Journeys of Resilience: American Indian Students with Disabilities
Overcoming Barriers to Pursue Higher Education - Chapters 1, 5, & 6

Citation:
Overcoming Barriers to Pursue Higher Education (dissertation). ProQuest, Ann Arbor, MI.

Chapter 1: Introduction

• The author avows that the intersection of American education and First Nations historically have adverse effects that are still evident in the 21st-century; acts of ethnocide and genocide was committed by the American federal government on First Nations peoples, with evidence of the use of biological warfare (i.e., smallpox) in the seventeenth century.

• The author contends that the social model of the 1960s, defining disability as a result of environmental influences instead of evaluating the origins of the impairment within the individual; when pursuing tertiary education, students (i.e., FNSD) experience discrimination in the medical, social models.

• The author asserts that FNSD can be unfamiliar with the transition between culture and higher education, as first-generation students; educators can develop an atmosphere that empowers students (i.e., FNSD) to confidently negotiate the institutional environment by completing activities, tasks, and obligations.

• The author attests that the impact from prejudices, discriminations, and, at times, ethnocide created a negative residual effect on families’ funds of knowledge (i.e., lived experiences), resulting in the perpetuation of barriers that hinder marginalized communities (i.e., First Nations and people with disabilities) opportunities for positive, successful growth.

• The author substantiates that studies need to be aware of the unique customs, histories, and traditions of marginalized communities (i.e., First Nations and people with disabilities) while conducting the research, limiting implicit biases; failure to integrate a lens of marginalized communities in research perpetuates the Western paradigm of the previous centuries, creating a direction that limits collective interests.

• The author believes that there is a profound necessity to increase awareness of marginalized communities intersectionalities and the rationale of a dominant narrative’s categorical determinants that are perpetuating an era of discrimination and prejudices; educators, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers must re-examine the rationale of identifiers and systems that were developed, at times, during an era of segregation, and incorporate the counter-narratives of the marginalized communities.

Chapter 5: Findings
• The author affirms that students’ cultural identity can serve as their knowledge and are assets that can be beneficial in an educational context, allowing a cohort to become aware of multiple lived experiences.

• The author maintains that students (i.e., First Nations) encounter barriers within higher education that are impacted by financial aid, cultural disconnect, and family responsibilities; six barrier themes are prevalent in the analysis of students (i.e., First Nations students with disabilities - FNSD) pursuing higher education and their resilience, which are: (1) disability; (2) knowledge of college; (3) ability to navigate; (4) special education; (5) social-cultural and Intersectional barriers; and (6) financial barriers.

• The author avows that members of marginalized communities (i.e., people with disabilities) are affected by the societal construction of normalcy by experiencing ‘othering’ in a variety of contexts; experiences by P-20 students indicated that there is a necessity to develop a framework that increases student awareness of the diversity of funds of knowledge (i.e., lived experiences) in the local, state, federal, and global levels.

• The author expresses the necessity to conceptualize, design, and develop courses that allow all students access to the instructor(s), resources, and evaluations; support during the k-12 education experience increases students’ (i.e., First Nations and people with disabilities) resilience through families that model loving, compassionate, and nurturing environment.

• The author avows that the dualism in education (i.e., general and ‘special’ education) creates barriers based on a multitude of factors, such as
  1. development of underserved entitlements,
  2. limitation of learning,
  3. constricted to a limited learning environment,
  4. the experience of programs that are ineffective and relevant,
  5. limiting resources to interventions that support student success, and
  6. experiencing institutionalized ‘othering’ in placement (physical and virtual).

• The author supports the necessity to include the awareness of students’ intersectionality to increase awareness in the conceptualization, development, and implementation of a learning experience (physical or virtual) that allows members of marginalized communities (i.e., First Nations and people with disabilities) the ability to limit ‘othering’ and stereotyping.

• The author substantiates that members of marginalized groups (i.e., First Nations) can engage in an autonomous journey of self-authorship, allowing the individual the opportunity to become aware of multiple perspectives throughout multiple communities, learning customs, traditions, and linguistics to bridge the gap of knowledge and awareness.
The author maintains that students (i.e., First Nations) experience residual effects from colonization; America’s education systems (i.e., P-20 institutions) are influenced by policies and regulations of an era that perpetuated discrimination and inequality.

The author validates that there are three layers of identity markers that represent individuals’ funds of knowledge, which are

1. association of kinship (i.e., heritage affiliation through families’ funds of knowledge);
2. level of connection to customs and traditions of the associated community; and
3. the relationship with a community based on similar associations.

The author affirms that there is a necessity to expose students to the inaccuracy of labels and continued linguistic association that perpetuates the continued use of terms, such as First Nations peoples who originate from North America labeled with people from the sub-continent of India, Indians.

The author holds that desire, faith (spirituality), and hope create the links that sustain students' ability to develop resilience to pursue tertiary education; student connection to the community allows for the opportunity to become a pillar in the bridge that perpetuates the community's continued positive growth.

Chapter 6: Discussion & Implications

The author attests that the connections to the community allow students to learn about heritage, ceremonies, communal responsibilities, language, ontological kinship, relationship with the land, and traditions.

The author affirms that cultural resilience is related to cultural competence, gender roles, religion, values, and spirituality; unfortunately, there are incidences when students are unaware of their personal identity and need guidance to navigate the complexity of cultural awareness.

The author asserts that acknowledgment of the critical race tenet of the intersectionality framework allows students, members of the cohort, and instructors to develop an awareness of macro and micro constructs that create barriers, projection stereotypes.

The author avows that academic resilience is a continual process supported by cultural, environmental, and community contexts and students’ funds of knowledge (i.e., individual factors, lived experiences, and family’s experiences).

The author maintains that understanding students’ funds of knowledge are central to the awareness of individual beliefs, customs, traditions, philosophies, and values, developing a framework that parallels the ability to create an inclusive learning environment (physical or virtual).
• The author substantiates the necessity to employ critical analysis of institutional policies, programs, and systems that perpetuate the barriers of marginalized communities (i.e., First Nations and people with disabilities).

• The author supports the necessity of the counter-narrative addressing the socially constructed perceptions of marginalized groups (i.e., stereotypes); acknowledgment of counter-narratives creates awareness and allows all participants the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives.

• The author believes that Merge (see Noam Chomsky’s Science of Language for more about Merge) of multiple lenses empower students with the opportunity to analyze critically (i.e., critical theory) the social and institutional conditions that create barriers for marginalized groups, resulting in interest convergence.

• The author surmises that students’ funds of knowledge (i.e., personal, sociocultural, trauma, and college knowledge) must be considered to allow all students to participate in an autonomous education journey that limits the influence of social constructions of era oppression and discrimination.

• The author attests that identity is a continuum (author plans on developing more studies on identity continuum) that is fluid within communities that allow individuals to develop adaptability before pursuing objectives (i.e., goals) beyond the community, developing a more profound understanding of the connection to beliefs, customs, heritage philosophies, and traditions.

• The author emphasizes the necessity to acknowledge the representation of variations within communities (i.e., visible and invisible disability); for example, there are approximately 567 federally recognized tribal nations that have a continuum of beliefs, customs, heritage philosophies, and traditions that are similar and unique in multiple contexts.

• The author maintains that the development of an experience (physical or virtual) allows participants the opportunity to engage in a process that embraces storytelling through the transmission of knowledge, customs, culture, and traditions.

• The author maintains the identifying individual intersectionality (positionality) fosters the ability to develop research that becomes an expression that works “for or with” (limiting the “about” approach) the communities.