

Teachers' Perceptions of the Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis and
School Climate Interventions for Native American Students

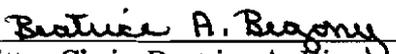
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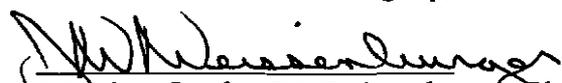
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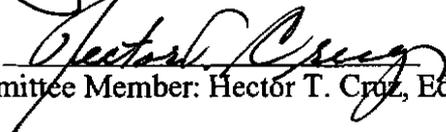
A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Education Specialist Degree
in

School Psychology

Approved: 6 Semester Credits


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May, 2008

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Title: *Teachers' Perceptions of the Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis and School Climate Interventions for Native American Students*
Graduate Degree: Ed.S. in School Psychology
Committee Chair: Beatrice A. Bigony, Ph.D.
Committee Member: Jacalyn W. Weissenburger, Ph.D.
Committee Member: Hector T. Cruz, Ed.D.
Month/Year: May 2008
Number of Pages: 101
Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

Research shows that the Native American school-aged population is growing faster than the national average (The National Indian Education Association, 2003) and that many Native American students are struggling in school or have already dropped out (Sanders, cited in Garrett, M.W., 1995; Sue & Sue, 2003; Freeman & Fox, 2005). Numerous studies attribute these negative educational outcomes to the cultural discontinuity that Native American students experience while attending mainstream schools (Noland-Giles, 1984; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993).

This study looked at teacher perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, the degree to which teachers believe traditional Native American values either conflict or are

congruent with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system, and the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students in one rural Wisconsin school district.

Fifty certified teachers completed the survey. Results revealed that the teachers surveyed possessed varying degrees of support for the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. In addition, the findings indicated that the majority of participants did not view traditional Native American values as conflicting with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system. Participants did, however, rate many of the school climate interventions targeted at making education more culturally continuous for Native American students as effective.

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Acknowledgments

This research project could not have been accomplished without help from many individuals. First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Beatrice Bigony, for her ongoing support. I feel blessed that I was able to work with her on not only my Master of Science in Education thesis, but also my Education Specialist Degree thesis. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Jacalyn Weissenburger and Dr. Hector Cruz (two of my all-time favorite professors) for serving on my thesis committee.

Secondly, I would like to thank Erin, my classmate and close friend, who volunteered to help me with my data collection. I could not have completed this study without her! I would also like to thank her school district for agreeing to participate in my research study.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my husband, Alan, for putting up with me when I experienced frustration, for encouraging me every step of the way, and for serving as my proofreader even though the subject area is not his cup of tea.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for always believing in me and providing me with support I need to experience success not only in my education, but also in life in general.

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Chapter I: Introduction

According to The National Indian Education Association (2003), there are over 550 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Native groups, as well as hundreds of unrecognized groups. The most recent U.S. census indicates that the Native American population is “young and growing faster than the national average” (National Indian Education Association, 2003, n.p.). In this census, of the two million people identified as Native American, 60% were under the age of 25 (National Indian Education Association, 2003). Clearly, the need for Native American education advocacy will continue to increase as the number of Native American children entering U.S. mainstream schools continues to rise. How well our education system responds to this trend will depend “largely upon our attitudes toward our students and their culture, our understanding of their backgrounds, values, ways of learning, and how well we adapt to their special needs” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 1).

Research indicates that Native American children perform well during their first few years of school, and perform average or above average through the fourth grade. But then, after the seventh grade, a pattern emerges showing a decrease in achievement motivation (Sanders, cited in Garrett, 1995; Sue & Sue, 2003). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), the high school dropout rate for Native American students was 14% in 2005. The national dropout rate for Native Americans was more than two times that of Whites and nearly five times that of Asian/Pacific Islanders. In Wisconsin and Minnesota, the 2005-2006 dropout rates for Native American students in public schools were 4.01% and 11.79%, respectively (Wisconsin Department of Instruction, Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools, n.d.; Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). Clearly, these statistics indicate that there is room for improvement in the retention of Native American students.

Many educators attribute the high dropout rate to the cultural discontinuity that Native American students experience while attending predominantly mainstream American schools. Numerous studies echo these claims, pointing to the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as a way of explaining the high dropout rate of Native American students (Noland-Giles, 1984; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993). The cultural discontinuity hypothesis suggests that cultural differences between students' homes and the mainstream school culture cause difficulties for minority students, such as Native Americans, which can eventually lead to academic failure and the potential for dropping out (Ledlow, 1994).

Cultural discontinuity arises for students when their personal values clash with the ideals that shape their school system. The current education system is based on mainstream American values, which are typically in conflict with the traditional cultural values of Native Americans. Researchers have identified similar traditional values that exist across all Native American tribes. These traditional values include extended family structure, respect for elders, emphasis on community, cooperation, sharing, harmony and balance, spirituality as a way of life, noninterference, emphasis on nonverbal communication, and present time orientation (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Nieto, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003; Tsai & Alanis, 2004). Conversely, the mainstream values that permeate the education system consist of nuclear family structure, respect for the "rich and famous," competition, acquisition of wealth and property, power and control, spirituality as only one part of life, interference with others, emphasis on verbal communication, and a future time orientation (DuBray & Sander, cited in Garrett & Garrett, 1994). It is clear that traditional Native American cultural values differ greatly from the mainstream values represented in public education (see Table 1 in Chapter II for a visual comparison).

This study will examine teachers' perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as

one plausible explanation for the low academic achievement and high dropout rates of Native American students. In addition, teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions targeted at making education more culturally continuous for Native American students will be examined. Coladarci (1983) and Gruber & Machamer (1996) examined the specific reasons Native American students gave for dropping out of school. These included student-teacher relationships, content of schooling, and lack of parental support. All three of these reasons can be directly tied to aspects of school climate as identified by Halderson (1988). Therefore, research suggests that education professionals should work on improving these aspects of school climate to increase the retention rates of Native American students.

Specific ways in which education professionals can improve aspects of school climate for Native American students will be discussed in the literature review and also highlighted in the results of this study. Based on previous research, to improve the quality of student-teacher relationships, teachers need to become more knowledgeable about traditional Native American values and use this knowledge to reshape their communication with Native American students (Gilliland, 1995). It is important for teachers to be aware of the process of acculturation, "the cultural change that occurs when two or more cultures are in persistent contact" (Garcia and Ahler, cited in Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 6). Many researchers describe acculturation as having different levels, ranging from traditional to acculturated (Heinrich, Corbine & Thomas, 1990; Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Sue & Sue, 2003); however, this theory of acculturation does not fit with reality. Native Americans do not clearly fall into one level of acculturation versus another. Education professionals need to see the process of acculturation as ongoing and highly situational for any given individual. By understanding the fluctuating nature of acculturation, teachers can better determine how to interact and respond to a student's individual needs.

With regard to content of schooling, teachers can make valuable instructional and curricula modifications by incorporating the traditional Native American values into their teaching. Gilliland (1995) suggested that teachers “bring the Indian heritage, Indian values, Indian contributions to thought and knowledge into the discussions in every subject whenever possible” (p. 11). Education professionals also need to seek out nonstereotypical, culturally relevant reading material (Reyhner, 1992) and incorporate a more visual teaching style into their instruction (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, n.d.; Reyhner, 1992). By making these modifications, teachers are letting Native American students know that they value their Native American cultures. Such practices also provide Native American students with opportunities to connect home and school.

The last aspect of school climate that can be adapted to fit the needs of Native American students is parental and community support. According to Gollnick and Chinn (1994), parents are unlikely to become involved within a school that does not embrace their culture because they feel unwelcome, which is the case for many Native American adults. Education professionals need to initiate the contact by asking parents and community members to participate in school activities. Increasing parental involvement in education for Native American students is an important step to bridging the gap that exists between the Native American community and the school (Gilliland, 1999).

The research suggests that by learning to view these aspects of school climate through a traditional Native American cultural lens, education professionals will be better equipped to serve Native American students. In turn, these educators can bring about changes in school climate by incorporating Native American values into students’ educations. Thus, through increasing cultural continuity at school for Native American students, education professionals

will be increasing the chances of academic success for Native American students.

Statement of the Problem

As previously discussed, many Native American students are struggling in school or have already dropped out. There is a need within the public education system to address the low academic achievement and high dropout rates of Native American students. Research indicates that steps should be taken to provide these students with a more culturally continuous education. Education professionals need to become more knowledgeable about the traditional Native American values and incorporate these ideals into school climate interventions for Native American students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, including the degree to which they believe traditional Native American values either conflict or are congruent with the current mainstream education system. In addition, the study examined teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do school teachers support the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as an explanation of the negative educational outcomes of Native American students?
2. To what extent do school teachers believe traditional Native American values conflict with the current mainstream education system?
3. What school climate interventions for Native American students do school teachers perceive as effective?

