

SECTION I:

**Addressing Class, Gender,
and Race in Higher Education**

CHAPTER 2

Climbing Up and Over the Ivy:

EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF AMERICAN INDIAN IVY LEAGUE GRADUATES

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Abstract: In this chapter, I am interested in exploring the ways that American Indian communities, through their citizens, identify themselves in relation to ongoing struggles. Part of this examination includes the ways that American Indians, and citizens of their tribal nations, utilize higher education to examine and explore their complex economic, political, and social structures. I examine how higher education for the public good informs and is informed by the struggles of these communities and what it may mean for institutions of higher education in a world that continues to change. I argue that all education at these institutions should be higher education for the public good.

In the last year, I have often wondered about what “higher education for the public good” meant and how it might be useful for American Indian peoples and tribal nations. I¹ was particularly interested in making sense of the connection between college and our lives on reservations or in communities with large American Indian populations. An elder in a community in which I have worked for almost ten years best articulated the connection between higher education for the public good and our communities. I was interested in knowing why community elders were continuing to encourage their young people to attend college, even though the retention rates were low for Indigenous students. Institutions were marginalizing, oppressive, and failed to understand the needs of its Indigenous

students. In response to my question and concern he told me, “We send you all there [institutions of higher education] as a way of acknowledging where we come from. We have to fight fire with fire and use the natural relationships that might be counterintuitive to some [people] in order to win this war....Make no mistake that we are at war for our lives, cultures, and rights to be independent nations.” This quote and the thinking behind it offer new ways to examine higher education for the public good for American Indian communities. It also offers a challenge to institutions of higher education to think about what their roles are for different communities and for the larger public.

In this chapter, I am interested in exploring the ways that American Indian communities, through their citizens, identify themselves in relation to ongoing struggles. Part of this examination includes the ways that they utilize higher education to examine and explore their complex economic, political, and social structures. I intend to examine how higher education for the public good informs and is informed by the struggles of these communities and what it may mean for institutions of higher education in a world that continues to change.

This chapter is informed by three guiding questions:

1. How and in what ways do tribal nations utilize institutions of higher education to address local and enduring struggles?
2. How and in what ways does higher education for the public good inform these struggles?
3. How is higher education informed by the struggles themselves?

These questions force institutions of higher education to (re)consider their own roles within society and particular communities.

Before proceeding further, I offer a brief discussion of my methods used for data collection and analyses. I then offer a theoretical overview of both higher education for the public good and the idea of local and enduring struggles as they are couched in Holland and Lave’s (2001) notion of history in person. I make connections between these two concepts before presenting data collected and its subsequent analysis. Finally, I conclude with the importance of higher education for the public good for both institutions of higher education and marginalized communities; I argue that all education at these institutions should be higher education for the public good.

METHODS²

The original data for this monograph come from a two-year ethnography conducted with seven American Indian undergraduate students at two Ivy League universities

between 1995 and 1997. In the original study (Brayboy, 1999) I was interested in examining the cultural, educational, political, emotional, and psychological costs and benefits of being an academically successful American Indian undergraduate student at an Ivy League university. In the original study, I found that individual students established strategies to assist them in being both “good Indians” and “good students” simultaneously. Being a good Indian meant that they were individuals who saw themselves as members of a tribal community and the community likewise saw them as an integral part of their community. In several of these instances, the individuals chose to attend an Ivy institution because they believed that the skills and credentials earned there would assist their tribal communities in their quest for sovereignty. These individuals all work in their communities and have, in fact, assisted their communities toward larger political ends.

In the years since, I have collected data from the original participants in the study in their roles as students and professionals. I also conducted participant observation in their homes away from the university during school summer breaks. I conducted interviews with community and tribal leaders, analyzed documents, and conducted focus groups. I have, since 1996, visited each community once a year and interviewed community and tribal leaders. Additionally, I have maintained telephone and electronic mail correspondence with the original participants and many of the tribal and community members. For this particular chapter, I rely on the original participant observations and interviews, as well as on follow-up interviews with the participant and their tribal elders.³ The long-term nature of this research is important for addressing notions of both local and enduring struggles. I have seen the ways in which the geographical, political, economic, and cultural landscapes have changed over a relatively short period of time. The time is significant enough to make some judgments based on the changes in the landscape. Ultimately, I recognize that these communities are always in a state of being and becoming; they are—like all communities—liminal (or in a temporary state) because of the fact that they change constantly.

