

# The I/Indian Not-In-The-Textbook: Native/Indigenous Post-Structuralism, Critical Methodologies, Epistemologies, and Tribal Realities as Agency toward the Decolonization of the Territorial Divide In American Indian Studies Courses

Alan Lechusza Aquallo



**Abstract:** This article focuses upon how, within American Indian Studies courses, there is a necessary border crossing between territorialized Native and non-Native students. Taking the literal borders of Indian reservations, and repositioning these realities as a metaphor for critical epistemological deconstruction, I argue that there is a necessary educational border crossing which is necessary for Native/Indigenous equity and socio-political justice to be realized and acquired as cultural currency. As students within these courses begin to understand, embrace, and challenge American Indian Studies (AIS) courses, and the dynamics of the discipline, there is a self-defined border crossing between, and within, the Native/Indigenous ideological territories, and literal, physical reservation borders, which the curriculum represents. Each student may – or will – find their own point of critical Native/Indigenous inquiry, from which they are challenged and welcomed to embrace, as well as depart from previous scripted EuroAmerican rhetorical references regarding Native/Indigenous cultures. Following this critical epistemology, for the student participant, a new territory of knowledge, cultural, and expressed understanding from, and about, Native/Indigenous Peoples becomes manifest; a new academic frontier is possible.

Applying this methodology, for academic decolonization, the *i/Indian* image/icon need not exist within the textbook(s); the potential for recognizing and decolonizing the physical reservation borders becomes possible. The realities of Native lives – both historic and contemporary - do matter, beyond these limitations and scripted inclusions within textbooks. Whereas a text may prove as a site of disenfranchisement, inequity, and, tribal marginalization, there, then, lies the necessity for Native V/voices to be heard, reviewed, and function as sovereign references and expressions, which advances beyond the terminal reservation borders as agency.

This article seeks to challenge pre-determined academic references, mis-representations and re-presentations of Native Peoples, read: the *i/Indian* image/icon, as well as providing a critique of how Native/Indigenous realities are, then, able to sovereignly relate to the large non-Native population beyond the limitations of a physical reservation border. Taking note that there is no one single educational methodology, which can be applied within American Indian courses, multiple academic perspectives begin to surface, which address the educational process about Native Peoples. The 3 views of Indian education – anthropological/archeological/ethnographic/historical,

*sympathetic, activist - as I argue, become, and are maintained as antiquated points of articulation, which continue to be employed about Native Peoples, replacing the active dynamics of Native cultures, customs, traditional knowledge, and expressions. This article, therefore, challenges these 3 views of Indian education*

*anthropological/archeological/ethnographic/historical, sympathetic, activist - noting that the classroom, textbook(s), and their references, mis-representations and re-presentation(s) about Native Peoples, need to be decolonized, following the importance, ideology, dialectics and dynamics of tribal sovereignty, equity, and socio-political justice.*

**Keywords:** This article focuses upon how, within American Indian Studies courses, there is a necessary border crossing between territorialized Native and non-Native students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Don't speak about the Indian: The *i/Indian* icon/image inside the textbook

The third essay in this collection aims to work against the academic limitations of the *i/Indian* icon/image as it resides within EuroAmerican textbooks. This essay defines **3 Views** of academic positions as they regard and represent *i/Indian* education, by way of a colonial/settler ideology: the Anthropological/Archeological/Ethnographic/Historian view, the Apologist Sympathizer view, and the Overly Enthusiastic/Blind Activist view. These positions each determine how the *i/Indian* icon/image is and will be related to students – albeit Native or non-Native – relying upon their own embedded biases. In reality, each of these pedagogical approaches constructs a rhetorical educational border around the complex dynamics of tribal histories, often with a limited lexicon and disregard for socio-political equity and tribal sovereignty. Both innocent and not-so-innocent perspectives, each of the **3 Views** traps Native voices in a historic tapestry developed through the writing of Western culture by the hands of the colonial/settler. This academic institutionalized racist operation leaves the *i/Indian*, captured in a repeated traumatic cycle of defeat. This localization of the *i/Indian* icon/image I note as the *Pocahontas Syndrome*. The *Pocahontas Syndrome* dismantles constructed racist histories of Native cultures, while addressing the necessity for relevant, contemporary Native histories.

