

| Week 4 (SKYPE Conference Call / Lecture) Feb 5 – 11 – SUPPLEMENT |   |
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| Class Exercise:  | <p><b>Modern American Indian Communities:<br/>Political &amp; Demographic Trends</b></p> <p>Read this statement from <i>The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development</i> (<a href="http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hpaied">www.ksg.harvard.edu/hpaied</a>)</p> <p>“American Indians face enormous economic, social, and political challenges. When compared to the US non-Indian population, American Indians suffer from lower incomes, lower wealth, lower educational attainment, greater unemployment, higher death rates, and greater family disintegration; indeed, it is telling that four of the five poorest counties in the US are located on Indian reservations. At the same time, however, a growing number of America's 560-plus tribes are ending cycles of poverty, dependence, and their related socioeconomic ills. These emerging nations are crafting futures that look refreshingly different than those of decades and centuries' past. What explains why some tribes are breaking away while others remain impoverished? And, critically, what can the American Indian experience teach us about poverty reduction and socioeconomic development in other contexts?”</p> <p>While the statistics cited here might be factually correct, think critically about this statement – what possible biases shape the Harvard Project’s overall work with American Indian communities (for instance, how does the Harvard Project / mainstream U. S. culture define “family”? Measure wealth or “success”? View the past and/or progress? How do American Indians?)?</p> <p>The Harvard Project also stresses “dependency” as being at the root of current American Indian “problems” / challenges. Think about what we have learned about American Indian – Federal Government relationships over time - and the modern American Indian retribution movement. Is “dependency” a fair description of that relationship?</p> <p>Although Harvard is an internationally respected institute of higher education, its recent approaches to work with American Indian communities has been questioned. Read the following article to gain a greater sense of some of the debate at Harvard (we will review Harvard’s 350 year history of American Indian ‘schooling’ in later modules).</p> <p>“Sept. Remarks Resurface” <a href="http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=507229">www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=507229</a></p> |

The Harvard Project contends, based on its research, that three factors are critical to “sustainable” American Indian community development:

**Sovereignty** -when tribes make their own decisions about what approaches to take and what resources to develop . . . .The effective exercise of sovereignty is manifested in many ways, from tribal control over resource management and tribally designed economic development strategies to tribal administration of health care and other social services.

**Institutions** - assertions of sovereignty must be backed by capable institutions of governance . . . . Stable political institutions and policies, fair and independent mechanisms for dispute resolution, a separation of politics from day-to-day business management, a capable bureaucracy and a strategic orientation are institutional attributes that are critical.

**Culture** - Given a diversity of Native cultures and circumstances, tribes are challenged to equip themselves with institutions (e.g., constitutions, economic systems, etc.) that fit their unique societies.

(for more information on The Harvard Project’s findings – and their suggestions for more sustainable development, view [Keys to Nation Building in Indian Country](#))

It is important to consider that these are the traits / assets that The Harvard Project has identified as critical to American Indian sustainable development. In general, The Harvard Project emphasizes *economic* sustainability (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable\\_development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_development) for a more broad definition of “sustainable development”). What traits / assets do you think are critical for sustainable community development? Which take priority?

As reading from *Killing the White Man’s Indian* suggests, some tribes have had an easier time merging their beliefs and traditions with “mainstream” American values (now and in the past) than others. Although **culture** (values and beliefs and traditions) is one of the ways that American Indian are defined within our society, it is important to recognize that **culture is not static**. What happens when American Indian culture transitions (or regenerates) in ways that mainstream culture finds disagreeable? Think about the short film on Indian casino development we watched.

### **Black Indians**

Heredity, roughly approximated “blood percentages,” adoption, and shared inhabitation of certain lands / participation in community life are some of the other ways that American Indians have been defined (and/or have defined themselves) in the U. S. over time. Like all racial definitions, how American Indians are defined

racially is highly subjective – and it has also shifted over time.

*(note: the following is adopted from [www.progenealogists.com/nativeamerican.htm](http://www.progenealogists.com/nativeamerican.htm) & [www.blackindians.com](http://www.blackindians.com))*

For example, the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek (a.k.a Muscogee), and Seminole Indian tribes were called “the Five Civilized Tribes” by mainstream culture because they lived in (or were willing to adapt) European style settlements as farmers and planters, built stone and brick buildings and even owned slaves (these tribes were granted the right to own slaves as a reward and means to speed assimilation with mainstream culture). They also dressed in a more European style than the Plains Indians and had forms of government that were more recognizable to white settlers [think about the assets that The Harvard Project values].