For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on the experiences of one student, Heather. Her case is instructive for many of the other students with whom I have worked. Like other students in the study she came to Sherwood in order to assist her community’s political agenda. Heather put her community before herself in terms of academic achievement; she formulated strategies, in some cases with the assistance of her Indigenous classmates, to enhance her achievement and her ability to be both a good Indian and a good student. Heather encountered severe personal costs for her work.⁴ The methods are informed by the theoretical frame that is grounded in the notion that higher education can be—and has been—utilized by marginalized communities to address their enduring struggles. It is to this framework that I now turn.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

Two related theoretical frames organize this chapter. Higher education for the public good is an integral part of how I envision the role of institutions of higher education in our society. Additionally, “history in practice” frames the struggles of local communities as they find and define their places in the world. Together, these concepts outline a vision of how communities rely on and make sense of themselves and their struggles in relation to the services provided by institutions of higher education.

The Kellogg Commission (2000) has argued:

The irreducible fact is that we exist to advance the common good. As a new millennium dawns, the fundamental challenge with which we struggle is how to reshape our historic agreement with the American people so that it fits the times that are emerging instead of the times that have passed (p. 9).

In this vision of higher education, the Commission alludes to an arrangement “with the American people.” The Commission also points to the idea that agreements have to change to meet the present needs. The vision that I articulate below seeks to extend and complicate this vision. For what happens when the agreements between universities and American people may be contradictory to the needs of other people of the Americas? That is, what happens when larger society has policies in place that are destructive for particular communities? Whose agreements are honored when American Indian communities have disputes with the federal, state, and local governments that are hundreds of years old? At this point, I argue that the common good may be both debatable and contextual. By this, I mean what some see as a “common good” may, in fact, be uncommonly bad for others. At this point of departure, how do we as a society decide whose good is met at the expense of others?

Additionally, I will argue that the times that are emerging are, in the case of many marginalized communities, tied to the past and our enduring struggles. Given this argument, what then is the agreement and whom does it serve? Can the agreement serve both sides in a disagreement or struggle? If so, what does that mean for the agreement? I believe the agreement can—and must—be contradictory because there are enduring struggles between particular communities and society at large or governmental structures. It is not the role of institutions of higher education to necessarily better prepare one side of the struggle, but to seek equity and justice for all segments of society.⁵ It is in this vein that a search for the common good must begin. My point here is not to disagree with the Commission

for they have offered a useful vision; my intent is to push and extend that vision to be wider and more encompassing with a particular focus on the struggles of marginalized communities.

In this chapter, I use higher education for the public good to convey a multi-faceted idea that is rooted in notions of activism. My definition includes two in-depth components: how higher education serves society, and how higher education prepares active, vibrant citizens. Importantly, institutions of higher education do not do these things in a vacuum; they are not the source of all knowledge or the center of society. Rather, they are a part of a larger whole for a global community, and for specific local communities. Higher education clearly plays a role in larger society. In a vision of public good the University must ask the question: How is society best served? Generating new, creative, and inventive ideas, universities can begin to address ways to assist local communities as they continue to face struggles. More importantly, higher education for the public good has a reciprocal relationship with society where it serves society, but also finds many of its guiding principles from community members. By teaching students and encouraging faculty, staff, and administration to be active citizens and community oriented, higher education for the public good offers expertise and creativity to address societal issues in constructive, proactive, innovative and interesting ways. For communities who have enduring struggles, innovation and creativity become an integral part of addressing their struggles, and working toward creating a solution that works for a specific community.

It is important that the citizens graduating from and working in institutions of higher education be activists in our society. Individuals are, and become, parts of local, national, and global communities that they wish to serve actively. These individuals also recognize that a core of people working together are able to generate responses to societal and community needs. Importantly, these citizens also form proactive strategies for activist-oriented roles in society. Ultimately, higher education must create affirmative contexts of self-determination for communities within larger society. In the case of this chapter, American Indian students, and the community members that guide them into specific colleges for specific purposes, highlight the role of higher education for the public good. Returning to the elder with which this chapter started, higher education for the public good allows communities to fight fire with fire. Essentially, this community has legal and societal struggles with the local, state, and federal governments. They have essentially put young people in place to gain education, skills, and credentials in order to fight the governmental structures using the government's language and tactics. The Indigenous communities are buoyed by their cultural knowledges and epistemologies and a vision of the fact that the past continues to influence the present and future. They are attempting to redefine the new rules by playing by the old ones.