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\* Correspondence Author

Alan Lechusza Aquallo\*, PhD, Associate Professor American Indian Studies, Palomar College

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Just as Pocahontas has become a victim of EuroAmerican storytelling, captured and reduced to no more than a childish character, this Native critical analysis, then, flip-the-script on the assumptions of power over Native cultures, identity and representations. Taking critical action toward resituating notions of equity, socio-political power, and contemporary inclusion – least of all the value and importance of Native dialogue within academic curriculum - this essay addresses the **3 Views** I identity of Native representation, developed and maintained within texts and academic rhetoric about Native Peoples, in order to provide an academic border crossing from which point new scaffoldings of Indian education can be constructed. Taking holistic charge and agency from tribal sovereignty, cultures/customs, traditions, knowledge and expressions, it befalls upon the current attention of those within the academic arena – both Native and non-Native – to engage such actions for tribal equity and justice so that the uninformed misunderstood reference of and about the *i/Indian* icon/image may no longer endure to be relegated as a diminished relic of antiquated EuroAmerican history.

## II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

**The Textbook and Classroom as a Border Culture – Lesson number one, the Indians were the first inhabitants of America... – WithOut Rezervation (1992)**

“...[a]nd that means returning control of Indian education to tribal nations with additional resources and support so that you can direct your children’s education and reform schools here in Indian Country. And even as they prepare for a global economy, we want children,...learning about their language and learning about their culture,...We want to make sure that continues and we build on that success.” President Obama, July 2014, Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, South Dakota.

“My work focuses on pride in our heritage because the town I grew up in is very racist. I was proud of being Indian, but nothing was supportive of this. There was very little community activity, very little ceremony, very little traditional activity. But I knew something was there and felt something had to be done.” Jean LaMarr, 1992.

The academic territorial limits of the/a textbook, operates and functions – in the hands of a Euro American educational doctrine - as a tool for educational reservation relocation, and assimilation strategies forced upon Native Peoples. The physical realities and limitations of the reservation system<sup>3</sup>, within North America, continues to dominate the acculturated attitudes and stereotypes of, and about, Native Peoples. The realities of these reservation borders serve, not only to limit the presumed mobility of Native Peoples, but further maintain a racist ideology, biased acceptance, and minimal equity/justice in socio-political actions toward Native/Indigenous Peoples. Steaming from generations of socio-political discourse and a have-have not binary, the physical limitations of the reservation system, for Native Peoples, has constructed a divisive discourse placing Native/Indigenous Peoples at the farthest margins of contemporary EuroAmerican ideology. Thus, through the recognition of the reservation system itself, Native/Indigenous Peoples have to not only overcome

the political limitations of these real – and lived - borders, but further must work and strive – in all aspects of life – to present a cultural currency for the larger non-Native population, as well as a global racist perspective. The methodical ideological reality, then, of the Native/Indigenous person surviving within an educational text - as a leverage to present a biased perspective of Native/Indigenous cultures - leads to the possessive obsession with limiting the realities and sovereignty for Native Peoples.

