

WHO IS AN INDIAN?
Race, Blood, DNA, and the Politics of Indigeneity in the Americas

ABSTRACTS

ABSTRACTS (in alphabetical order by author surname)

Taíno Reflections: African Legacy in the American Indigenous

José Barreiro

This paper will explore the apparent accusations of anti-Black sentiment made against the contemporary Taíno movement by several scholars in the field of Puerto Rican Studies, many of who see the claim to Taíno identity as a negation or attempted escape from Blackness. The material for this paper is based on interviews presenting a range of opinions by leaders and members of different organizations that constitute this movement. In addition, I will consider the political impact of recent mitochondrial DNA surveys conducted in Puerto Rico that claim to show that 61% of contemporary residents of the island possess Pre-Columbian indigenous ancestry. The paper will also present evidence of past or historical uses of "indio" identities to obscure Black Caribbean identities—in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

Beothuk and/or Mi'gmaq?

Dennis A. Bartels and Alice L. Bartels

It is widely believed that the last Newfoundland Beothuk perished in 1829. But recent research suggests that the genetic material of the Beothuk is indistinguishable from that of contemporary Newfoundland Mi'gmaq and from that of the Innu of Labrador. This discovery has implications for the issue of genetic versus social construction of aboriginality and indigeneity. It also has implications for the current attempt by Mi'gmaq in the Federation of Newfoundland Indians to gain Status under the Indian Act.

“How Much Indian are You?” A Cross-border Perspective

Philip C. Bellfy

Beginning with the legal “definitions” of “race” as it is applied in modern, Western society, this paper will explore the question of indigenous identity as it relates to blood-quantum, tribal membership, self-identification, and other markers, especially as these markers are defined differentially in the United States and Canada. As the author is a low-blood-quantum tribal member in the US, the paper will explore these definitions of the “Indian” through the author’s personal experience as well as from examples drawn from the writings of several other Aboriginal People –from both within and outside the academy.

Law, Nationality, Blood and the Cherokee Resurgence

Julia M. Coates

“Legal” definitions are often overlooked in discussions of indigeneity, while race and culture demand greater attention. Yet many tribal governments in the United States regard legal definitions not as artificially imposed from external colonizing institutions, but as internally achieved definitions of “nationality” and their sovereign statuses. While its lack of quantum standards or cultural requirements are frequently not understood by non-Indians and derided by other tribal nations, the Cherokee Nation has continued to assert that nationality derived from their specific history of tribal citizenship is a more inclusive category for contemporary times than race or cultural markers. Based on interviews from a particularly challenging group of Cherokee nationals, the 60% of the citizenry living outside the tribal core in northeastern Oklahoma, this paper examines the potential of “nationality” as a basis of self-identification for those Cherokees in diaspora, and the role the concept of “citizen” plays in contemporary Cherokee resurgence.

Introduction: Sighting and Certifying Indigeneity in the Americas and the Prospects for Moving Beyond Race

Maximilian C. Forte

The introductory chapter aims to outline the panorama for comparison of cases from across the Americas, the central concepts of the project, its primary objectives and key questions, the positions adopted by the authors with respect to the key questions, a review of the most relevant literature, and the main theoretical conclusions derived from the collection of papers. This is followed by a synthesis of the chapters that follow in the volume.

A Heritage Beyond Race: Positioning Carib Indigeneity in Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago

Maximilian C. Forte

Racializations of identities in Trinidad were institutionalized and regulated in conjunction with broader political economic processes shaping the British colony from the 1800s onwards. Indigenous identity was strictly governed given the economic status associated with Mission Indians. Miscegenation was a formal basis for excluding individuals from the rights and status obtaining to mission residence. Purity of blood, however measured, became the norm for assigning or claiming indigenous identity. Over a century later, while racial notions of identity persist, current Carib self-identifications stress indigeneity as a cultural heritage, a body of practices, and recognition of ancestral ties that circumvent racial ideologies.

Indian Enough? The Consequences and Contradictions of Selecting Indigenous Students in South America

María Elena García

The Program for Training in Intercultural Bilingual Education for Andean Countries (PROEIB-Andes) is a master’s program based out of Cochabamba, Bolivia and supported by international development agencies. Since 1996 this program has trained indigenous students from at least six different South American countries with the aim of creating a critical mass of indigenous professionals who will work toward the improvement of indigenous lives through the advancement of an intercultural education agenda. This paper explores the production, negotiation, and

transformation of indigenous identities at the PROEIB. Specifically, I discuss the selection process for this program, through which indigenous applicants are expected to demonstrate their indigeneity in order to be admitted into the PROEIB. I also discuss the implications of this process for students as they negotiate racial, cultural, and linguistic positionings during their time at the program. Finally, I situate these dynamics within a broader transnational frame, focusing on the impact these have had on indigenous professionals working in various governmental and non-governmental spaces.