Higher education for the public good has at least two potential weaknesses. First, there is the danger of having too much focus on individuals and not enough on the communities from which they come. When institutions of higher education tend to focus on individuals as such, communities may get lost in the process. Can we build a strong community one member at a time without a coherent strategy or philosophy of activism in place? Institutions of higher education must focus on community values and priorities in order to truly carry out higher education for the public good. It is important to note that individuals will not be lost in the process; rather, they will be seen as belonging to something and coming from some place. I do not mean, however, to minimize the inherent danger associated with fighting fire with fire. Individuals who take up fire or the tools of dominant institutions then become co-opted by the institutions and by society. There is always a danger of this occurring and it is harmful to both the individual and the community. It is a risk those communities facing enduring local struggles must make. I do not minimize the fact these communities have other strategies in place in order to meet the needs of their communities. They are not solely relying on institutions to assist them in their political goals. They have instituted their own culture and language revitalization programs, pursued their own economic endeavors, and created educational institutions that serve the needs of many of their members who live in areas of reservations or other tribally based areas.

The second weakness may be that institutions of higher education cannot clearly articulate their place within society. Too often, those of us in the academy have been criticized for not being connected to communities. What, after all, do we have to contribute to society? How much of our research and theorizing can be linked to community improvement or espouse ideas that communities can take and make their own? Too often, it seems, we attempt to dictate to communities how their communities “should” live by instituting programs that go into communities to “improve” them or by bringing our expertise to communities without recognizing that communities have knowledge and skills of their own. Is there a coherent message of our contributions, and if so, what is it? If we listen to and hear communities,⁶ as institutions of higher education, we can begin to articulate our place within society in meaningful ways. These threats must be acknowledged and strategically and effectively addressed by a higher education for the public good.

History in practice is a theoretical concept posited by Holland and Lave (2001). This idea explores the “mutually constitutive nature of long and complex social, political, and economic struggles and the historically fashioned identities-in-practice and subjectivities they produce” (p. 3). History in practice is a combination of two concepts that Holland and Lave outline as “history in person” and “enduring struggles” (pp. 5–6). History in person refers to a “constellation of relations... between subjects’ intimate self-making and their participation in contentious local

practice” (p. 5). In other words, how do individuals make sense of who they are in relation to and because of events that occur in their immediate surrounding community? Enduring struggles is a “constellation of relations...between contentious local practice and broader more enduring (historical, processual, and open ended) struggles” (Holland & Lave, p. 6). Together, enduring struggles and history in person make up history in practice.

It is important to know that this process begins with local struggles or those struggles in specific times and places that extend into enduring struggles. These enduring struggles are often situated in explicit local conflict. For the Indigenous community that I discuss in this chapter, those explicit local conflicts are with the local, state, and federal governments.⁷ They are rooted in treaty rights or those promises made by treaties that are being ignored by municipalities and private businesses. For the case study, the tribal nation’s conflict occurs over the ownership and uses of natural resources that are indigenous to their own lands. Because treaties promised all monetary rewards to the tribal nation, they are fighting with the federal government and a private natural resources company over working conditions and profit sharing. Many of the discussions occur in legalese and are written against the tribal nation. Many of the original agreements are in direct conflict with the treaties, but the federal government refuses to enforce the law in spite of its official position as trustee of the tribal nation.

The conflict is both local and enduring. The results will inform how communities are making sense of who they are in relation to the contentious practices. Holland and Lave (2001) write, “struggles produce occasions on which participants are ‘addressed’ with great intensity and ‘answer’ intensely in their turn” (p. 10). The community discussed in this chapter is being addressed and answering with great intensity. I am particularly concerned with the role of higher education for the public good’s role in the manner in which these communities are now answering.

The following sections and analysis will take up the ideas and questions stated at the beginning of this chapter. There is a particular focus on the connections between higher education for the public good and the local and enduring struggles of the Indigenous community. I argue that this community specifically sends young people to institutions of higher education in order to meet its need to solve particular struggles.

THE PLACE, SPACE, AND PEOPLE: MOVING TOWARD HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

In the following section, I discuss a community in which I have worked for ten years as a researcher. The community is located in the southwestern part of the United

States. It is, like many reservation communities, removed from highly traveled roads and interstates and can be described as rural. The community is about 110 minutes from the closest large city. Many members of the community make bi-weekly or monthly trips to the city to stock up on goods that are hard to find on the reservation. There are places in the community that do not have running water or electricity. The state of living in some corners is “third world like,” according to one community member who has traveled the world extensively. The community is rich in natural resources with an abundance of uranium, natural gas, and oil. The community is divided over how to utilize these resources. It is believed that some of the most valuable resources are found in the ground, but many in the community refuse to bother because of its spiritual and sacred importance.