Definition of Terms

To ensure reader clarity and understanding, the following terms needed to be defined:

Dropout rate: This term refers to “the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are out of school and who have not earned a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) credential” (Freeman & Fox, 2005, p. xi).

Mainstream American Values: “Mainstream American values” may be defined as the prevailing principles or standards considered desirable and worthwhile by the Euro-American majority in United States' society. For the purposes of this paper, European American values will be considered synonymous with mainstream American values.

Native American: The term “Native American” will be used to refer to an individual who identifies him or herself as a descendant of the original peoples who inhabited North, Central, or South America. For the purpose of this study, this researcher will not be distinguishing among Native Americans belonging to or not belonging to a given tribal nation or be concerned with percentages of ancestry or blood quantum.

School climate: This term is used to refer to “the relatively enduring pattern of shared perceptions about the characteristics of a [school] and its members” (Keefe, Kelly, & Miller, cited in Halderson, 1988, p. 3). The specific aspects of school climate that will be addressed in this study include student-teacher relationships, curriculum content and style of teaching, and parent and community support (Halderson, 1988).

Student: The term student will be defined as an individual who is of typical school age (5 years old to 18 years old) for the purposes of this paper.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study was that there were no reliability or validity measures available

for the survey. Secondly, the results from this study were from one school district with the majority of the Native American students from one tribal nation. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the results to teachers' perceptions in other school districts as they may have Native American students from different tribal nations. Lastly, a potential limitation of this study was that the participants might not have responded openly and honestly due to the sensitive nature of the topics. In their responses, the participants may have tried to portray their school, students, and/or themselves in a more positive manner than exists in reality.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The researcher will begin this chapter with highlights from the history of Native American education, followed by a discussion designed to illustrate the heterogeneous nature of the Native American population. Then, the core values of traditional Native Americans will be discussed and compared to contemporary mainstream American values. In addition, the researcher will address issues related to poor academic performance in Native American students, including the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. The researcher will conclude this chapter by discussing school climate interventions that can be implemented by education professionals to minimize the cultural discontinuity Native Americans encounter in mainstream public schools.

The History of Native American Education

In order to understand the current status of Native American education, one must first have knowledge regarding the history of Native American education. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Native American education has been marked with trauma. Conflicts between the U.S. government and Native Americans regarding land allotment and assimilation policies greatly affected the educational experiences of Native American students. The U.S. government mandated that all Native American children attend boarding schools (Reyhner, 1992). According to Szasz (1974), Richard Henry Pratt, the U.S. Army captain and founder of Carlisle Indian School in 1879, used the success of his boarding school to persuade the public that all Native Americans were able to be educated, which led to the opening of off-reservation boarding schools. Native American children were forced to move away from their families and entire generations lost access to traditional parenting models, culture, language, and values (Duran & Duran, 1995). By the 1930s, these off-reservation boarding schools were eventually replaced

with reservation boarding schools, otherwise known as day schools (Szasz, 1974). Boarding schools represent only one of many challenges Native Americans have faced in education. The effects of the boarding schools are still evident in Native American communities today. Due to the past traumas of boarding schools, some Native American parents find it difficult to communicate with public school administrators and teachers, and even more difficult to trust them.

Native Americans: A Heterogeneous Group

Native Americans are a highly heterogeneous group of people (Heinrich, Corbine, & Thomas, 1990). According to The National Indian Education Association (2003), “there are over 550 American Indian tribes and Alaska Native groups recognized by the federal government and hundreds of unrecognized groups” (n.p.). The total number of tribal nations helps illustrate the variation that exists among Native American people. Although there are some similarities across tribal nations, each group ultimately has its own culture. According to Sue and Sue (2003), “there are large within-group differences and between-group differences among the different tribes in customs, language, and type of family structure” (p. 312). Even with these differences, it is important to understand that all Native Americans “share the history of having lost their ancestral lands, forced education in boarding schools, systematic attempts to eradicate their language and religion, and restrictions on their traditional means of obtaining a livelihood” (Norton & Manson, cited in Sue & Sue, 2003, p. 312). The oppression Native Americans have experienced in the past has influenced and shaped the evolution of their culture as a whole overtime.

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss a basic core set of traditional Native American values. However, it is important for the reader to understand that the values discussed are not

representative of all Native Americans. The heterogeneous nature of this group requires individuals working with Native Americans to be aware of between- and within-group differences and to adjust their goals and approaches to treatment accordingly. Thomason (1991), in his discussion of the diversity found in the Native American population, cautions against using stereotypes and assuming that it is possible to make recommendations that will work with all Native Americans. In concordance with Thomason, this researcher realizes that although some general recommendations for education professionals working with Native American students can be made, it is important to address each student individually according to his or her unique needs. Nevertheless, with this being said, traditional Native American values will be the basis for the recommendations given in this paper. By learning more about traditional Native American values, education professionals can better understand and serve their Native American students more effectively.

Traditional Native American Values

To understand the traditional Native American value system, one must become familiar with Native American family structure. According to Red Horse, quoted in Sutton and Broken Nose (2005), "Family represents the cornerstone for the social and emotional well-being of individuals and communities" (p. 45). The typical Native American family is comprised of immediate and extended family members, but often non-relative community members are included as well (Noland-Giles, 1984; Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett, 1995; Sutton & Broken Nose, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2003; Tsai & Alanis, 2004). It is common for Native Americans to adopt non-blood relatives into their families as "fictive kin" (Garrett & Garrett, 1994).

Tafoya (cited in Sutton & Broken Nose, 2005) referred to Native American languages to illustrate the importance of extended family in Native American culture. Native American

languages often use the same word to refer to both siblings and cousins and have no word for in-law, suggesting that there is no perceived difference in the relation or closeness to these extended family members. Tafoya also discussed the significant parental roles grandparents and aunts and uncles play in raising a child. In many families, they have just as much control over a child as the child's parent. Also, it is not uncommon for Native American families to take in a child from their extended family network when circumstances arise (Sue & Sue, 2003). Related to this extended family structure is the value Native Americans place on elders in their communities. According to Garrett and Garrett (1994), "elders are honored and respected because of the lifetime's worth of wisdom they have acquired" (p. 137).

Intertwined with the emphasis placed on extended family and elders are the Native American values of community and sharing. Native Americans are collectivists, valuing their group over individuals. According to Sue and Sue (2003), Native Americans "believe that the tribe and family take precedence over the individual" (p. 315). Native Americans can gain honor and respect by sharing, giving, and remaining sensitive to others' opinions and attitudes (Sue & Sue, 2003). With regard to sharing, Native Americans do not place value on accumulating material items or wealth (Sue & Sue, 2003); instead, they are generous and give away their possessions to fellow community members as needed (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Garrett and Garrett (1994) described this Native American value as "whatever belongs to the individual also belongs to the group" (p. 136). Northrup (1997) illustrates the Native American value of sharing through a story in which one tribal nation invited another to their land to rice because there were no lakes to harvest that year on their reservation. This story of kindness and generosity, not only shows the Native American value of sharing, but also emphasizes the importance of community, both being closely tied to the Native American value of cooperation.

Cooperation in Native American culture, like community and sharing, stems from their tribal histories. Cooperation, in the simplest sense, was a means of survival. The Blackfeet Cultural Committee (cited in Gilliland, 1999) stated, "We were all put on this planet to help each other. When we work together, we grow strong in mind, heart, body, and spirit" (p. 26). To a Native American, cooperation means "a conscious submission of self to the welfare of the tribe" (Heinrich, Corbine, & Thomas, 1990, p. 129). According to Sue and Sue (2003), cooperation in Native American children is shown through sensitivity to others' opinions and attitudes. Native Americans are likely to shy away from arguments (Sue & Sue, 2003) and avoid competition "for the sake of beating others" (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Directly related to this cooperative nature of Native Americans' is their desire for harmony.

Harmony is another core Native American value. Native Americans seek harmony within themselves, their family, and their community. This process of maintaining balance takes place both inwardly and outwardly (Tsai & Alanis, 2004). Inwardly, Native Americans strive to have their spirit, mind, and body working in harmony because they believe these elements are all interconnected (Sue & Sue, 2003). On a more outward level, Native Americans try to maintain harmony with other people, nature, and their environment. Garrett and Garrett (1994) and Tsai and Alanis (2004) make reference to the idea of harmony as it relates to the Circle of Life, a symbol used by many Native American tribes. According to Garrett and Garrett (1994), "the Circle of Life symbolizes the innumerable number of circles that surround us, that exist within us, and of which we are all a part" (139). Each of us has "a circle of self, consisting of many faucets of our own development (e.g., mind body, spirit, and surroundings); a circle of immediate family, extended family, tribal family, community, and nation; a circle consisting of all our relations in the natural environment; and a circle of our universal surroundings" (Garrett

et al., 2003, p. 227). This Circle of Life illustrates the interconnectedness of these elements and the need for harmony and balance among them.