Many Eastern tribal members particularly Cherokee, married people of European descent and so were “mixed bloods” even before 1800 (many tribal members also mixed with slaves and freedmen – a trend that the government actively sought to discourage). Despite efforts to assimilate the Eastern Tribes, it was eventually decided that the best policy would be to send the Civilized Tribes (for “their own protection” or simply to free up land for white settlers) West to reservations.

The Five Tribes were removed from their traditional homelands in the eastern United States in a series of forced removals, beginning in the 1830s. These forced removals are commonly referred to as “The Trail of Tears” – often, tribal slaves and freedmen still associated with these communities participated in these relocations. In other instances, mixed heritage tribal members choose to identify themselves as simply white or black (and not Indian) to avoid removal to the West.

Despite the severity of the move West, with relocation was the promise of new commonly-held tribal land in continuity - however foreign, inhospitable and/or ill-suited that land was for the Eastern Tribes (or anyone). Yet, within a generation, this promise of non-trespassed tribal land was broken. The federal government (via the Dawes Act) began a policy of dividing tribal held lands into small homesteads allotting these lands to individuals (once again to speed assimilation , and in order to address what the mainstream culture saw as the failures of the reservation system).>

On June 27, 1898, an act of Congress authorized a Commission headed by Senator Henry L. Dawes to determine who was eligible for tribal membership and land allotment within the Five Civilized Tribes. The result of this commission eventually produced what is called the “Dawes Rolls.” The Dawes Rolls attempted to legislate who or who wasn’t a tribal member based on a rough approximation of blood percentage ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawes\\_Rolls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawes_Rolls)).

As part of the allotment process, freedmen (all slaves had been emancipated in the U. S. at this point) of the Five Civilized Tribes were adopted into their respective tribes and were also given land allotments. Yet, descendants of freedmen are not able to become tribal citizens or receive any tribal benefits (unless they meet the tribe’s individually set blood percentage standards). While it is likely that freedmen had some percentage of American Indian blood, they were not listed with a blood percentage on the Dawes Rolls

It’s common knowledge that the Dawes enrollment process was fraught with errors and fraud.. There were whites who bribed their place on the rolls so they could get land allotments, and there were some freedmen descendants with large percentages of Indian blood who were denied tribal benefit and/or full citizenship status. Yet, the

Dawes Rolls is still in use today, and it is the only source accepted by any of the Five Civilized Tribes for obtaining present day citizenship.

Read "Blood Feud," to gain a greater sense for current tribal identification issues – and/or how new technology is fueling the debate.

[www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.09/seminoles.html](http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.09/seminoles.html)

Recently, the Cherokee Nation voted to revoke the tribal citizenship of an estimated 2,800 descendants of the people the Cherokee Indians once owned as slaves. This vote represents both the growing sovereignty of Indian tribes (including the ability of tribes to adjust the standards for tribal membership) and the external and internal political forces that are constantly at play in defining – and re-defining American Indians and American Indian communities.

Read:

"Cherokees vote to revoke membership of freedmen"

[www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1096414638](http://www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1096414638)

"Future unclear for 'freedmen' descendants" [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17442676/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17442676/)

Although accusations of racism have been launched against the Cherokee tribe because of this recent vote, at least one pundit has charged that the real issue is money and/or greed– and who is entitled to the tribe's recent economic gains. Other tribes have experienced similar turmoil in recent year related to economic growth – including battles over who is entitled to tribal benefits including healthcare, housing, and access to jobs. In some American Indian communities, tribal enrollment / citizenship qualifications have been increased by the tribal government - in order to both limit the pot of members claiming benefits and/or to reframe the local political environment.

As these articles suggest, a myriad of issues are pushing American Indian population growth – beyond high birth rates in certain tribes (nearly 50% of the Northern Cheyenne living on the reservation are under the age of 18) To gain a greater sense of some of these various issues, read:

"American Indians on the Rise"

[www.csmonitor.com/2001/1206/p11s1-ussc.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1206/p11s1-ussc.html)

(For actual U. S. census statistics focused to American Indian tribes and specific communities, visit: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

### **Urban Indians**

Territory or lands is yet another way in which American Indians are identified. In the 1950'-60's, it was U. S. policy to relocate American Indians to urban areas (to further speed assimilation). Some 36,000 American Indians were relocated into cities (their tribes and lands dissolved) during this time period.

Read the following commentary to gain a greater sense of some of the issues that urban Indians face:

“Urban Indians in Bush’s Sites”

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/260306\\_urbanindian.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/260306_urbanindian.html)

(The Census also tracks conditions of American Indians in urban (non tribal) areas.)