In the community, there is a clear vision held by some community members that institutions of higher education offer a place to develop “modern day warriors.” When I asked one community leader what he meant by modern day warriors, he told me:

These are our people who know how to fight using computers, books, law, and book smarts...We must reach a point where we have balanced young people who understand who they are and the importance of fighting for who we are, but...they have to be able to talk to white people...the government...the BIA...these businesses who want our [natural resources], but don't want to pay for them.

He went on to tell me, “We make a deliberate attempt to have those schools [universities] train you people to fight for our rights and for us.” In this community, there have been struggles over the use of natural resources and education for the tribal nation’s bilingual or monolingual (tribal language-only) students.

The fight with the private company stems back over 100 years and is directly tied to a treaty that proclaimed that all natural resources and the resulting monies or profits would go directly to the tribal nation. The private company, according to tribal elders, used the lack of English and legal knowledge of tribal leaders, and signed a 150-year lease that essentially gave the tribe eight percent of the profits and leased the land to the company for less than one dollar per month. To add insult to injury, the collection of the natural resource is dangerous and toxic. The company has used tribal labor to extract the resources and failed to implement proper safety measures. As a result, the incidence of cancer is almost quadruple the natural rate found among communities outside of the reservation. This is clearly an example of both an enduring struggle and one that is, at any given time, local and focused for this community. This struggle has become part of everyone’s life on the reservation because the industry influences individuals and families on an everyday basis either through the incidence of cancer or as a form of economic survival.

While individuals in the community are aware of the health problems they are also aware that, by reservation standards, the industry pays well. In spite of the hazards, individuals from the local community go to the site to work on a daily basis. Holland and Lave (2001) remind us that local and enduring struggles can be contradictory. Essentially, the pay clouds the dangers of the industry and individuals must decide if they will starve today, leave their home for a low paying job in the urban area two hours south of the reservation, or potentially die of cancer later. These choices finally led a community of leaders to consider how they might send their children and young warriors to college in an effort to address the struggles.

Heather is a young woman from this reservation, and one of the warriors sent out to do battle for her community. She grew up in a home that borders the reservation; both of her parents have been active in tribal politics for several decades, and they are viewed as leaders in the community. Both are professionals whose work takes them on and off the reservation. Heather attended high school in the local town where the student body was a mixture of members from her tribal nation, surrounding tribal nations, and local Anglos. There was a small percentage of Latina/os. The school was almost evenly split between Indigenous students and Anglos.

Recognizing that the tribal nation needed good, strong Indigenous leaders, they began to look for young people who were adept thinkers and verbally skilled. They found one such student in Heather. One leader in the community, in reference to this informal program, commented, “We actually modeled some of what we did from the old East German bloc countries and from the Chinese in that we looked for kids—really young kids—who displayed a particular talent that we thought would be useful.”⁸ He went on to say, “If kids seem to be healers, we thought of them as doctors; if they could teach or seemed like good teachers, then we would steer them in that direction....I know this seems a bit extreme, but we live in extreme times.”⁹ Heather was a student who showed promise as a potential lawyer in the community. When I met her during her first semester as a college student, she told me, “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 did endure insults and psychological and racist attacks in college and in law school in order to meet her goals. In college, she was actively involved in the campus American Indian student group and began the process of building an Ivy League coalition of American Indian students. Along the way she found staff and professors in whom she placed trust and confidence in her ultimate goals. These individuals assisted her in developing skills that they believed would be useful for her life long endeavors. She worked as a research librarian’s assistant during her time at her university where she acquired the requisite skills to be a

thorough creative researcher. These skills would serve her well in the future in law school and as a tribal attorney. She took this job after a professor found out about her aspirations and made arrangements to have her campus job be in the library. The professor knew a reference librarian who was interested in American Indian issues. Together they helped Heather become an able reference librarian and a capable researcher before she finished college. Another area in which professors served as mentors for her included her summer jobs. Each summer break, Heather would spend a month working in an internship in Washington, D.C., that helped her become more familiar with the role of Washington in her tribal nation's affairs. Over the summers she worked for the Department of Interior, Department of Energy, Smithsonian Institute, and served as intern in the Department of Justice. In addition, she interned for the tribal nation's law firm and different tribal governmental offices. This conscious, well-rounded experience made her aware of what was happening on a national level within the United States and her tribal nation. She was well informed of the issues and potential solutions before entering law school.