Likewise, the value of harmony is directly related to Native American spirituality. In order to be healthy, Native Americans believe harmony and balance must be achieved among all three elements: spirit, body, and mind (Garrett & Wilbur, 1999). If one element is overcome by illness, it directly affects the other elements. Native Americans' spirituality is also based on the belief in "a single higher power known as the Creator, Great Creator, Great Spirit, or Great One, among other names" (Garrett & Wilbur, 1999, n.p.). In addition, many Native American languages do not have a word for "religion" because it is synonymous to life in their culture (Tsai & Alanis, 2004). According to Garrett and Wilbur (1999), all of the Native American traditional values embrace the idea of maintaining harmony and balance with the "energy of life" – the basis for Native American spirituality.

Native American spirituality is connected to the value of noninterference in personal relationships. Physical aggression and verbal forms of coercion and suggestion are inappropriate when they interfere with the activity of others (Good Tracks, 1985). Instead, Native Americans allow others to make their own decisions and to exhibit self-determination, even if it could result in that person doing something unsafe or unwise (Good Tracks, 1985; Garrett, 1995). Native Americans show respect in their relationships through patience (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). According to Good Tracks (cited in Garrett, 1995), "patience is the number one virtue governing Indian relationships" (n.p.). Native Americans believe that an individual will ask for help when he or she needs it and will share information when he or she is ready (Garrett & Pichette, 2000).

In addition, in traditional Native American culture, nonverbal communication and listening are valued more than verbal communication and speaking. Standing Bear (cited in

Gilliland, 1999) describes the Native American communication style in the following quote:

No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one was pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation. Silence was meaningful with the Lakota, and his granting a space of silence to the speech-maker and his own moment of silence before talking was done in the practice of true politeness and regard of the rule that thought comes before speech. (p. 32)

Also, as part of this communication style, Native Americans avoid direct eye contact as a sign of respect. They learn through listening and observation; and they only ask a limited number of direct questions (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Sue & Sue, 2003). Another feature of Native American communication is not interrupting the speaker (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Silence, as mentioned above, is also an important aspect of Native American communication. Sutton and Broken Nose (2005) point out that “silence may connote respect, that the client [Native American] is forming thoughts, or that the client [Native American] is waiting for signs that it is the right time to speak” (p. 51). Commonly, Native American speakers use large pauses in their communication and speak much softer and slower than contemporary mainstream Americans (Garrett & Pichette, 2000).

Traditional Native American time is not run by the clock and calendar; instead, it focuses on personal and seasonal rhythms (Sutton & Broken Nose, 1996). Mainstream Americans say “Time flies,” whereas Native Americans say, “Time is with us” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 33). This distinction reflects the difference between a future time orientation and a present time orientation, respectively. In Native American cultures, the concept of readiness determines when things start and end – a concept referred to as “Indian time” (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). This time

orientation incorporating “readiness” does not have at its heart punctuality or planning for the future – time concepts in mainstream American society (Sue & Sue, 2003). Native Americans are focused on the present, the here and now, in their daily interactions (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Sue & Sue, 2003).

Northrup (1993), a Native American writer, describes time in one of his poems as being “measured by the sun not quartz on the wrist” (p. 90). In another one of his pieces he uses the seasons to give meaning to time. Northrup (1997) states that “traditional [Native American] life follows nature’s changing cycles. From harvest to hibernation, sweet spring to summer wanderings. When living with the seasons, we don’t get worried about time as measured by the clock” (p. 37). Farrer (1996) further clarifies the Native American time orientation by making a distinction between polychronic and monochronic time. Native Americans typically operate under polychronic time, meaning “several things occurring at the same time,” whereas mainstream society subscribes to monochronic time, “where one thing happens at a time in sequence” (Hall; cited in Farrer, p. 5). The Native American time orientation embraces the idea that things happen when they happen and take as long as they need to take.

Traditional Native American Values Versus Mainstream American Values

There are many key differences between traditional Native American values and contemporary mainstream American values. These differences collide in mainstream public schools, creating cultural discontinuity for Native American students. This section will point out some of the key differences between the two cultural value systems, discuss how the cultural value systems commonly conflict with each other, and provide related suggestions for education professionals (see Table 1, p. 16).

Table 1

Comparison of Cultural Values

Traditional Native American	Contemporary Mainstream American
Reliance on Extended Family	Reliance on Nuclear Family and Experts
Respect for Elders	Respect for the “rich and famous”
Community needs more important than one’s own; emphasis on the group	Personal goals considered most important; emphasis on the individual
Cooperation	Competition
Sharing, work to meet present needs	Private property, work to acquire wealth
Harmony and balance; harmony with nature	Power and control; power over nature
Spirituality as a way of life	Spirituality as only a part of life
Noninterference; try to control self, not others	Need to control and affect others
Nonverbal communication, use encouraging signs	Verbal skills highly prized, use verbal encouragement
Time is always with us, present time orientation	Clock watching, future time focus

Note. Garrett, M.T., & Pichette, E.F. (2000). Red as an apple: Native American acculturation and counseling with or without reservation. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78, 3.

[Permission pending].

Extended family structure versus immediate family structure

Native Americans have a family structure that consists of immediate household, extended, and fictive family members. They are likely to view all of these individuals as important, valuing all of their opinions. Extended family members may play significant parental roles in a child's life. On the other hand, mainstream Americans tend to view only their immediate household family members as the most important, rarely asking extended family members for their advice or opinions or including non-blood relatives in their family. Instead, they turn to "experts" for advice.

Due to the significance of the Native American extended family structure, education professionals may need to communicate and work with additional family members, not just a student's parents, when trying to strengthen the home-school connection or when implementing an intervention. It is important for education professionals to realize that a student might refer to non-immediate family members using close kinship terms (i.e., brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather), and that they need to acknowledge and respect these close kin relationships. Education professionals need to learn to view the Native American extended family structure as "one of the greatest strengths of American Indian cultures" (Bearcrane-Crow, cited in Gilliland, 1999, p. 28).

Respect for elders versus respect for the "rich and famous"

Native American culture emphasizes respect for elders. In contrast, mainstream Americans often view older individuals as inactive and unproductive members of society, focusing their respect on younger, ambitious, successful, and wealthy people. In recent years, the respect for elders exhibited by Native American youth has declined due to the influence of the mainstream culture, causing many elders to be removed from their respected roles in their

communities (Garrett & Garrett, 1994).

Education professionals should work to reinstate a respect for elders in the minds of all their students. Students should be taught to value interactions with elders, giving elders their time and gratitude. Education professionals should strive to instill the mindset that “elders have helped us get to where we are” in their students. They have the wisdom and accumulated life experience to get us to where we want to be if we just listen. Elders can help education professionals learn and teach the local culture (Gilliland, 1999). According to Gilliland (1999), elders are a “good source of cultural information and wisdom, and they have many interesting stories and experiences to tell your students” (p. 27). By inviting the elders of all students into the classroom, education professionals can show their students their respect for all elders and for the values of Native American people (Gilliland, 1999).

Community versus self/sharing versus saving

Native Americans view meeting the needs of their community as more important than meeting their own individual needs. Farrer (1996) describes the “reciprocity principle” that exists among the Mescalero Apache tribe that keeps most families on the same economic playing field.

It [is] very difficult for families to save; saving, for its own sake, is not sensible at Mescalero, for one must always share with family. In a way, the Mescalero Apache system of reciprocity is a kind of saving that invests in people rather than in banks.

(p. 71)

Generally speaking, Native Americans are generous in nature and believe in working to meet the present needs of the community. Conversely, mainstream Americans focus on achieving personal goals, such as saving to acquire wealth and personal property, often neglecting community needs.

In the classroom, education professionals can have students practice setting group goals ahead of individual goals, encourage students to share with classmates, and seat students in table groups, rather than individual rows (Nieto, 1996). Also, education professionals can incorporate stories into their curricula that illustrate the Native American values of community and sharing. Such strategies, which can be easily incorporated into classrooms, will allow inclusion of Native American values and enhance the learning environment for all students.

Cooperation versus competition

Cooperation is highly valued in traditional Native American culture, and is closely linked to the values of community and sharing. Native Americans see group success as more important than individual success. Conversely, mainstream Americans try to turn almost everything into competition. This behavior likely stems from the tradition of “the American dream” – an ideal that equates status with wealth and ownership. Garrett (1995) believes that for European Americans, “one could easily mistake the purpose of human life to be the act of 'getting ahead'” (n.p.). According to Garrett (1995), “such a competitive attitude toward living invariably precludes any real attempt by individuals to live in harmony with their community” (n.p.). Clearly, the Native American value of cooperation and the mainstream American value of competition are in serious conflict with one another within and outside of the schools.