### **Urban Indianz? On the Rez?**

While in some American Indian communities, anti-black racism can be apparent, many American Indians (like many mainstream whites) have adopted so-called “black” or urban cultural identities – including elements of hip-hop culture and, in some tribal communities, a deep love affair with basketball. There’s also examples of particular American Indian tribes adopting / adapting reggae music and cultural identities - including the isolated Supai Reservation in Grand Canyon region of Arizona (see [www.firethistime.com/en/frameset.htm](http://www.firethistime.com/en/frameset.htm) & [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2822/is\\_2\\_23/ai\\_61837439](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2822/is_2_23/ai_61837439)).

For some American Indians (and others), a black or urban identity (regardless of geographical location) relates to a real or imagined sense of shared oppression with those of African heritage in the U. S. and elsewhere (a slur for American Indians sometimes used is “prairie n-----” – similar to “sand n-----” for people of Middle Eastern descent).

For other American Indians (and others), adoption of this image relates more with a desire for status or certain style – especially, as black or urban image has been celebrated and defined economically in recent years.

Such cultural shifts (esp. the speed of such shifts) can also relate to the growing youth population of certain tribes, increased visitation and travel, and new communications technology.

For fairly recent assessments of tribal economic infrastructure conditions and gains – including related to technology infrastructure, visit [www.eda.gov/Research/NativeAmerican.xml](http://www.eda.gov/Research/NativeAmerican.xml)

### **Housing**

Housing conditions for American Indians can be quite dire. HUD reported in 1996 that 15% of all American Indian households and 28% of American Indian households in Tribal Areas are either overcrowded or lack kitchen or plumbing facilities, as compared to the national average of 5%.

In addition, approximately 29% of American Indian households and 44% in Tribal Areas have a housing affordability problem, as compared to the national average of

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|                         | <p>23% (<a href="http://www.huduser.org/publications/hsgspec/native.html">www.huduser.org/publications/hsgspec/native.html</a>). One factor impacting housing affordability for many American Indians is <b>energy costs</b> (<a href="https://tribalcollegejournal.org/themag/backissues/winter2005/winter2005ambler.htm">https://tribalcollegejournal.org/themag/backissues/winter2005/winter2005ambler.htm</a>)</p> <p>Similar to the Dawes Act (and its allotment of lands to individual households), tribal housing also promotes certain nuclear-family oriented development patterns (similar to U. S. housing policy, in general). On tribal lands, more transitional (such as apartments for singles or young or childless couples) and/or more co-operative housing options (such as duplexes) are limited if non-existent – while single family homes or trailers are more the norm.</p> <p>Beyond fueling housing problems in tribal lands, over-emphasis on detached (or free standing) single family homes (at the expense of other housing options) can also challenge sustainability.</p> <p><b>Urban Eco-Citizenship</b></p> <p><b>In general, rural communities in the U. S., as they currently have developed, have much larger environmental footprints than urban areas. This challenges deeply held opinions about rural vs. urban dwelling and definitions of environmentalism. Think about this in conjunction with the romanticized view of modern American Indians as the stewards of the environment / last hope for the planet. How is environmentalism a part of the “white man’s” / invented Indian?</b></p> <p><b>Read:</b></p> <p><b>Andrew Ligh “Urban Ecological Citizenship”</b><br/><a href="http://faculty.washington.edu/alight/papers/urban.pdf">http://faculty.washington.edu/alight/papers/urban.pdf</a></p> |
| <p>Work to Complete</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Complete the readings included with this module. Write a brief report (5 pages max) indicating factors that you found interesting from each reading – including the first 5 chapters of “Killing the White Man’s Indian” Your paper can simply be a list of descriptive but succinct bulleted points. Your bulleted points could also include questions that the reading raised for you. When applicable, state questions that the reading raises specifically for your independent work with an American Indian community</li></ul> <p>To conclude your paper, relate some of what you learned in this module to how modern American Indian community life was depicted in “Smoke Signals” Submit this report to blackboard by <b>Tuesday, March 26.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What political, cultural &amp; demographic information are you able to find out about the community that you are interested in attempting to complete a distance service project with this semester? More specifically, what reported or probable challenges to sustainability are you able to identify in your particular community? How about possible organizations to partner with in</li></ul>   |

your work (think broadly – but don't contact them yet)?

Develop a briefing powerpoint presentation that summarizes your community research so far (site resources). If you have not been able to complete much research at this point, state your research priorities – what are you interested in finding out more about and how will you attempt to complete these research tasks via distance? Your powerpoint presentation is due posted to blackboard by Sunday, April 1

- Read Chaps 6-8, *Killing the White Man's Indian*
- Review the assignments from Module 3 – Any of the tasks that you have not completed, please attempt to do so now – and email me an update on your work with Module 3.

THANK YOU! WELCOME BACK!