In her academic work, a cohort of professors and staff members assisted her in creative research projects. She implemented a study of water rights and natural resources for a political science course. For a geology course, she examined the impact of mining on different lands and communities, including her own. Her work was focused toward addressing the enduring struggle in which her home community was engaged.

In turn, her professors traveled to her home community and conducted life histories; took soil samples; examined the intricate weaving, pottery, and jewelry designs of her nation's artisans; and formed computer simulations of the impact of certain events on the water supply. This research assisted the professors in their own research and course offerings and the findings were turned back to the tribal nation for their own uses. It was, in the goal of higher education for the public good, a reciprocal relationship that benefited all parties. The tribal nation's understandings of particular issues were greatly enhanced in these partnerships. Heather played a key role in introducing these faculty and staff members to community members and in articulating the community's desired needs to the scholars. The fact that scholars and community could discuss these issues and establish partnerships is remarkable in and of itself. This is one of the creative ways communities can be proactive in addressing their needs and creating solutions to particular struggles, both local and enduring.

In this process, communities are attempting to address their enduring struggles in innovative ways. For the institution's part there was a group of committed scholars that took up the mantle of higher education for the public good. In order for this relationship to be truly effective, institutions, as a whole, must assume

components of this work to address the needs of particular communities as defined by the community. The connection in these cases was one student sent to a specific university for a particular end. This leads to the natural question: How do institutions of higher education begin to form relationships with communities that are both local and enduring? How do these institutions form collaborative partnerships with communities to address enduring struggles?

One important piece of the case just outlined has to do with the fact that members of the institutional community were activists. If higher education for the public good has an activist component, members of an institution's community must be committed to activism. Activism can be, as illustrated above, rooted in an individual's research agenda. In this case a professor of geology interested in the impact of particular practices on soils and water resources led him to conduct research that assisted the community. In the process his own research agenda was fulfilled. The point here is that professors can meet their professional requirements and be activists simultaneously.¹⁰ Additionally, institutions cannot create groups of activists if they do not have experienced activists in their midst.

Another important piece of this case is that the institution, or its constituent members, respected the knowledge of the community and became aware of its struggles. Unlike many cases in which an institution or its members may try to dictate a solution or path of action to a community, these members listened to community leaders and elders, observed what was occurring, and acted according to the wishes of community members. They saw their place within the community as they served the community's needs and by extension the university became part of a larger whole as part of a solution to an enduring and local struggle.

In beginning to ask the question, "How is society best served?" these faculty members are asking the community, "How can we best serve you?" The faculty members did not attempt to take over the situation or the struggle; rather, they took their lead from the community who had their own ideas about what would best serve their needs. Eventually, the community leaders asked faculty members for ideas. One community leader told me:

We needed to see if his [a faculty member] heart was true. Did he want to work with us, or did he want to use us? What was in it for us? Did he have our interests at heart or his own?...As soon as we knew that he wanted to work with us, it changed things completely.

This leader went on to say, "We realized that he could really help us and give us the kind of information we needed to make our case. Of course, he was able to get what he needed, but we got what we needed first."

Answering these questions offers a connection between higher education for the public good and history in practice. History in practice encompasses the struggles of communities in their local practices and the ways that individuals make sense of themselves. By becoming activists to address the enduring struggles and by resisting the overwhelming power of the local, state, and federal government in the affairs of American Indians, these communities engage in history in practice. Importantly, higher education for the public good becomes a source of power for them as they engage in the struggles. The solution includes more than simple skills and credentials earned at an institution of higher education; there are components of using these skills toward a particular end and by particular people. The institution is aware that it plays a role in the process of addressing the struggle and that the local community determines how it uses the institution to meet the struggle head on.

Heather graduated from college and was admitted to another Ivy League university's law school. The tutoring and mentoring continued, as did her focus on serving her community. During the summer of each year between law school, Heather interned in the law firm that served her tribal nation. The firm was in a large urban area several hours away from the community. Heather traveled between her community and the law firm and became actively engaged in the process of serving the community. Her coursework focused on tribal law, contracts, and federal cases. It was a program developed to best serve her community. Immediately upon graduation, Heather returned to her home community, studied for the bar exam, and passed it four months later. She also began working for the community's law firm immediately upon graduation.