Education professionals should keep this important difference in mind while structuring their lesson plans since the U.S. education system is a reflection of mainstream American values. Cooperative learning and experienced-based learning activities have proven to be effective with Native American students (Preston, cited in U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.; Gilliland, 1999). Gilliland (1999) lists as headings sixteen ways of applying cooperative learning in the classroom: develop an attitude of sharing and cooperation; lessen competition for grades;

become a team, develop group pride in achievement; work in pairs; sit in groups or circles; try peer tutoring; let older students tutor younger; form bonded partnerships; use group problem solving; develop student-led group projects; try team games; apply cooperative effort to learn writing skills; solve math problems cooperatively; replace competition with others with self-competition; promote caring about each other; and design school-wide activities that emphasize Native traditions of generosity, sharing, and cooperation. Utilizing cooperative learning groups would not only benefit Native American students, but also teach mainstream American students the importance and value of learning from others and their unique experiences and perspectives, an important quality that employers look for in potential employees (Gilliland, 1999).

Harmony and balance versus power and control

As previously discussed (see p. 12), Native Americans seek to maintain harmony and balance among their mind, body, and soul because these three are all viewed as interconnected elements of human existence. They also try to maintain harmony with nature by matching their actions to nature's rhythm. Lame Deer (cited in Gilliland, 1999) stated:

We Indians live in a world where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. Your symbols are words written in a book. Ours are the earth, the sun, the wind, the rain, stones, trees, animals, even little insects like ants and grasshoppers. They are part of ourselves. We try to understand them, not with the head, but with the heart. (p. 36)

In contrast, most mainstream Americans do not view mind, body, and soul as interconnected, but rather as separate elements. An example illustrating this belief is the U.S. health care system. Mainstream Americans visit separate doctors for mental health issues, physical health issues, and spiritual health issues, whereas traditional Native Americans visit the same healer or medicine man to meet all their health needs.

Accordingly, with respect to these harmony/balance versus power/control issues, education professionals need to be aware of these cultural differences in order to understand their students' behaviors. A teacher may find it "normal" for mainstream American students to control and even try to manipulate their school environment (i.e., ask questions, slow their teacher down for clarification, bargain with their teacher for a better grade). On the other hand, Native American students may strive to maintain harmony and balance within their school environment, especially with peers and teachers. They are more likely than their mainstream American peers to learn quietly through observation and seek to please teachers and classmates through their contributions and behavior. As a result, teachers may come to view Native American students as more passive than active learners.

Spirituality as a way of life versus spirituality as only a part of life

For Native Americans, spirituality cannot be separated from their cultural values or way of life. Lowery (cited in Gilliland, 1999) depicted the importance of spirituality in the Native American culture by describing her upbringing: "Long ago, before I was four...I learned that everything had a spirit, that everything had a place, that everything was connected" (p. 37). In contrast, for many mainstream Americans, spirituality is just a part of their religion (i.e., go to church on Sunday) and it does not influence every aspect of mainstream American life.

Public schools reflect the mainstream American view of religion. The United States government requires that church and state, including public schools, maintain their separateness. Education professionals are required to keep religion out of the classroom, but can exhibit an appreciation for different religions and varying views on spirituality. This appreciation can be demonstrated by excusing student absences for different cultural ceremonies or when a loved one dies. Education professionals can demonstrate respect for their students and support their cultural

identity development by accepting and understanding Native American spiritual traditions (i.e., sweat lodge ceremonies, powwows) as much as mainstream traditions (i.e., Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter).

Noninterference versus interference

Native Americans value noninterference. According to Gilliland (1999), “Indian children are taught not to interfere in other people's affairs or their rights as individuals...[they] should have respect for each individual's privacy, autonomy, and personal dignity” (p. 27). They do not force themselves upon others, nor do they try to influence others through physical aggression, interruption, or use of verbal suggestion or coercion, methods commonly used by mainstream Americans, their institutions, and governments. According to Good Tracks (1985), “all the governments and institutions of these societies use a variety of coercive methods to insure cooperative action...[whereas] traditional Indian societies...were organized on the principle of voluntary cooperation” (p. 66).

The Native American value of noninterference is not reflected in mainstream public schools; instead, students are encouraged and rewarded for being outgoing and assertive in their classrooms. The value of noninterference conflicts with many typical classroom behaviors (i.e., asking questions, interrupting the teacher and their fellow classmates, speaking for fellow classmates) (Garrett, 1995). Because traditional Native American students regard noninterference as an integral aspect of their life, they will often sit quietly while observing what is going on in the classroom instead of taking action. For example, while engaged in group work, a Native American student might quietly observe the group's interactions, while the mainstream American student might take charge of the situation.

Nonverbal communication versus verbal communication

Native Americans stress the importance of nonverbal communication in their interactions. In general, as already indicated, Native Americans avoid direct eye contact, ask few pointed questions, and are comfortable with long pauses and silences. Their communication style is reflective of nature and involves processing information thoroughly. On the other hand, mainstream Americans value verbal communication over nonverbal communication. Many are uncomfortable with silence and therefore find it necessary to fill the gaps in conversation. For mainstream Americans, the focus is on making their own points, thereby limiting the amount of a genuine listening that takes place.

Thus, these differences in communication styles can lead to misunderstandings between mainstream American teachers and Native American students. For example, a Native American student who is avoiding direct eye contact with his teacher may be thought of as disrespectful or exhibiting low self-esteem by his teacher; whereas, in his culture he is exhibiting a normal sign of respect (Sue & Sue, 2003). Another common nonverbal behavior that is misinterpreted by education professionals in Native American students is how silently they sit in the classroom. Their style of observational and visual learning is often misinterpreted as indifference or lack of attentiveness (Garrett et al., 2003). Education professionals need to be careful when interpreting nonverbal communication of Native American students and should monitor the nonverbal communication messages they are sending to their students as well. Educators can introduce more silences and times for quiet observation into the classroom to make the environment more culturally continuous for Native American students.

Present time oriented versus future time oriented

Native Americans are not run by the clock and calendar; however, they do function in a

timely fashion in their daily lives. The difference is that Native American time is based on the here and now and follows the seasons. Native American time orientation is shaped around many of their other values. They try to maintain harmony with nature by living in tune with the seasons. Native Americans will put family and community needs above scheduled obligations because they value their relationships more than keeping a set schedule. On the other hand, punctuality and following a set time schedule are highly valued by mainstream Americans. For these reasons, the Native American time orientation may result in behaviors that are viewed as inappropriate from the perspective of mainstream Americans. For example, an event not “starting on time,” according to mainstream American clocktime, may be viewed as occurring “on time” in the Native American culture (Farrer, 1996, p. 4).

This difference in time orientation between the two cultures clearly creates some problems for Native Americans students attending mainstream schools. Schools are structured according to time schedules and deadlines; thus, some Native Americans students may have a difficult time adjusting to such strict time constraints. Education professionals need to be aware of this difference and work with Native American students to minimize the problems that may arise as a result of this difference. Garrett et al. (2003) suggest developing lesson plans focused on an awareness of time. Storybooks with time as an underlying theme can be effectively used with early elementary students, while older elementary children may respond well to compare and contrast situations in which time is or is not important (Bellon & Ogletree, cited in Garrett et al., 2003). Project-based activities that require a final outcome are valuable experiences in that they allow students to structure their own learning approach, are not as time-oriented, and allow for reflecting on the process as well as obtaining the outcome (Garrett et al., 2003). Education professionals should try to incorporate a present time orientation into classroom activities when

appropriate, not only to benefit Native American students, but also to teach other students the value of this orientation and how they can use it effectively in certain situations.

As illustrated above, traditional Native American values differ significantly from mainstream American values. It is also evident that these differences affect the everyday educational experiences that Native Americans have in U.S. public schools. In the next section, this researcher will describe the cultural discontinuity hypothesis and the importance of culturally relevant education.

Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis

With the majority of schools operating under the mainstream American value system, it is rather easy to understand the discontinuity Native American students experience between school and home. The public education system requires Native American students to adopt values and ways of thinking that are uncharacteristic of their traditional culture. This dissonance that occurs appears to be connected to Native American students' feelings of anxiety and isolation or rejection, as well as declines in self-esteem and academic performance (Garrett, 1995). This observable trend has been coined as the "cultural discontinuity hypothesis" (Ledlow, 1994, p. 114).

The culturally discontinuity hypothesis has not only been used to explain the low academic performance and high dropout rates of Native American students, but also has been applied to minority students as a whole, who exhibit similar trends in education. According to Ledlow (1994), "the cultural discontinuity hypothesis assumes that culturally based differences in the communication styles of the minority students' home and the Anglo culture of the school lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and, ultimately, failure for those students" (p. 114). Gallagher (2000) explains the foundation for the hypothesis by stating that "many believe the

loss of traditional native knowledge and language is intimately related to the problems of high dropout rates and poor academic achievement” in Native American students (p. 36). Christensen, a professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and an Ojibwa Indian herself, supports this theory. She believes “it's all tied up with identity and cultural dissonance...the effects of that cultural dissonance are widespread and continue to grow” (Gallagher, 2000, p. 36).