This hyper obsession with the limitations of a Native reference – (mis)use/(mis)represent – positions the “Indian” – or, as it should be viewed as the “Indian-in-the-textbook” – as being a politicized useful idiot icon/image without a sovereign voice. The obsessive objectified, essentialist troupe of a stereotypical *i/Indian*<sup>2</sup>, within scope of an academic environment, is institutionalized to the point that non-Native students often propose diminutive responses to Native cultures without a second thought to ethical or racial insensitivity. Academic structuralism, following a model devoid of Native reality or agency, firms lines of cultural demarcation between Native and non-Native students – let alone marginalizes Native communities which banishes the *i/Indian* into the culturally absent pages of a textbook. Further, at no point in history does a EuroAmerican standard give pause to the physical realities, socio-political inequity and historic racist trajectory of the physical reservation borders, which continue to plague Native/Indigenous Peoples, and, thus, compound a rhetorical hegemony and agency against contemporary Native/Indigenous issues, applying further mental-physical traumatic experiences upon the Indian communities as real, and lived, as the reservation borders themselves. This intent (read: **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT**) against Native/Indigenous realities does not disturb the historic policies and agendas realized with the physical reservation borders themselves. Rather, these applied doctrines of defeat require that Native/Indigenous Peoples struggle to unsettle not only the physical landscape within which they may – or may not, as the larger urban Indian population itself must equally contend with the mental-physical traumas of Euro American socio-political injustice – reside, but, in addition, Native/Indigenous Peoples must work to re-write a racist history of, about, and continued to be told against their cultures and, upon their own ancestral lands.

The existing paradox of the reservation system makes Native Peoples both visible – within a legal limitation – and invisible – outside of EuroAmerican purview. The reservation border structures bind, limit and erase Native/Indigenous cultures. The bind legal limitations of these physical borders obfuscate the complex constellations and dynamics of contemporary Native Peoples. The erasure process forces Native cultures to exist only within a limited domain recognized by EuroAmerican popular culture, and fortified through the EuroAmerican academic hegemony.

The *i/Indian*, then, is bound by a physical border and forced to live within the new reservation of EuroAmerican academia, applying a re-reservation diaspora and consequential existence for the *i/Indian* image/icon. The “vanishing Indian,” finds itself terminally to be an actor within a counterfeit play where it (read: the “Indian”) is both visible – within the legal reservation border structures – and invisible – within the dominant EuroAmerican pop culture gaze. In order to survive beyond both of these limiting borders – physical and academic – the *i/Indian* must border cross and strive to edify itself as an existing construct based upon Native traditions, cultures, customs, histories and expressions.

This **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** is not for the sake of Native/Indigenous self-recognition. Rather, this expressed agency outlines a circular pattern whereas, contemporary Native/Indigenous identities can become visible, socio-politically recognized, and ethically acknowledged by the dominant non-Native population. Through this border crossing agency – applying the required historic and contemporary tribal **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** – the *i/Indian* may – as history will define – be able to exist as a contemporary sovereign, in company and discourse with EuroAmerican ideology, dialectics, and enjoying the benefits of socio-political equity and justice.

Academia holds, at this current state and time, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, a defined post-modern rhetoric, which it applies to the established and foundational EuroAmerican curriculum.

This **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** hegemonic discourse reduces the dynamic energy of any one discipline and, further, obfuscates the multi/interdisciplinary opportunities within the classroom context/environment. When this operational, rhetorical mold is placed around the idea and expressed notion of the Indian in academics, the realities of Native Peoples become essentialized and situated within a curriculum prison, without the possibility of sovereignty or tribal expressive freedom. Therefore, this post-modern EuroAmerican colonial device is a reaction to Native Peoples and may, on the surface, appear to be useful within an academic setting. However, this applied colonial theory, in reality, as an ideological point of contact and educational structure, is nor, nor does not have a focus, support or reference for Native sovereignty or the dynamics of tribal expressions. The EuroAmerican academic landscape maintains barriers of limitations, cloaked as post-modern opportunities, which continue to articulate a structured academic reservation for Native Peoples – which often allows only the fictional *i/Indian* to survive in, and as an image/icon of American popular culture.