Heather's work focused on addressing the natural resources on her reservation's land. She conducted extensive research using her knowledge of the law and the skills developed as a reference librarian and attorney. Her thorough research, in connection with her intimate knowledge of the enduring and local struggles, was an incisive and integral part of an ensuing lawsuit. I cannot overstate the connections that individuals have with local and enduring struggles as they begin to address them. She told me, after her first year in law school, "This [company] has eaten our tribe alive; they continue to behave in ways that are unconscionable. How can they continue to deny links between these cancer rates and their [work]? I'm going to help end this." In Heather's case, she was focused for seven years on these struggles, and clearly working toward a solution to the problem. She knew families who had lost family members to cancer. She saw how the management of the private company treated those in the community who looked like her. She saw the dependence of the community on an industry that was simultaneously destroying it. Heather's words are also those of an activist. She understands that a group of individuals with the right training and preparation may have an

opportunity to take up the struggle and change its direction. Higher education for the public good is particularly important here because members of the institution of higher education asked themselves, “What is best for this society?” as they assisted Heather in her role in the struggle. In the process they helped feed Heather’s activist’s motivations.

Two years after she finished her law degree, Heather was part of a team of attorneys that represented her tribal nation in a lawsuit against the private natural resources company. In a series of negotiations—lasting over an eighteen-month period—much of the data that Heather had compiled were presented. The company and the tribal nation negotiated a new contract. The contract included better compensation for the resources’ worth. The new contract also created safer and better working conditions, a comprehensive health insurance plan for employees, and ensured the employment of members of her tribe in management positions. Higher education for the public good also played a key role in this process. On behalf of her tribal nation, Heather was the key researcher of the case. She successfully held her own in the negotiations and relied on her knowledge and skills gained at the institution of higher education.

I met with her recently to discuss the negotiations and to catch up on her life. Dressed in a gray suit with cream pinstripes, black pumps, and carrying a worn, leather briefcase, Heather looked very much like an attorney. She sat in an old chair in her office that overlooked a scenic vista. Her diplomas were on the wall. Her office was scattered with law cases, legal folders, pink telephone messages, and bookcases stacked with books and folders. Other than her diplomas, she has not “had time to do anything with [my] office.” I felt like I was in a busy attorney’s office. About the negotiations, she told me, “I was the only woman in the negotiation process, but many of the people with whom I negotiated were alumni [from her undergraduate and law schools]. We connected on that and I think they had more of a sense of respect for me.” She went on to tell me, “I knew that data from one end to another, so I was comfortable. It quickly became apparent to them that I was the one with the knowledge, so I felt good about my role.” Heather also mentioned the fact that “I also knew some of these people from my time in Washington; so that worked out well.” Heather’s presence was made more powerful because she had graduated from two prestigious institutions of higher education, and had served internships in departments in Washington, D.C. She was well rounded, and had credentials that are impressive. The role of higher education for the public good is important here. The entire process of creating and assisting an activist came together as the tribal nation was addressing an enduring struggle. With her education, Heather has helped create a “better life for [her] people, [her] siblings, [her] cousins and nieces and nephews.” This is a story of empowerment and liberation both for Heather and for her tribal group.

Heather is what Deyhle and Swisher (1997) have called “adapters.” Heather knew that the structures of the classroom and social environment were not completely comfortable for her, so “[she] accept[ed] this segment of [her life] as a short interruption on [her] way to meeting life goals” (p. 167). These interruptions were, in Heather’s case, expected and planned in order to gain specific skills and credentials from elite institutions of higher education for personal and/or tribal betterment, self-determination, and tribal autonomy. Her adaptation makes her one of the new tribal warriors. But what are the costs for individuals like Heather who adapt and commit their lives to the tribal nation?

While this is an interesting story and one that ended well for the tribal nation, I do not want to romanticize this process. Heather’s work was important to the process, and she has devoted her life to making life better for her tribal nation. At the same time, the enduring struggles over treaty rights continue; unemployment, alcohol, and domestic abuse rates remain high, and the poverty level of the tribal nation ranks in the lowest tenth in the United States. Formal higher education is still a rarity in this community, and Heather is one of a few attorneys from her tribal nation. Health care is abysmal, and cancer and diabetes claim lives every week in this small, intimate community. Heather’s connection with elite institutions of higher education has not removed the enduring or local struggles. As each is addressed, another replaces it on the scale of importance. These enduring local struggles will continue as long as the community remains at the mercy of the United States Federal Government in many decisions.