Two studies are frequently cited as providing solid evidence in support of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis: Philips (1982) and Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1993). Philips (1982) conducted her research on the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. Her primary focus was the communication styles and interaction patterns between the school and the Warm Springs community. She found that having “more Indian teachers, culturally relevant materials, and teaching methods which emphasize appropriate participant structures allow Indian students to experience greater success and achievement at school” (Ledlow, 1994, p. 114). Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1993) studied Native Hawaiian and Navajo students. The results indicated that the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP), a program based on the Native Hawaiian culture, significantly improved academic performance for Hawaiian students, but proved to be ineffective and counterproductive with Navajo students. The researchers concluded that “cultural compatibility is a credible explanation for school success while, conversely, cultural incompatibility is one credible explanation for school failure” (Vogt, Jordan, Tharp, 1993, p. 62). The fact that these two studies were separated by a span of over ten years suggests that the need for culturally continuous education for Native Americans has existed for quite some time and continues to be ignored within the U.S. public education system, despite research findings.

Some researchers still question the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, believing that it

does not adequately explain the dropout rate and poor academic achievement seen in Native American students (Ledlow, 1994). Ledlow acknowledges the fact that there are numerous research studies providing evidence that cultural discontinuity does play a role in poor academic performance, but cites macrostructural variables (i.e., racism, discrimination, poverty, historical forces) as the more significant contributing factors. Similarly, Ogbu (as cited in Ledlow, 1994), who sought to explain the academic failure of minority students in general, “found the 'structured inequality' of American society to be the cause” (p. 119). These larger societal issues that Ledlow and Ogbu eluded to clearly affect Native American students and their learning potential both within and outside of school, as the school itself is a microcosm of society. One cannot deny the existence and influence of these macrostructural variables; but, they must be addressed in the educational system in conjunction with culturally-based differences, in order to help Native American students succeed academically.

Research on culturally compatible education indicates that “all children can learn if appropriate modifications in instruction are made,” suggesting that the greater the cultural congruence for students, the more effective the instruction (Nieto, 1996, p. 147). The cultural discontinuity that exists within most schools for Native American students produces “discouraged youths who experience confusion about themselves and their cultural heritage, feel alienated and ashamed of the inability to meet mainstream expectations and norms, and consequently, withdraw altogether” (Garrett, 1995, n.p.). Nieto (1996) states that although “all schools cannot become *culturally compatible*, they nevertheless can become *multiculturally sensitive*” (p. 147). This is an important distinction to make. Clearly, schools cannot be culturally compatible in every way for every student because of the diverse student populations they serve; however, education professionals can use an array of techniques and curricula so that more

students' needs are met beyond those of mainstream American students. Education professionals should strive to maintain “a balance between Indian culture and Anglo academics that prepares students for success in both native and mainstream realms” (Gallagher, 2000, p. 36). Likewise, Whittingham, of Cherokee heritage, believes that education professionals should work to “ensure that Native Americans don't forget who they are, where they've been, where they're going...[they need] to encourage them to keep moving forward” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 1). Education professionals can accomplish these goals by implementing school climate interventions that directly address the cultural discontinuity Native American students experience in U.S. public schools.

School Climate Interventions

According to Reyhner (1992), “continuity between the culture of the home and the culture of the school will help to unleash creative intelligence by smoothing the transition between students' lives at home and their lives at school” (p. 30). In this section of the paper, the researcher will provide the reader with recommendations specifically targeted at improving the school climate for Native American students, ultimately increasing their retention rates and chances for academic success. Three areas of school climate will be addressed: student-teacher relationships, curriculum content and style of teaching, and parent and community support. The author selected these three areas based on the Coladarci study (1983) and the Gruber and Machamer study (1996), both of which explored reasons as to why Native American students drop out of school. All three areas have also been identified as contributing to overall school climate (Halderson, 1988).

Student-teacher relationships

One of the most important steps to take in improving student-teacher relationships with

Native American students is to become knowledgeable about traditional Native American values. Garrett et al. (2003) believe that in order “to provide culturally responsive services in the daily life of Native youth, educators and related service professionals must demonstrate a level of knowledge, awareness, and skill relative to the dynamics of Native culture” (p. 228). By understanding and appreciating the Native American value system, education professionals are better able to interact with students, understand their unique needs, and make appropriate modifications to their instruction. Some of these modifications related to the traditional Native American value system have already been discussed (see p. 17-24).

According to Coladarci (1983), Native American students are dropping out of school because “teachers did not care about them” (p. 18). Coladarci (1983) interviewed 46 Native American students who had dropped out of high school in the previous three years. He found that these students shared the following beliefs: Native American students do not receive adequate assistance from their teachers, Native Americans do not see school as important, and teachers are culturally insensitive (Coladarci, 1983). The students interviewed in Coladarci's study indicated that greater encouragement, assistance, and expressed care from teachers would have changed their decision to drop out (Coladarci, 1983). Education professionals need to show Native American students that they care about them by having positive one-on-one interactions with them that are academically and culturally encouraging.

Twenty years after Coladarci's study, Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock (2003) interviewed 120 Native American youth in the United States and Canada. They found that Native American students believe effective teachers are knowledgeable about the tribal people they teach and show real interest in their students (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003). Similar to the results of the Coladarci (1983) study, the students identified the characteristics of good

teachers as using encouragement, being helpful, and being caring (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003). In addition, the students in this study reported important teacher qualities to include having high expectations, being fair and demanding respect for all learners, being flexible, and listening and trying to understand their students.

Beyond developing the characteristics discussed above, education professionals should strive for improvement in the following areas with their Native American students: accurately interpreting nonverbal communication (i.e., lack of eye contact with teacher, silence during learning), understanding the importance of following through with what you say you are going to do to improve trust, and realizing the significance of giving students a choice instead of telling them what to do (i.e., offering suggestions without offering directions) (Garrett et al., 2003). By educating themselves about traditional Native American values, education professionals can incorporate their new cultural understanding into their interactions with their students. Only by taking a personal interest in their students' lives, culturally and academically, can education professionals help students feel confident about their identity as a Native American and as a student.

An Indian mother echoed these ideas in a letter that has circulated in Indian Country for quite some time:

Dear Teacher,

Before you take charge of the classroom that contains my child, please ask yourself why you are going to teach Indian children. What are your expectations? What rewards do you anticipate? What ego needs will our children have to meet? Write down and examine all the information and opinions you possess about Indians. What are the stereotypes and interested assumptions that you bring with you into the classroom? How many negative

attitudes towards Indians will you put before my child? What values, class prejudices, and moral principles do you take for granted as universal? Please remember that "different from" is not the same as "worse than" or "better than" and the yardstick you use to measure your own life satisfactorily may not be appropriate for their lives. The term "culturally deprived" was invented by well-meaning middle-class whites to describe something they could not understand. Too many teachers seem to see their role as rescuer. My child does not need to be rescued; he does not consider being Indian a misfortune. He has a culture, probably older than yours; he has meaningful values and a rich and varied experiential background. However, strange or incomprehensible as it may seem to you, you have no right to do or say anything that implies to him that it is less than satisfactory. Our children's experiences have been different from those of the typical white middle-class child for whom most school curricula have been designed. (I suspect that this "typical" child does not really exist except in the minds of the curriculum writers.) Nonetheless, my child's experiences have been as intense and meaningful to him as any child's. Like most Indian children his age, he is competent. He can dress himself, prepare a meal for himself, and clean up afterwards, or care for a younger child. He knows his reserve like the back of his hand. He is not accustomed to having to ask permission to do ordinary things that are part of normal living. He is seldom forbidden to do anything; more usually the consequences of an action are explained to him, and he is allowed to decide for himself whether or not to act. His entire existence since he has been old enough to see or hear has been an experimental learning situation, arranged to provide him with the opportunity to develop his skills and confidence in his own capacities. Didactic learning will be an alien experience for him. He is not self-conscious

in the way that many white children are. Nobody has ever told him his efforts at independence are "cute." He is a young human being energetically doing his job, which is to get on with the process of learning to function as an adult human being. He has been taught by precept that courtesy is an essential part of human conduct and rudeness is any action that makes another person feel foolish or stupid. Do not mistake his patient courtesy for indifference or passivity. He does not speak standard English but he is in no way "linguistically handicapped." If you will take the time and courtesy to listen and observe carefully, you will see that he and other Indian children communicate very well, both among themselves and with other Indians. They speak functional English, very effectively, augmented by the fluency in the silent language, the subtle unspoken communication of facial expressions, gestures, body movements, and the use of personal space. You will be well advised to remember that our children are skillful interpreters of the silent language. They will know your feelings and attitudes with unerring precision, no matter how carefully you arrange your smile or modulate your voice. They will learn in your classroom because children learn involuntarily. What they will learn will depend on you. Will you help my child learn to read, or will you teach him that he has a reading problem? Will you help him develop problem-solving skills or will you teach him that school is where you try to guess what answer the teacher wants? Will he learn that his sense of his own value and dignity is valid, or will he learn that he must forever be apologetic and try harder because he isn't white? Can you help him acquire the intellectual skills he needs without at the same time imposing your values on top of those he already has? Respect my child. He is a person. He has a right to be himself. -An Indian Mother (Seale and Slapin, 2004, p. 8)

As this Indian mother suggests, education professionals should become knowledgeable about traditional Native American values, in addition to examining their own values, worldviews, and culture.