Non-Native instructors are often ill equipped to deal with the racialized insensitivities of, and about Native cultures expressed and voiced by students – who may/may not be innocent participants and by-products of a EuroAmerican education – to the extent that a historic text, which in and of itself limits any ability for contemporary Native sovereignty or expressions to take center stage within a pedagogical conversation. This devalued educational approach toward cultural insensitivities – based upon the limitation of accurate tribal histories or contemporary Native cultures – becomes a crutch upon which instructors may often lean. In doing so, as the case may be, the borders of tribal sensitivity, equity and socio-political justice become blurred

to the point of near erasure for the sake of preserving a EuroAmerican educational hegemony. A narrative of Native histories and cultures, taken in part or full, from limited, antiquated texts, establishes an (firm, yet fuzzy?) academic border – a pedagogical reservation – where the *i/Indian* is set to reside, for all his/her academically controlled days. This action develops, and embraces, a Native slave narrative for Native Peoples. This unassuming process does little in the way of articulating, highlighting, or placing emphasis upon contemporary Native sovereignty or the dynamics of tribal cultural expressions. Rather, this Native slave narrative becomes the educational trajectory of knowledge steaming from teacher/instructor to pupil in a possible never-ending cycle of Indian illiteracy. Tribal articulations of knowledge, cultures, customs, traditions and expressions are diminished, by an assumed dominant EuroAmerican academic standard. Pedagogical misguidance formulates structures of resistance, which operate as a Container Culture for contemporary Native identity, ideology, and sovereignty; a politicized metaphor functioning in real-time as an academic reservation for Native Peoples.

In academic environments, there remains an unspoken, yet embraced emphasis upon the educational necessity to be “all knowing,” with regards to tribally related matters. This fallacy is all too often taken-up by non-Native instructors, and, sub sequentially, students. It’s necessary to draw attention to this point of academic/cultural reification, which can be an uncomfortable position for Native/Indigenous Peoples, yet is tribally, socio-politically and justly important to critique and challenge for the currency and multiplicity of tribal sovereignty. By bringing the “Indian-out-of-the-textbook,” a necessary dialogue, then, has the potential to be engaged. No longer is it possible for the *i/Indian* to remain a hallmark of EuroAmerican history. The borders of pedagogical Western hegemony become disturbed. The realities of injustice, racial, bias and bigotry toward Native communities, cultures, and Native sovereign rights are – through this **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** – not a fallacy, nor fanciful historical decorations of the American frontier. The lines of demarcation, which have educationally served as an added reservation territory for Native Peoples within the context of the classroom and ill equipped textbooks, are, then, able to be challenged. This challenge allows liberation within an educational territory for the dynamics of Native/Indigenous sovereignty to be expressed, recognized, understood and – eventually with enough proactive resistance coupled with an honest recognition of equity and socio-political tribal justice – practiced beyond the limited imperialistic colonial terrain of the classroom.

The necessary epistemological incorporation and tribally specific interpretations of **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** can shed a more realistic light upon three views of Indian education: the sympathetic view, the anthropological/historian view, and the activist view.

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Focusing the dynamics of tribal sovereignty specifically through their **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT**, begins to remove an ideological EuroAmerican centrist discourse, which has, for generations, served as the sole structure through which *i/Indians* have been able to exist. The availability of advancing through time, with engaged currency and tribally specific equity and socio-political justice, has not been a liberal prospect for Native/Indigenous People given these EuroAmerican assimilation policies and colonial strategies. This historic process further obfuscates the option or possibility of Native/Indigenous People to co-exist within contemporary non-Native societies. The global-local (read:glocal) realities for Native/Indigenous Peoples continue to be marginalized – at best – and forcibly erased – at most – from these contemporary contexts. The need, then, and now, is ripe for a post-structuralist border crossing ideological dialectic pedagogy firmly embedded within the dynamics of Native/Indigenous sovereignty, cultural expressions, and socio-political equity and justice. This **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** can, with direct, clear, and consistent application, begin to dismantle the divide between Native/Indigenous realities, and the “Indian-from-the-textbook,” which has stood firm as the singular definition(s) and articulation of the long-standing historic borders in EuroAmerican education.