There are personal costs for Heather as well. Heather wants to have a family and raise children on the reservation. Due to her education and her prominent role in the community, she is inundated with work. Additionally, she is a controversial figure in the community. She left the community for seven years and wears fancy clothes; as a result, many are intimidated by her. She has struggled with relationships. She has also encountered jealousy from those in the community who do not fully understand her motivations. She has moved off the reservation and into the local town. She has an unlisted phone number and is often concerned about how others will receive her on the street. She is a bit of an outcast even as she has helped her community. This is a complicated role for her and a complicated one for the community as they address their local and enduring struggles.¹¹

The manners in which tribal leaders and elders have addressed this enduring struggle are not fully supported by the entire tribal nation. There are some leaders and elders who believe that institutions of higher education have nothing to offer these communities. Many of their beliefs are rooted in another enduring struggle between the tribal nation and schools. It is important to note that these struggles can and do conflict with each other. Marginalized communities, in their quest to

address these struggles, are forced to be creative and strategic in ways that may not be approved by everyone in the community.

In response to the objections outlined by community members who want to steer clear of institutions of higher education, one of the weaknesses of higher education for the public good is highlighted. These institutions are not clearly articulating their own places within society. Much of this is connected to the fact that institutions of education have for centuries been used to assimilate American Indian communities (e.g., Child, 2000; Lomawaima, 1995, 1996). In many ways, the purpose was to “kill the Indian and save the man.” In the process, American Indian communities have come to distrust these institutions. How are institutions of higher education articulating the ways that they are different now than they have been in the past? How do these institutions show enough humility to listen to a community and offer a piece of themselves to address these enduring struggles? How do these institutions make amends for the work they has done to create monolingual speakers or citizens who do not return home to tribal communities? What measures are being put into place to make the institutions more welcoming and to become better hearers of the communities? Are institutions capable of practicing humility when their structures are rooted in elitism? If so, what will the humility look like, and how will institutional cultures adapt to allow for the humility? Institutions of higher education must participate in the process of addressing the enduring struggles of which they are a part for many American Indian communities. It is to that potential vision that I now turn in the conclusion, and I offer remedies for institutions of higher education that want to participate in higher education for the public good.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Holland and Lave (2001) argue:

In the course of local struggles, marginalized groups create their own practices. Participants in these groups both are identified by these practices and often identify themselves as “owners” of them. These practices thus provide the means by which subjectivities in the margins of power thicken and become more developed and so more determinant in shaping local struggles (p. 19).

The response to the tribal nations’ local and enduring struggles put forth above is creative and rooted in a tribal belief that the community must adapt and adjust to meet the issues their citizens face. I have outlined one such response, and how different members in the same community countered it. Still, higher education for

the public good must articulate its place in society, and become a viable option for communities that have been marginalized and are engaged in enduring struggles.

The vision of higher education for the public good is one that must be symbiotic between institutions of higher education and marginalized communities. Institutions of higher education, in order to articulate their place in society, must be not only useful to society, but also viewed that way by many of their detractors. What, then, can these institutions do to make themselves seem as useful as they can be? First, higher education for the public good must be based in a philosophy of humility. As important as we, as academics, think our institutions are, we must recognize that there are forms of knowledge that are thousands of years old that communities rely on for guidance and operation. We cannot think that because we have knowledge based in “scientific” understanding, that our knowledge is better or superior. What can we learn from these communities and their knowledge sets? How do we ask questions as learners to improve our own ability to teach others? I believe that higher education for the public good must be rooted in both teaching and learning. Returning to the argument I made earlier in this chapter, institutions must develop the ability to hear communities and to address the needs in ways that make sense for the communities. Institutions of higher education must become hearers *and* learners in order to promote higher education for the public good.

Communities too must see that institutions of higher education can be successfully used to assist them in their enduring and local struggles. Utilizing “scientific knowledge” in ways that make sense for these communities is an effective tool in fighting for justice. In the example involving Heather’s community, the use of soil samples, geological studies, computer simulations, and medical references was invaluable for the new negotiations of a contract. Importantly, the institution of higher education—and its staff—was guided by the community in its search. The focused nature of the studies and the fact that they were rooted in community-oriented ideas and agendas is one key aspect of higher education for the public good. Community epistemologies and ontologies must be the driving force behind the work that is accomplished. I do not mean here to argue that institutions of higher education lose their sense of independence and ability to drive their own agendas. I mean to argue that higher education for the public good must be a negotiation between communities and institutions that focuses on specific goals outlined by the communities.