The Canary in the Coal Mine: What Sociology Can Learn from American Indians

Eva Marie Garrouette

I will focus on three case studies involving claims for recognition as American Indian. The selected case studies highlight controversies involving (1) the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe of Massachusetts, (2) Kennewick Man, and (3) organizations marketing DNA testing services to establish racial ancestry. In each instance, I examine claims to ethnic authenticity, followed by counter-claims and subsequent disputes; I will show how participants may invoke a range of strategies for identity construction and deconstruction. These case studies illustrate how ambiguous ethnic boundaries can be at the margins and especially when there are reasons, such as economic resources, to justify claims and counter-claims about group membership. The experiences of American Indians may represent the “canary in the coal mine” that predicts experiences that other Americans, particularly mixed-race individuals, may increasingly confront.

Is “Indianness” Even Necessary? The Nationhood Struggles of Federally Unrecognized Algonquins in Eastern Ontario

Bonita Lawrence

With the development of the Ottawa Valley land claim since the 1990s, federally unrecognized Algonquins, after a century of being swamped by settlers and facing extreme assimilation pressures, have been forced to negotiate nationhood in conjunction with the one existing Ontario Algonquin reserve. The resultant reshaping of contemporary Algonquin identity has highlighted divisions between the one Algonquin community which lives under the Indian Act and the far greater numbers of Algonquins who are federally unrecognized, or “non-status.” The Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, whose primary identity for many years has been “Indian”, see Algonquin identity entirely through the legal regime governing Indianness in Canada. However, non-status Algonquins, for whom Indianness has been a submerged and silenced identity, are experiencing a resurgence of identity, not as “Indians”, but as Algonquins. Conflicting views of Algonquin identity, of the importance of the Indian Act—and indeed, of Indianness, are rife among the different communities.

Encountering Indigeneity: International Funding of Indigenous Organizations in Peru

José Antonio Lucero

This paper seeks to understand how international non-governmental organizations select indigenous development partners and what effects they have on the construction of Indianness. Building on prior field research on indigenous social movements in Ecuador and Bolivia, the paper examines the interaction between Oxfam America and two indigenous political

organizations in Peru. Comparing two different experiences, one which resulted in the consolidation of a strong Andean organization, and another which led to organizational fragmentation, this paper examines the ways in which international funds and actors become both targets and terrains of cultural political activity. In an interactive process of legitimation, actors on both sides of the development encounter shape discourses over the role of foreign aid and the content of indigeneity. Indigenous actors, in the strategic plans of development agencies, are distinguished in terms of representativity and political effectiveness. The contestation and negotiation over “development” and “indigeneity” reveal the need to understand how both are constructed across local and global scales.

“Inuitness” and Territoriality in Canada

Donna Patrick

This paper provides a Canadian perspective on the question of ‘who counts’ as a member of an Indigenous group in Canada, focusing on the Inuit. Drawing on my experience conducting collaborative research in Inuit communities, in the North and in urban centres, I examine the complexities of racialized Inuit identities in terms of heritage, territoriality, and Aboriginal-state relations. My analysis highlights the discursive construction of ‘Inuitness’ based on ancestry, cultural practice, and relationships to land as opposed to ‘biologized’ Indigeneity.

Locating Identity: The Role of Place in Chorotega Identity in Costa Rica

Karen Stocker

In the absence of a legal definition of “indigenous” in Costa Rica, the implicit definition in the North Western province of the country has become “one who resides in a reservation.” However, various other interpretations of the label exist both within and outside of the Chorotega reservation. Social class and approximation to stereotypical views of what an indigenous person looks like also play a role in individuals’ working definitions of indigenous identity as does the social location and relative power of the person providing the definition. This chapter will address how various residents of the Chorotega reservation, those who live just outside the reservation, scholars, legal discourse, historical discourse, and those who have inhabited or studied other Costa Rican reservations have defined indigenous identity in contradictory ways, and in manners that have had varying consequences for those labeled as Chorotega in Costa Rica.

DNA.coms: Genetics and (Native American) Race On-line

Kimberly Tallbear

Roughly 15 companies market “Native American DNA” tests to the public. Two companies market the “paternity test” directly to US tribes and Canadian First Nations. I focus on five companies that target the “Native American identity market”. I examine their scientific-cultural claims in marketing texts and imagery that tie Native American racial/tribal identity to DNA. I analyze how each company wields one of two overlapping categories, “race” or “tribe”, as objects of science, when they are primarily historical, political, and cultural categories. Finally, I look at how several companies target the political arena of tribal/First Nation enrollment and rights.

Does Identity Make an Indian? The Retreat of Anthropology

Jonathan W. Warren

In studying Indian resurgence in Brazil I found that one of the primary reasons for the upsurge in the Indian population was a shift in anthropological thought. The Brazilian constitution mandates that an anthropologist produce an official report ruling on the legitimacy of a given community's claims to Indianness and this report usually determines the judiciary's opinion. In the past few decades, Brazilian anthropologists have moved away from a definition of Indianness that required biological and cultural purity to a Barthian position in which self-identity is sufficient. Consequently this has helped to produce an upsurge in the number of federally recognized Indian communities in Brazil. Given the stakes—land, social services and most importantly the legitimacy of the Indigenous movement—is it wise for anthropology to wash its hands of the messy business of judging Indianness by allowing communities to make the decision-making? Is Indianness simply a question of identity? What will the likely consequences be of anthropology's retreat?