Curriculum content and style of teaching

According to Coladarci (1983), Native American student dropouts report content of curriculum as a prominent factor influencing their decision to dropout. Coladarci found that these students felt “school was not important for what they wanted to do in life” and that “school was not important to them as Native Americans” (p. 18). This finding has major implications for practice in terms of instructional techniques and curriculum materials. Education professionals need to use culturally appropriate techniques and relevant curricula in order to keep Native American students' interest levels up. Consequently, Tsai and Alanis (2004) believe that education professionals can “stimulate the Native American students' interest in their own academic progress” by including historical, cultural and linguistic studies in their curricula (n.p.).

Textbooks have always played an important role in American schooling and continue to do so today. However, the problem with using textbooks in education is that the majority of them are written from a mainstream point of view. As a result, students are only taught one perspective. For Native American students, this usually means learning about their ancestors in a very negative light, while early European settlers are glorified. And often times, Native Americans and other cultural groups are absent from textbooks all together. Furthermore, many of the stories in the textbooks may be irrelevant or unrealistic to Native American students or portray Native Americans in stereotyped, often negative, ways. For all of these reasons, perhaps the use of textbooks could be deemphasized in education. To this end, Reyhner (1988) suggests placing more emphasis “on using other kinds of books and giving kids real world, hands-on,

experiences in all subject areas” (p. 97).

Thus, education professionals need to seek out additional reading material that is more culturally relevant and non-stereotypical for their Native American students. This may mean finding reading material that is specific to a student’s particular tribal background. By incorporating culturally relevant material into the curricula, education professionals can “reinforce positive self-concept, motivate reading, and develop reading comprehension skills” in their students (Gilliland, cited in Reyhner, 1992, p. 157). Ideally, history should be taught from multiple perspectives. After all, all students will benefit from reading books written from a non-mainstream perspective. Reyhner (1992), in his book entitled *Teaching American Indian Students*, provides specific names of textbooks and different curricula ideas and activities for teachers from a wide variety of disciplines (i.e., computer science, reading, writing, social studies, science, mathematics, consumer education, art, physical education).

It is also important for education professionals to incorporate teaching and learning styles into their classrooms that are conducive to Native American students' learning. According to Tunley-Daymude and Begay-Campbell (cited in U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.), “Native students learn in styles unique to their cultural upbringing...[and their] learning styles...are directly impacted by language, culture, spirituality, communication styles, and more” (n.p.). Rohner (cited in Reyhner, 1992) explored the styles of Native American learning and found that Native American children learned through observation, hands-on experiences, and experimentation in their homes, while at school their learning was limited to verbal instruction, reading, and writing. Correspondingly, many Native American populations have shown a preference for “observational” or visual learning approach (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.; Gilliland, 1999). This visual approach to learning exhibited by many Native

American students is often misinterpreted by teachers as indifference or lack of attentiveness (Garrett et al., 2003). According to experts in the field (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.), “teaching styles and classroom instructional practices need to reflect the learning styles of American Indian and Alaskan Native children” to effectively engage students in “classroom instruction and activities” (n.p.). When students are taught through their preferred learning style, they are more likely to achieve academically, express more interest in the given subject area, like the way they are being taught, and want to learn other subjects in a similar way (Gilliland, 1999).

Additionally, there are many specific content- or style-related interventions that can be implemented to improve school climate for Native American students. One of the most frequently cited interventions in the research is use of cooperative learning groups, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal. The group is rewarded based on the success of the group as a whole, which helps foster positive interdependence among group members along with individual accountability. As previously mentioned, group work with an emphasis on cooperation instead of competition is a great school climate intervention for Native American students as well as other students. It is important for students to learn to work together and to recognize the individual strengths that exist within a group (Garrett et al., 2003). An example of a type of cooperative group activity would be to divide a classroom into groups, each group being responsible for creating a different portion of a news program (i.e., sports, weather, national news, local news). Within each group, members must decide which role each member will take on (i.e., graphics, speaker, recorder). The skills learned in this type of group work are valuable not only because they are consistent with Native American culture (i.e., cooperation and group interaction), but also because they are directly

applicable to “real world” situations for students from all cultural backgrounds.

Another area related to style of teaching that needs to be addressed is classroom environment. To make the classroom environment more welcoming to Native American students, education professionals can incorporate quiet time into the beginning of their lessons. This allows students to “orient themselves to the situations, get in touch with themselves, and experience the “presence” of the other person(s)” (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 232). This simple intervention communicates “respect, understanding, and patience” not only to Native American students, but to all students (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 232).

Other techniques which education professionals can use in their classrooms as ways of adapting to Native American learning preferences include the following: use teaching techniques used at home (i.e., modeling, role playing); set up lessons where students can learn from other students (i.e., small group projects); supplement or lower the amount of verbalization used in teaching (i.e., use visual aides); work on listening skills; encourage students to apply what they are learning to their lives; incorporate active learning techniques into instruction (i.e., tracing of words, writing in sand); integrate music, drama, stories and legends into instruction (paraphrased headings from Gilliland, 1999). These are just a couple examples of how cultural-related school climate interventions can be worked into the content and style of schooling.

Parent and Community Involvement

According to Reyhner (1994), “the best way to get schools to reflect parent and community values and to reduce cultural discontinuity between home and school is to have real parent involvement in Indian education” (p.110). Parental involvement helps parents feel ownership in their children's school, which leads to more academically supportive and encouraging parents. According to Butterfield and Pepper (cited in Gilliland, 1999), who

summarized 100 research studies, “parent participation in the school in any form improves parent attitudes and behavior, as well as student achievement, attendance, motivation, self-esteem, and behavior” (p. 9). Parental involvement can take on many different forms from school board member to classroom volunteer, from guest speaker to parent advisory committee member. Education professionals need to make Native American parents and community members feel welcome within the school.

Some ideas to promote parent and community involvement include leaving a couple “parent chairs” free in the classroom for parents to come in and visit whenever they would like; inviting parents and community members to come into the classroom to share their experiences since this information would add some true cultural relevance to the curriculum for Native American students (Reyhner, 1992); and bringing in parents and other community members “to instruct the children in arts and crafts, community organizations, traditions, and the world of work, as well as helping with field trips, interest clubs, and other activities” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 9). Another intervention that would be effective for Native American students would be to set up a mentoring program with Native American elders from the community (Garrett, 1995). Parents and community members could also be included in curriculum planning and in new teacher orientation (Gilliland, 1999).

Gilliland (1999) lists seven ways education professionals can get Native American parents involved in their children's education. The first way is to “become part of the community” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 125). Gilliland suggests using every opportunity to get involved in the community (i.e., pow-wows, church, service clubs, sporting events, community planning meetings, open tribal or town council meetings), in an attempt to learn more about the Native American culture and to demonstrate to parents and the community that you are genuinely

interested in bridging the gap between school and home.

The second way to increase parental and community involvement is to “keep communication flowing” between the school and the families (Gilliland, 1999, p. 126). Gilliland (1999) advises education professionals to use parent-teacher conferences not only to inform parents about their child's progress, but also as a time for questions and concerns to be addressed. If parents are unable to attend conferences, education professionals need to be willing to make home visits. Follow-up communication with parents needs to occur throughout the school year through phone calls, personal notes, and/or home visits. Also, instead of discussing solely troubling information, communication with teachers and parents should include positive reflections about what is going on in the classroom and with the given student. Likewise, the teacher can invite parents and other relatives to participate in upcoming activities (Gilliland, 1999).

Thirdly, education professionals need to “help parents to know how they can help their children at home” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 127). The suggestions need to be realistic and practical for the student's home situation. When talking with parents, education professionals should emphasize the importance of spending time as a family (i.e., eating dinner together), talking about what is going on at school, praising their children for successes and hard work, and setting high academic expectations (Gilliland, 1999). Moreover, parents should be encouraged to visit the classroom to witness first hand some of the teaching techniques they can use with their children at home (Gilliland, 1999).

The fourth way education professionals can get parents involved is to “provide parent training in early childhood education” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 128). According to Gilliland (1999), the bond between home and school can be strengthened by providing parents with the

appropriate training (i.e., structured materials and activities) to better prepare their children for school. Gilliland (1999) suggests using traditional stories, finger plays, games, music, dance, and traditional arts and crafts in the program as a way of infusing Native American culture into early childhood education. Research shows that “children of parents who have attended these classes have been readier for school-type learning when they entered first grade,” giving these students more of a chance to succeed academically in their later years (Gilliland, 1999, p. 128).

