"Diné Entrepreneurship: Indigenous Contemporary Entrepreneurship" Abstract:
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This qualitative study researches the concept of entrepreneurship in an indigenous population by assessing the external and internal challenges faced, discusses the various types of support offered, and compiles recommendations for partners to understand the Diné individual with a business. This research interviewed nine formal entrepreneurs who are enrolled members of the Navajo Nation tribe who have either created businesses on the reservations, manage nonprofits aimed at supporting entrepreneurs, or possess a wealth of entrepreneurial experiences working both on or off the Navajo Nation Reservation. Entering a specific academic field, the research is a contemporary addition to previous economic research conducted on the Navajo Nation. Utilizing the frameworks of "Nation Building" as the foundational methodology, the text builds upon the themes of economic development, cultural-match, and indigenous sovereignty by analyzing the concept, action, and future of Diné entrepreneurship. Research finds a high degree of miscommunication between key groups, misinterpretation of the term "entrepreneurship" and expectations of each role, and missed opportunities for each sector to benefit from cross-sector partnerships. Additionally, while addressing many of the standard themes of business creation and management, Diné entrepreneurs are simultaneously presented with the twin challenges of embodying Diné values (i.e., a commitment to their community and family) and overcoming specific technical, economic, and social hurdles within the Navajo Nation Reservation. As individuals, various internal factors like private aspirations and academic, personal, and professional experiences work to shape the interviewed entrepreneurs into figures who accept risk, promote innovation, and are audacious. Similarly, a series of external factors were noted as influencing the entrepreneurs, including the role of the nuclear and extended family, actions by the federal, state, and tribal governments, and the concerns of their specific communities, all of which combine to create an environment that either supported or challenged the Diné Entrepreneur.