Indigenous Peoples is a monumental undertaking, covering a vast range of native groups from around the globe, including the Ainu, the Cañari, the Sami, as well as the more familiar Maori and Native American Indigenous people. The chapters, like the indigenous peoples, represent an array of studies, including ethnographies, narrative analysis, qualitative, and quantitative research pertaining to the educational struggles and outcomes of indigenous folk. Indigenous Peoples shatters the majoritarian narrative of a homogenous group of people, and depicts instead a panorama of the many subjugated groups struggling against dominating settler nations to assert their sovereignty and right to educate their children. If you are wondering what the indigenous people of Greenland are struggling with today, then this book can provide a chapter for you. However, there is very little cohesion between the multiple perspectives, methods, and analyses in the text to offer a linear thread drawing the reader through.

Indigenous Peoples is divided into three sections: 1) Past, Present and Future, 2) De/Colonization and Indigenous Knowledge, and 3) Teachers, Students and Pedagogies. Every chapter in the text covers all of these subjects within their own context. This compendium of
research on indigenous peoples challenges normative depictions of native peoples from the first chapter of Past, Present and Future, “Indigenous Ainu and Education in Japan: Social Justice and Culturally Responsive Schooling,” by Kaori H. Okano (2013, p. 3). The Ainu are relatively unknown to those unfamiliar with indigenous peoples outside of U.S. or Australian contexts, and by highlighting them in the beginning of this text the editors present a powerful counternarrative. The majority of papers presented in this volume highlight little- or unknown native peoples including the Yuánzhùmin of Taiwan (Liu & Kuo, 2013, p. 27 not in references), the Tibetan people in the People’s Republic of China (Singh & Jing, 2013, p. 161 not in references), and the Sami of Sweden (Brown & Parding, 2013, p. 255 not in references). Okano (2013 not in references) highlights the efforts the Japanese have taken to incorporate Ainu traditions and knowledge into contemporary curricula, and how those efforts dissipate further away from areas historically inhabited by the Ainu. In contrasting the Ainu struggle for parity in education, Okano (2013 NIR) notes that Ainu children continue to lag behind nationalized Japanese in standardized test scores and higher academic development. A hopeful measure, Okano suggests, is the 2008 official government recognition of the Ainu as Indigenous peoples and the possibility of the Ainu gaining a greater voice in their education.

The second section of the text, De/Colonization and Indigenous Knowledge, offers insights into methods Indigenous peoples are using to reassert control over education. Reyhner and Singh (2013 not in references) cite the United Nations 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to point out that control of Indigenous education is a protected, international human right. They go on to argue that culturally responsive education (CRE) is the pedagogical concept that best supports the goals of reestablishing the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing in coordination with national educational objectives (Reyhner & Singh, 2013 NIR). In an intriguing insight, Reyhner and Singh (2013 NIR) posit an alternative origin story of CRE from Gay’s (2002) work to the initial reports of the U.S. Indian Office in the Meriam Report which stated “Everything in the Indian life and surrounding will have to tie in the educational program in a manner now seldom observed” (Institute, 1928, as cited in Reyhner & Singh, 2013, p. 143 NIR). In contrast to mainstream
educational methods, which advocate a middle class White approach to knowledge, CRE requires strategies that “include in-depth study of the surrounding physical and cultural environment in which the school is situated, while recognizing the unique contribution that Indigenous people can make to such a study as long-term inhabitants who have accumulated extensive specialized knowledge related to that environment” (Reyhner & Singh, 2013, p. 146 NIR). CRE provides an alternative paradigm, drawing upon the student’s funds of knowledge (Moll, 2004) to expand curricula by inclusion of the community’s expertise.

In the third section of Indigenous Peoples, Teachers, Students, and Pedagogies, Bodkin-Andrews, Denson, Finger, and Craven (2013 throughout this review, these authors are listed in different orders including starting with Bodkin-Andrews, starting with Craven, and as Bodkin-Andrews et al. please determine the correct order and make consistent) examine the potential of Positive Psychology as an intervention to facilitate Indigenous Australians’ academic success. Bodkin-Andrews, et al. (2013 author order) make two significant departures from the majority of research on Native Peoples in this chapter, first by examining a western intellectual construct and its significant limitations and constraints, and second by using a rare quantitative methodology. Both departures are worth noting. Rather than assuming a shared common ground, Bodkin-Andrews, et al. (2013 author order) closely interrogate the central tenets of Positive Psychology and its applicability to Indigenous Australians’ experiences. Asserting Positive Psychology as an alternative approach, incorporating Indigenous Australians’ resilience and resolve in the face of racism and institutionalized oppression, Bodkin-Andrews, et al. (2013 author order) offers a tool adapted to the researchers’ needs. In a similar vein, Bodkin-Andrews, et al. (2013 author order) examine significant faults and limitations of quantitative research to adequately address the nuanced understanding of Indigenous People’s experiences. Despite these comprehensive examinations of potential for misunderstanding, Bodkin-Andrews, et al.’s (2013 author order) study demonstrates the ability of Positive Psychology and quantitative research to illuminate the deep connections between academic performance and discrimination. Mirroring Steele’s (1997) research, this study found that students who were more invested in school and had a strong sense of ethnic identity also felt most
impacted by racial discrimination (Bodkin-Andrews, et al., 2013 author order). As a possible intervention strategy, Bodkin-Andrews, et al.’s (2013 author order) study indicated that “racism tended to negate the positive effects the positive psychology constructs had on the varying schooling outcomes” (p. 206). The experience of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization effectively wiped clean the possible ameliorative effects of the intervention.

While the researchers in Indigenous Peoples represent a diverse range of methods and approaches to the subject, a number of themes resonate throughout the text. Consistent in each chapter is the history of suppression, efforts at assimilation, and eventual restoration of some authority. The global mobilization of Indigenous Peoples and their activation of claims of both sovereignty and cultural authority are reflective of struggles to regain control of cultural heritage and Indigenous ways of knowing (Craven, Bodkin-Andrews, & Mooney, 2013 author order). However, it would be inconsiderate to conclude that a homogeneity of experience has come from such a wide ranging swath of humanity, a hegemonic notion of similarity among a diverse group of people struggling to assert sovereignty. Craven, Bodkin-Andrews, and Mooney (2013 author order) offer no sweeping generalities, but instead present a series of research studies rich in texture and context, offering the vast array of efforts Native groups have and are going through to gain control of their educational trajectories. By the same token, this text then becomes somewhat encyclopedic in nature. The plethora of methodologies used, the range of material, and experiences recounted make the text a fine reference for what is going on among Indigenous peoples around the globe, but also removes the possibility of a narrative thread to guide the novice reader through the book. Craven, Bodkin-Andrews, and Murray (2013 not cited. Typo? Is Murray supposed to be Mooney? If so then author order) choose to let the researchers in Indigenous Peoples speak for themselves, but the lack of any editorial guide to help readers new to the experience of Native Peoples in the text suggests that this is an insider work, useful to those already familiar with the contexts of suppressed peoples’ experience.

Indigenous Peoples is a contemporary text demonstrating the wide range of Native Peoples’ effort to assert educational rights within the context of dominating
settler states. The book is an exhaustive account of an array of suppressed voices from around the world, uncovering the struggles of people frequently hidden within mainstream narratives similar to Abu-Saad and Champagne’s (2006) groundbreaking work. The editors, Craven, Bodkin-Andrews, and Murray (author order. Murray=Mooney?), have assembled a rich range of researchers and methodologies, implicitly displaying the heterogeneous nature of the indigenous effort to regain educational authority.

References


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