Fifthly, education professionals need to “use parents as resources” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 129). As previously mentioned, parents should be invited into the classroom to share and teach about their culture through stories, arts, crafts, dance, songs, and field trips. By using parents as resources, education professionals will not only be getting Native American parents involved in their children's education, but will also be culturally enhancing the curriculum for all of their students. Parents can also be used to help create a cultural study center in their child's classroom (Gilliland, 1999).

The sixth way education professionals can involve parents in their children's education is to “recruit parents as volunteers” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 129). This will come more easily for education professionals after they get involved in the community, communicate regularly with parents, and use parents as cultural resources. Some suggested ways of using classroom volunteers include reading to children, telling stories, playing games, or supervising recess (Gilliland, 1999). Education professionals should make sure to meet with volunteer parents prior to their first day of volunteering to answer any questions they may have and to go over the plans for the day (Gilliland, 1999). Also, educators need to extend a warm welcome to these volunteers when first meeting them. This is important because many Native American parents may be hesitant to even enter through the school doors, let alone trust education professionals, due to the

negative educational experiences (i.e., forced boarding schools) Native Americans have experienced in the past.

Finally, education professionals need to “get the whole school and the whole community involved” (Gilliland, 1999, p. 130). Gilliland (1999) believes that this can be achieved when the school becomes the focal point in the community. The school must open its doors not only to the Native American students, but also to the parents and adults in the community. Education professionals should encourage community members to use the school as a facility for different events. Gilliland (1999) suggests opening up the gym for community recreation, getting Native American parents involved in curriculum planning and advisory committees, using Native American parents' suggestions to improve the school climate, and holding parent orientation meetings at the beginning of the school year.

This researcher believes that incentives may need to be offered in order to get Native American parents more involved in their children's education. For example, parents could be rewarded for volunteering in the classroom or serving on a curriculum planning committee. Local businesses could be contacted by the school and serve as sponsors, offering free goods or services for participating parents (i.e., free ice cream sundae for parent and child, free lunch for parent and child, free mini-golf pass for parent and child). Beyond incentives, education professionals and school administrators need to demonstrate a serious commitment to the cause, backing such programming through their time and effort.

Gilliland (1999) believes the key difference in the success of a parent and community involvement program is the commitment level of the education professionals. If teachers and other staff are unwilling to genuinely take interest in their Native American students and do not show parents that they want them involved, the program will be ineffective. Education

professionals must become a part of the community, keep the communication flowing with parents, assist parents in helping their children at home, offer parent training programs, use parents as resources, recruit parents as volunteers, and try wholeheartedly to get the whole school and community involved in order for parent and community involvement among Native Americans to increase (Gilliland, 1999).

By improving student-teacher relationships, curriculum content and style of teaching, and parent and community involvement within the school, education professionals will be on the right track to helping Native American students succeed academically. These school climate interventions will help minimize the cultural discontinuity Native American students face at school. According to the Nations At Risk Task Force (cited in Gilliland, 1999), “schools that respect and support a student's language and culture are significantly more successful in educating those students” (p. 5). Education professionals need to make school a place where Native American students feel respected, encouraged, and at peace with their cultural identity.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter will reiterate the statement of the problem and review the research questions for this study. The chapter will also describe the methodology of the study, including subject selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Limitations of the study will also be discussed.

Research shows that the Native American school-aged population is growing faster than the national average (The National Indian Education Association, 2003) and that many Native American students are struggling in school or have already dropped out (Sanders, cited in Garrett, 1995; Sue & Sue, 2003; Freeman & Fox, 2005). There is a need within the public education system to address the low academic achievement and high dropout rates of Native American students. Numerous studies attribute these negative educational outcomes to the cultural discontinuity that Native American students experience while attending mainstream schools (Noland-Giles, 1984; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993).

This study was designed to assess teachers' perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis and the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students. The investigator was interested in obtaining information to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do school teachers support the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as an explanation of the negative educational outcomes of Native American students?
2. To what extent do school teachers believe traditional Native American values conflict with the current mainstream education system?
3. What school climate interventions for Native American students do school teachers perceive as effective?

Subject Selection and Description

A rural school district in Wisconsin was selected to participate in the study based on the predominantly Native American student population. The investigator was interested in surveying teachers in this district due to their daily contact with Native American students. All certified teachers in the district, regardless of grade level or subject matter taught, or years of teaching experience, were asked to participate in this study. The school board approved the study prior to contacting the teachers. Teacher participation was voluntary and teacher names remained confidential.

The school district surveyed is comprised of approximately 110 teachers and 1000 students, of which, 99% are Native American. The school district is considered to be at-risk due to its rural location and high level of families and children living in poverty.

Instrumentation

Prior to beginning the study, the survey was submitted and determined to be exempt from review by the UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The project was ruled to be exempt under Category 2 of the Federal Exempt Guidelines. A copy of the letter indicating the exemption can be found in Appendix A.

A cover letter was included with the survey to inform participants of the following: the purposes of the study, a guarantee of their confidentiality if they chose to participate, their ability to withdraw from the study at any time, and the fact that their completion of the survey implied their consent. A copy of the cover letter is located in Appendix B.

The survey was created to assess teachers' perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis and the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students. The survey's creation was based on the current research that was reviewed by the

researcher for her Master of Science in Education thesis. The survey consists of four categories: 1) Respondent Information (basic demographic information), 2) Hypotheses for Negative Educational Outcomes (rating the degree to which the teacher agrees/disagrees with cultural discontinuity hypothesis), 3) Traditional Native American Values and the Current Mainstream Education System (rating the degree to which the teacher believes traditional Native American values conflict or are congruent with the values emphasized in the current mainstream U.S. education system), and 4) The Effectiveness of School Climate Interventions for Native American Students (rating the degree to which the teacher believes school climate interventions are effective for Native American students). The questions were designed to be straightforward and easy to answer in a short period of time. The survey consisted of 20 questions and required approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Due to the fact that the survey was designed specifically for this study, no measures of reliability or validity were available. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

Data Collection Procedures

In December 2007, a school psychologist in the participating school district distributed the survey, cover letter, and envelope to the participants. The research materials were distributed during a staff meeting (at the primary school) or were put in teachers' school mailboxes (at the middle school and high school). To ensure the anonymity of respondents, the surveys were placed in sealed envelopes after completion and returned to the school psychologist in person or via inter-office mail. A total of 110 surveys were distributed, which accounted for the majority of certified teachers within the school district. At the end of the data collection period, January 22, 2008, a total of 50 surveys were collected, which represented approximately 45% of the distributed surveys.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze the collected data. Analyses were conducted to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, to discover to what extent traditional Native American values intersected with the current mainstream education system, and to determine the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students. The chapters that follow will present the findings and conclusions based on the analyses.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was that no reliability or validity measures existed for the survey because it was created for this study. Another major limitation of the study is its lack of generalization. It is vital to remember that teacher perceptions from only one district were collected and that the Native American student population in that school district primarily represents one tribal entity. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing the results of the study to teacher perceptions in other school districts. Another potential limitation of this study is that the participants may not have responded openly and honestly due to the sensitive nature of the topics covered in the survey. Several participants noted on their surveys that they did not feel comfortable answering questions regarding traditional Native American values. Other participants indicated that they believe school climate interventions should be effective for all students regardless of race.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter outlines the results of the survey that was completed by certified teachers in a rural Wisconsin school district in December 2007 through January 2008. The data collected was in relationship to teachers' perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis and the effectiveness of school climate interventions for Native American students. The first section of the chapter briefly highlights the demographic information of the participants. The remaining sections of the chapter examine how the data collected answered the study's research questions.

Demographic Information

In the first section of the survey, basic demographic information was gathered from the participants. The first survey item asked the participants to indicate the grade level(s) they teach (see Table 2, below). Of the 50 participants, six reported that they teach at more than one level (i.e., elementary and middle school). Almost two-thirds of the participants reported working at the elementary level and nearly one-fourth at the middle school level. Therefore, the number of teachers surveyed who work at the high school level was minimal (9%).

Table 2

Grade Level(s) Taught by Participants

Level Taught	Frequency (Number of Responses)	Percentage
Elementary (K-5)	37	66%
Middle School (6-8)	13	23%
High School (9-12)	5	9%
Other: Head Start	1	2%

The skewed breakdown between the different grade levels taught by participants may have inadvertently affected the results of the study. For example, the 66% of participants teaching at the elementary level may have significantly different views regarding the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, traditional Native American values, and the effectiveness of school climate interventions, than their middle school and high school counterparts. Likewise, the 23% of the participants teaching at the middle school level may have different views regarding this study's variables than participants teaching at the elementary and high school levels. Research shows that Native American students experience more positive educational outcomes in elementary school than in later years. Native American students do quite well in school up until fourth grade. And, then, after the seventh grade, a pattern emerges showing a decrease in achievement motivation (Sanders, cited in Garrett, 1995; Sue & Sue, 2003). As a result, the elementary teachers may not have seen the same type of conflicts between traditional Native American values as middle school or high school teachers.