Finally, institutions of higher education and communities need to see that some of their goals are more congruous than originally imagined. In this case, Heather’s issues of justice and scholarship drove the community, the institution and its faculty. Justice and scholarship need not be incongruous. In fact, higher education for the public good recognizes that scholarship should incorporate components of justice, and be focused on serving the public and community good.

Ultimately, local and enduring struggles can be addressed through community sets of knowledge and those coming from institutions of higher education. Higher education for the public good is the entity through which many of these struggles are addressed and managed.

Heather's case is one example of how the connections between scholarship and justice coalesce toward a common good. The next steps for this conversation are rooted in institutions of higher education recognizing their role in the oppression of many marginalized communities and focusing on ways to end the marginalization. This admission, along with a plan toward working with communities to end enduring struggles, is the future of higher education for the public good.

Endnotes

1. I am an enrolled member of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina.
2. Due to space constraints, I do not offer an extensive overview of my methods and methodology. For a more detailed treatment, please see Brayboy, 1999 and Brayboy, 2000.
3. Since 1996, I have conducted over 100 interviews, and conducted hundreds of observations. I also have several hundred e-mail correspondences with the participants in the study. In this chapter, I am relying on interviews, observations and electronic mail correspondence with the former student and several tribal members.
4. Reviewers have pushed me to think about whether students who attended Ivy League institutions are indicative of other students who may have attended schools that are not considered "Ivy League" or "elite." In response, it is important to point to the fact that a study that focused on the experiences of seven students is limited in its scope and generalizability; however, these students struggled with how to make sense of who they were both as cultural beings and as students in a rigorous academic environment. I believe that many marginalized students at all institutions, including Historically Black Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities, must—at some point—make sense of how to connect these issues. The work of scholars of color point to the fact that faculty of color, at all types of institutions must also try to make sense of similar issues (Smith, 2004; Turner & Meyers, 2001). I am left with the question: Are the experiences the same? Certainly not; however, there are some similarities that connect many of the participants.
5. One issue with this vision, clearly, is that it may be in and of itself contradictory, yet I do not believe it must be this way. Like privilege, justice is not necessarily a zero sum game. That is, in order for one person or group to gain privilege or justice, it must come from another person who holds it. On the contrary, concepts like privilege and justice must be less like a limited amount of goods and services, and more like an endless bounty of items from which to choose. In the case of equity and justice, I believe that institutions and society must take a long, hard look at these issues and, in conjunction with those communities who have been oppressed, marginalized, and disempowered, work through a plan to help them empower themselves. Institutions and society have long been at the heart of reinforcing social stratification and segregation; higher education for the public good calls for society and institutions to cease these reinforcements and move toward more equity and justice throughout our communities.

Critical Issues in Higher Education

6. The concept of hearing is an important one that researchers and academics may not consider as carefully as we should. For well-conceptualized notions of hearing see Williams (1991), Delgado-Bernal (1997), and Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001).
7. At the request of the communities, I do not identify them. One leader in a community told me, "Many nations have similar problems. The point is that we have ways that we are trying to deal with this. Other nations may or may not use these strategies, but the struggles and the war is the same." I honor the request for these nations to remain anonymous to the larger public.
8. This case is clearly different than creating a national team of elite athletes; in this case, this is a desperate measure at ensuring survival for a community under siege.
9. Not every child was looked at this way. Another person involved in the process told me, "We need people who can do many things, so having a good mechanic is just as important as having a good doctor is just as important as having people who can do many things." The tribal council and elders chose a few young students every year to engage in the process; importantly, many who they thought would be good at one occupation, chose to do something entirely different. This is not a process that is embraced by everyone on the community, and not all young people are willing to do what they are steered toward. My intention here is to focus on a few students who are engaged in this process toward meeting the enduring and local struggles head on.
10. It is important to note here that the work was well received by academic colleagues and was published in a variety of scholarly journals. On the surface, the professor is a well respected academic in his field; underneath the surface, the work served to assist the community in its enduring struggles.
11. The personal costs are not uncommon for individuals like Heather who serve their communities, but do so in such a controversial manner. Having degrees from elite institutions, coupled with the sense of what that means for her, has been personally crippling. This has been true for several other individuals who participated in my original study. Each has "mortgaged" him or herself for the good of the community. By mortgaging, I mean that they pay, in self interest, much more personally so that the community can face its struggles head on. The personal costs are tremendous; yet, the community benefits.

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