The directives, outlined within the importance of **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT**, and their included necessary interpretations, are not, nor should be confused with an ideological dialectical discourse designed to completely Indigeonize academia. Rather, this perspective – which takes full advantage of the feedback loops between each surrounding border developed and maintained by the three view of Indian education (sympathizer, anthropologist/historian/activist) as borders of an established academic reservation – decolonizes a previous disenfranchised Native identity, (knowledge, cultures/customs, traditions, expressions) and provides the opportunity to erase borders within the classroom as they capture, maintain, and hold a prisoner of time the “Indian-in-the-textbook.” Once fuzzy academic borders, created for the benefit of serving EuroAmerican assimilation strategies and colonial imperialism, which have solidified over time, can, following this tribally specific **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT**, begin to involve a Native/Indigenous V/voice, and discourse in applicable dialogue, without the fear of limiting Native/Indigenous realities, nor reducing the importance of contemporary tribal sovereignty and cultural dynamics. The reservation of the classroom, therefore, begins to fade as the **3 views** of Indian education (read: anthropologist/archeologist/ethnographer/historian, sympathizer, activist) themselves loose their modernist structural hold upon Native/Indigenous contemporary realities.

The cultural capitol, provided to Native/Indigenous Peoples, within the classroom, resides as a deficit. This deficit is largely based upon historic limitations of Native history/histories, taught within the classroom context, that often fade around the Red Power Movement/Era (c. 1970s). This time-honored – and limited - format for teaching courses designed to introduce students to the complexities of American Indian history/histories, cultures/customs, traditions, expressions, and sovereignty, follow an

anthropological structure that, by the basic rhetoric of the discipline, limits Native/Indigenous values – and the active V/voices - to those of a discourse outside of tribal sensitivity. Educators are, most often, taught how to “teach” a singular apologetic view Indian history, following a strict and direct historical line, from pre-contact to the Western Expansion. This linear application of colonialism neglects and looses the valuable educational contact points to discuss the dynamics of Native/Indigenous history/histories to the present. This manner of pedagogical operation, technique, and default process outlines, constructs, and maintains a classroom border, binding Indian/Indigenous histories within a textual (read: textbook and methodology) reservation beyond those of the literal, physical reservations, and without the ability to be realized as contemporaries within the global-local (read: glocal) communities.

In dealing – discussing, illustrating, highlighting – the inter-cultural realities and differences between Native and non-Native communities, the cultural divide becomes glaring and visible. Decades of cultural insensitive actions are satisfied by and from their pop cultural theatrical references – an unjust theatre of the absurd *i/Indian* - for a consuming academic population. Native/Indigenous Peoples remain academic puppets hanging by the threads of limited academic perceptions. This reality demands that Native/Indigenous V/voice(s) be heard and included within these academic conversations. A space for dialogue must begin to emerge – or, at least, the potential for such a perception should, in a post-modern global-local (read: glocal) world.

In navigating how to best understand the rhetorical representation(s) of Native/Indigenous Peoples, within a purely academic environment, multiple lines of demarcation, limitations, and borders begin to take shape: the historical anthropological approach, the overly sympathetic approach, and the activist approach. Each of these approaches formulates a response to the *i/Indian* image/icon, often without the means, nor necessity to engage contemporary Native cultural references. These limited focal points shape the context through which the *i/Indian* icon/image is to be displayed, acculturated and assimilated through EuroAmerican pop culture. The borders around the *i/Indian* image/icon, therefore, do not function to reveal the realities of Native/Indigenous Peoples, nor the multiple dynamics of tribal cultures and sovereignty. Rather, these borders tighten their assumptions and distortions about Native/Indigenous cultures/customs, knowledge, traditions and expressions in such a way as to define tribal sovereignty for, and by, their own non-Native desire. This manner of imperial academic colonialism manifests a EuroAmerican acculturated and assimilated fallacy of, and about Native/Indigenous Peoples, which continues to be shared, taught and passed-down through the generations. By these EuroAmerican academic standards, Native Peoples do not, nor will be able to recover from a scholastic reservation which is compounded through generations of (mis)use and (mis)representation(s).

The result of such academic standards can be surmised as a “follow the text” structure; a default mechanism used more often than not in courses relating to American Indians.

