▮▮▮
            Tribe"

Notice of IRB Review and Exempt Determination
as per Title 45 CFR Part 46.101 (b)(2)

The above protocol has been reviewed by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board and
Research Compliance Services. This is a minimal risk research protocol that qualifies for an
exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) for research involving the use of educational
tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or
observation of public behavior.

Please note that you will not be required to submit continuing reviews for this protocol, however, you
must submit any changes to the protocol to Research Compliance Services for assessment to verify
that the protocol continues to qualify for exemption. This exempt determination will expire August
05, 2020. Should your research continue beyond expiration date, you will need to submit a new
protocol application.

Your responsibility as a Principal Investigator also includes:
- Obtaining written documentation of the appropriate permissions from public school districts,
  institutions, agencies, or other organizations, etc., prior to conducting your research
- Notifying Research Compliance Services of any change in Principal Investigator
- Notifying Research Compliance Services of any changes to or supplemental funding
- Retaining copies of this determination, any signed consent forms, and related research materials
  for five years after conclusion of your study or the closure of your sponsored research, whichever
  comes last.

As with all Human Subject Research, exempt research is subject to periodic Post Approval
Monitoring review.

If you have any questions regarding your protocol or the review process, please contact Research
Compliance Services at ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu or (541)346-2510.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Johnson, BS, CHES, CIP
Director
Research Compliance Services
University of Oregon

CC: Arthur Pearl, Faculty Advisor
            Michael Bullis, Faculty Advisor

COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS ● RESEARCH COMPLIANCE SERVICES
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