"THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE"


Abstract:

In a questionnaire study among 124 students at Haskell Indian Nations University, the authors investigated the hypothesis that engagement with Indigenous identity—assessed along three dimensions including degree (identification scale), content (panethnic or tribal nation), and context (reservation or nonreservation)—can serve as a psychological resource for well-being and liberation from oppression. Consistent with this hypothesis, degree of identification was positively correlated with community efficacy and perception of racism. Apparently inconsistent with this hypothesis, degree of identification among students who had resided on a reservation was negatively correlated with the Social Self-Esteem subscale of the Current Thoughts Scale. Rather than evidence against the identity-as-resource hypothesis, this pattern may reflect the cultural grounding of self-esteem and tools designed to measure it.