Academics who rely upon antiquated, repeated rhetoric and the bare minimum historical accounts of Indian culture(s) fall victim to producing a textbook and curriculum concept of Native realities. This position states that the reality of what will be taught – about Native/Indigenous Peoples - without any action or engagement toward the current realities, cultural necessities and dynamics of sovereignty for Native/Indigenous Peoples, is, by these trivial academic definitions, the ongoing, simplistic and racialized “truth” about Native/Indigenous Peoples, which, when taught through the EuroAmerican academic paradigm, is – and becomes – the colonizer’s Truth. The tribal V/voice is silenced. Native/Indigenous realities are erased. Itemized points of Indian history are shared as a mechanism to provide a touchstone along the academic trajectory in a linear fashion outlining the dominant colonialist EuroAmerican history, therefore, establishing pop American cultural references of the *i/Indian* as accurate and situated in an academic context without question.

**The Potential for Border Crossings: Applied pedagogical ideology/dialectics founded upon Native/Indigenous realities.**

The **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** of Native/Indigenous sovereignty, and self-determination, function as a dialectic position for discourse within the academic arena. Through this lens, the opportunity can arise for hermeneutic border crossings, thus allowing students to obtain a sense of the dynamic realities from the vast, and various, tribal communities. The “one Indian fits all” romantic stereotype can, then, be reduced – with the intent of eventually being retired completely - in its ongoing use and EuroAmerican pop cultural value. Attention at this level requires that academics lean into the discomfort established and contained within current EuroAmerican biased, scripted history and texts produced for the purpose of generalizing Indian education as recognized by a colonial dialectic. To embrace this discomfort calls into question the necessity for tribal/Native/Indigenous access for students – as much as possible given an individual context. This action of academic border crossing thus provides the existence for resistance against the “one historic Indian,” as well as the “one Indian fits all” narratives. The multiplicities of tribal communities, cultural dynamics and sovereignty, then, become contemporary realities rather than historic fantasies.

It needs be stated that not all student questions regarding Native/Indigenous Peoples, tribal communities, cultural dynamics and sovereignty can be answered through this manner of border crossing. Rather, it becomes important for students to accept the multiplicities of tribal differences, understand the state and various structures of tribal discourse, and realize that Native/Indigenous Peoples are not “hiding” within the limitations of a historic text. Tribal knowledge, cultures, customs, traditions, expressions and sovereignty need to become visible, contemporary attributes, which students need to engage, through active community and academic involvement, participation, and contemporary alignment with a multi-tribal dialogue, a tribal pedagogical articulation, a Native/Indigenous hermetic

agency, and socio-political justice and equity from, and for Native/Indigenous Peoples.

**Native/Indigenous Agency Does Matter: The Importance of Contemporary Tribal Voices for academic Border Crossing**

The complex and dynamic realities of Native/Indigenous social, cultural, and sovereign rights are often usurped by re-presentations of counterfeit tribal identities, histories and narratives, based upon EuroAmerican colonial rhetoric. This action establishes a static academic environment for students, which builds the structures for a bias about – and against – contemporary Indian expectations, rights or even global/local (read: glocal) existence. This stasis denies student interaction and support of Native/Indigenous realities, while fortifying presumptions of tribal cultural identities, histories and narratives, which – through this **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT**- lead to other forms of cultural expulsion and, within the context of EuroAmerican pop culture, a profit leading campaign of exploitation. Students are, then, lead to believe and rely upon socially engrained racial biases against Native/Indigenous realities, identities and narratives. This supported EuroAmerican pedagogical hegemony works toward an absent definition of Native/Indigenous equity, socio-political justice and sovereignty. EuroAmerican academic strategies, therefore, outline a modernist structure of, and how, Native/Indigenous realities, identities and narratives are defined. The practice of cultural assimilation and the termination policies of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century can be viewed as they are solidified within the limitation of a EuroAmerican academic politic. A EuroAmerican modern structuralist ideological foundation denies access, the inclusion, equity, or socio-political sovereign justice for contemporary Native/Indigenous Peoples. Institutional racism, (mis)representations and outdated *i/Indian* histories become the foundation(s) for and upon which academia supplies its understanding of Native/Indigenous cultures, customs, expressions and sovereignty. Non-Native stereotypes, racist projections, and marginalized preconceived notions of an *i/Indian* statistic should – within a 21<sup>st</sup> century academic environment - no longer be applicable, taught nor allowed to be demonstrated models of Native/Indigenous Peoples. Students need to be advised, informed, and allowed to engage with cross/inter/multi-tribal cultural contemporary realities. Taking this Native/Indigenous process toward a cross/inter/multi-tribal cultural contemporary integration and academic agency is – and can be - a first step toward understanding the dynamics of tribal ideologies, Indigenous dialectics, Native identities, tribal historical narratives, and contemporary cultural expressions of Native/Indigenous sovereignty. Through this **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT**, students, instructors and the inclusive academic environment can begin to connect with contemporary tribal realities.

A knowledge base, therefore, built upon Native/Indigenous interests, socio-economic political equity, justice and sovereignty can become more visible, with the trajectory toward the importance of contemporary Native/Indigenous matters, issues and the existence of a Native “Voice,” a vernacular and lexicon embracing the multiple Native/Indigenous identities, histories, and narratives. A vehicle for Native/Indigenous equity, justice, and sovereign rights can, then - through this Native/Indigenous focused **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** - yield a border crossing from a limited *i/Indian* educational context into one with the potential to extend into contemporary Native/Indigenous realities.

### **Toward an Academic Border Crossing, or, trying to dissolve the academic borders:**

The pervasive outline of how the “Indian-in-the-textbook” is presented – which includes the re-reservation placement and standard of the *i/Indian*, established by a EuroAmerican academic rhetorical ethic – positions the power of the protagonist upon that of the instructor/teacher/professor. If, then, the instructor/teacher/professor is situated at the center of the discourse, within a course focused upon American Indians, there need be – or, more importantly, there must be - an upward movement to help develop, and deliver, active discourse and agency for new epistemologies to result that are not only related to Native/Indigenous Peoples, but are further couched within a contemporary American Indian course context. Below the instructor/teacher/professor center would, then, be an integration of the included students, who look at these academic colonial contexts which have a fixed, predetermined, and forced gaze upward toward the instructor/teacher/professor seeking assistance, guidance and knowledgeable clarity, on how best to navigate, understand, and reference contemporary Native/Indigenous issues. The surrounding perimeters are outlined by academic allies/colleagues, on one side, and supporting multi-disciplinary courses/subjects, on the other. These perimeter voices speak to the instructor/teacher/professor, yet remain disengaged and uninvolved in how to speak – and actively listen (applying an agency where there is no subaltern *i/Indian* voice, but an active, engaged Native/Indigenous rhetoric with a living, sovereign Voice) - back from contemporary Native/Indigenous discourse, ideology, dialectics, and new Native/Indigenous epistemologies. This model establishes an academic hegemony defined by EuroAmerican educational standards, which has, and continues to echo a limited academic standard within American Indian Studies courses, therefore keeping contemporary Native/Indigenous Peoples, tribal self-determination, and sovereignty within an academic reservation. As a methodological strategy to dismantle a EuroAmerican academic doctrine which places Native/Indigenous Peoples upon the reservation of the textbook - with limited acknowledgment of contemporary existence, and assumed identities founded upon stereotypes, racism and biased essentialism – it becomes vital that the center of this model be re-designed by, and fulfilled with, Native/Indigenous knowledge, cultures/customs, traditions, expressions, and sovereignty. This central action and tribal agency begins to outline contemporary Native/Indigenous cultural dynamics, self-determination and socio-political

equity, justice and sovereignty. The original interpretation and model – as stated previously - positioned the EuroAmerican academic instructor/teacher/professor at the center of *i/Indian* knowledge; a powerful centrist view which supplies colonial dominance over inclusive *i/Indian* matters and issues, both historical and contemporary. Native/Indigenous knowledge, therefore, remains as a by-product of EuroAmerican knowledge; the *i/Indian* is left to reside within the textbook, and exist as a fantasy based upon pop culture definitions, distortions, and marginally accurate historical references. This fundamental (dare we reveal this attitude and application as a mistake?) formalized the canon of the “Indian-in-the-textbook” through which – for generations – the *i/Indian* has only been allowed to be viewed, or exist. This centrist view, based upon a EuroAmerican academic modernist structure, created, put in motion, formalized, supported, and maintained the **3 Views** of *i/Indian* education: the Anthropological/Archeological/Ethnographic/Historian view, the Apologist Sympathizer view, and the Overly Enthusiastic/Blind Activist view. Each viewpoint is designed by generational rhetorical references of, and about, *i/Indian* cultures (read: a singular reference of *i/Indians/Native/Indigenous Peoples*). Each of these **3 Views** of Native/Indigenous education have, and continue, to work in concert with each other, challenging one another for the prized position of being considered the “most accurate” view point of Native/Indigenous academic knowledge, and, therefore, actually extending the limited borders of contemporary realities regarding Native/Indigenous Peoples. Though each of these **3 Views** of *i/Indian* education would like to believe that they are, in fact, working for, and in the best interest of Native/Indigenous Peoples, each, in their **ACTION-MEANING-CONTENT/CONTEXT** is, by their own self-proclaimed definitions, fortifying, reifying, and expanding the borders of an academic reservation defined by the structures of the textbook(s) where the *i/Indian* – and all their shamed EuroAmerican falsified “glory” - is left to reside, in academic poverty and generational disgrace.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **Postlude: Indigenous critical theory and the unmasking of educational defeat**

While writing this article, the included critical points, arguments, and potential paradigm shift, were shared with students attending a variety of American Indian Studies courses. Through various discussion and academic work, the majority of students involved shared that they retained little-to-no interest with these ongoing developments of Native/Indigenous critical theory. This exposed an undercurrent of academic and pop cultural assimilation steaming – as I have argued elsewhere, and continue throughout my writings and teachings - from the dominant EuroAmerican academic structures. In addition, I shared this line of Native/Indigenous critical theory, discourse and student responses with peers and colleagues, both within Native/Indigenous studies and other, similar disciplines.

Conversations revealed a similar lack of interest, as those stated from the noted students, from these peers and colleagues. This realization and acknowledgment of minimal pedagogical – least of all personal – care, desire, or basic interest, came to surface more often than not by those within academic circles. Taking all of these collected points and conversations together, from students and academics alike, which outlined a very disturbing, and not so subtle, accepted institutionalized epistemology of racism, assimilation and defeat, it became clear that the arguments and Indigenous critical theories - which are defined throughout this article - are even more important in these contemporary times than one would at first imagine. In kind, and trying to take an active positive approach, I am grateful to those “bored” students and “self-defeated” peers and colleagues who verbally pushed against the writing of this article. It is from, and because, of these marginally interest voices who were fixed and quite determined to frame a negative opinion upon the necessity – least of all a contemporary need - in striving to develop Native/Indigenous critical theory that this work finds itself near – if not at – the center of an important Native/Indigenous debate with the focus upon tribal sovereignty, socio-political justice and equity.

### ENDNOTES

1. Throughout the writing of this essay, I presented this work, notes, thoughts, and criticism to various American Indian Studies students, peers, and colleagues. I am grateful to those with whom I shared this work, and for their willingness to address, engage in dialogue, and critique the discourse and my developing epistemological strategies.

2. The term “i/Indian” is used following the critical work of Gerald Vizenor and his analysis that the image/icon of the “Indian” is, in fact, a fantasy maintained throughout, and within, EuroAmerican popular culture.

3. The Indian Removal Act (1830) institutionalized the practice of forcing Native American Indians off of their ancestral lands in order to make way for European settlement. In addition, the Indian Appropriations Act (1851), also known as the Appropriation Bill for Indian Affairs, authorized the establishment of Indian reservations in Oklahoma and inspired the creation of reservations in other states as well. The US federal government envisioned the reservations as a useful means of keeping Native American tribes off of the lands that white Americans wished to settle.

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