In addition to indicating the grade level(s) taught, participants were asked to report their position or title (see Table 3, p. 48). Over half of participants reported their position as a classroom teacher. Of the 27 classroom teachers, 22 reported teaching at the elementary level. Four participants reported being elective teachers (i.e., art, physical education, general and vocal music), with two indicating that they teach at multiple levels. Of the 11 special education teachers or other specialized special education professionals surveyed, six worked exclusively at the elementary level, three at the middle school level, one at the high school level, and one across all three levels. With regard to the academic support teachers surveyed, five of the six reading and/or math support or Title I teachers worked at the elementary level. Based on these numbers, the majority of the special education teachers/professionals and support teachers surveyed

Table 3

Positions/Titles of Participants and Level(s) Taught

Position/Title	Frequency (Number of Responses)	Percentage
Classroom Teacher	27	54%
Elementary Level	22	
Middle School Level	4	
High School Level	1	
Multiple Levels	0	
Special Education Teacher/Specialized Professional	11	22%
Elementary Level	6	
Middle School Level	3	
High School Level	1	
Multiple Levels	1	
Reading and/or Math Support or Title I Teacher	6	12%
Elementary Level	5	
Middle School Level	1	
High School Level	0	
Multiple Levels	0	
Elective Teacher	4	8%
Elementary Level	1	
Middle School Level	1	
High School Level	0	
Multiple Levels	2	
No response	2	4%
Elementary Level	1	
Middle School Level	1	
High School Level	0	
Multiple Levels	0	

worked exclusively at the elementary level (n=12, 75%). This finding is fairly reflective of the participating district's larger teacher breakdown. According to the district's staff directory, the majority (52.8%) of special education teachers/professionals and support teachers work at the elementary level. This suggests that there are more supports in place for students who are struggling in school at the elementary level than at the middle and high school levels in the participating district. As a result, elementary teachers may have different perceptions of the variables examined in this study. Overall, nearly two-thirds of the participants, regardless of their position/title, indicated that they teach at the elementary level.

In summary, the demographic information provided by the participants indicated that the majority of teachers surveyed taught at the elementary level and were classroom teachers. As a result, the sample was unrepresentative of all teachers in the participating district. This finding is important to keep in mind when considering how the data collected answered the study's three research questions.

Item Analysis

Research Question One. To what extent do school teachers support the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as an explanation of the negative educational outcomes of Native American students?

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as one plausible explanation of the negative education outcomes of Native American students (see Table 4, p. 50).

Table 4

Research Question One: Support of Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis

Rating	Frequency (Number of Responses)	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	2	4%
Disagree	13	26%
Neutral	16	32%
Agree	19	38%
Strongly Agree	0	0%

Of the 50 participants who responded to this item, two participants (4%) indicated they strongly disagree and 13 (26%) participants indicated they disagree with the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. A total of 19 (38%) participants did indicate that they agree with the cultural discontinuity hypothesis; however, no participants indicated they strongly agree with the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. Sixteen (32%) participants indicated neutrality regarding the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. The fact that nearly one-third of participants did not want to commit themselves to agreeing or disagreeing with the hypothesis suggests that these participants may be unfamiliar with the hypothesis or that they do not want to commit to a hypothesis that connects the negative educational outcomes of Native American students to the current mainstream education system.

In addition to rating the extent to which they agree or disagree with the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, participants were invited to provide other plausible explanations for the negative educational outcomes of Native American students. A total of 34 participants responded

to this open-ended question, many providing more than one explanation in their response. The researcher observed that these explanations seemed to naturally fall into categories of “like responses.” Therefore, the researcher grouped the different explanations provided by participants into eight themes (see Table 5, below). Some participants included more than one response per theme in their answer; the researcher counted only one response per theme per participant when calculating the frequency percentages. The researcher was unable to categorize five responses into the eight themes, and thus they are listed under “Other miscellaneous responses.” For a complete list of responses see Array of Other Plausible Explanations, Appendix D.

Table 5

Other Plausible Explanations for Negative Educational Outcomes of Native American Students

Theme	Frequency (Number of Responses)
Home environment with regard to parental support and stability	15
Education is not valued or seen as important	10
Social/community problems (i.e., drugs and alcohol)	8
Lack of effort and motivation from students	5
Conflict between poverty and middle class	5
Students' negative behaviors that conflict with academics	4
System-level challenges	4
Living in the present day, not looking toward the future	3
Other miscellaneous responses	5

Several of the plausible explanation themes correlate with traditional Native American values. For example, the theme, *Home environment with regard to parental support and stability*, may be correlated with traditional Native American family structure. It is important for education professionals to remember that traditional Native American family structure is different than most mainstream American family structure. The typical Native American family is comprised of immediate and extended family members, but often non-relative community members are included as well (Noland-Giles, 1984; Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Garrett, 1995; Sutton & Broken Nose, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2003; Tsai & Alanis, 2004). These families are likely to view all of these individuals as important, valuing all of their opinions. On the other hand, mainstream Americans tend to view only their immediate household family members as the most important, rarely asking extended family members for their advice or opinions or including non-blood relatives in their family. Thus, the Native American extended family structure may at times be misinterpreted by education professionals as lacking in terms of stability and support, when in reality these educators may just need to communicate and work with additional family members, not just a student's parents. Involvement of individuals within the extended family network may promote positive reinforcement when trying to strengthen the home-school connection or when implementing an intervention.

Several participants reported *Lack of effort and motivation from students* and *Negative behaviors that conflict with academics* as plausible explanations for the negative educational outcomes of Native American students. These explanations may be tied to the traditional Native American values of harmony, balance, and noninterference. For example, a teacher may find it "normal" for mainstream American students to control and even try to manipulate their school environment (i.e., ask questions, slow their teacher down for clarification, bargain with their

teacher for a better grade, speak for a fellow classmate) (Garrett, 1995). On the other hand, Native American students may strive to maintain harmony, balance, and noninterference within their school environment, especially with peers and teachers. For these reasons, they are more likely than their mainstream American peers to learn quietly through observation, instead of trying to manipulate their school environments through verbal encounters with their teachers. As a result, teachers may come to view Native American students as more passive than active learners. Some education professionals may even interpret these more passive behaviors as conflicting with academics, and may believe they indicate a lack of effort and motivation on the student's part.

Another plausible explanation supported by some of the participants was *Living in the present day, not looking toward the future*. This explanation may correlate with the traditional Native American value of present time orientation. In Native American cultures, the concept of readiness determines when things start and end – a concept referred to as “Indian time” (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). This time orientation incorporating “readiness” does not have at its heart punctuality or planning for the future – time concepts emphasized in mainstream American society (Sue & Sue, 2003). Instead, Native Americans focus on the present, the here and now, in their daily interactions (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Sue & Sue, 2003). As a result, Native American students may not possess the same type of future oriented mindset and/or planning skills that many mainstream students have internalized.

Research Question Two. What extent do school teachers believe traditional Native American values conflict with the current mainstream education system?

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they believe the 14 different traditional Native American values listed on the survey conflict or are congruent with the values

emphasized in our current mainstream education system (see Table 6, pp. 55-56). Of the 14 traditional Native American values, 10 were rated as more conflicting than congruent with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system. In contrast, only four of the 14 traditional Native American values included in the survey were rated as more congruent with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system.

The value that emerged as the most conflicting based on participants' ratings was *Not very interested in planning for future*. Nearly three-fourths of participants rated this item as conflicting or very conflicting. Teachers may perceive this value as highly conflicting due to the strong emphasis placed on planning for the future in our current mainstream education system (i.e., career exploration, postsecondary planning). Several of the values that were rated as more conflicting than congruent are related to relationships and working with others. These values included: *Cooperating (vs. competing) with others to complete task or reach goal*, *Do not try to interfere with the affairs of others unless asked to do so*, *Importance of nonverbal behaviors in communication*, *Sensitivity and understanding of others' nonverbal communication*, *Community needs more important than own*, *Emphasis on helping others*, and *Important to get along well with others*. Based on these results, the traditional Native American values related to community (cooperation, helping others, or simply getting along) are not emphasized to the same extent in the current mainstream education system as in traditional Native American cultures. In addition, not interfering with others is viewed as more important in Native American communities than in mainstream society. Research suggests that the Native American value of noninterference is not reflected in mainstream public schools; instead, students are encouraged and rewarded for being outgoing and assertive in their classrooms (Garrett, 1995). Traditional Native American students prefer to learn through observation, not action (refer back to Chapter II).

Table 6

Research Question Two: Traditional Native American Values - Conflicting or Congruent with Mainstream U.S. Values

Traditional Native American Values	Very Conflicting	Conflicting	Neutral	Congruent	Very Congruent
Not very interested in planning for future	42.6% (20)*	29.8% (14)	14.9% (7)	10.6% (5)	2.1% (1)
Focus of doing what is right for oneself	12.2% (6)	34.7% (17)	30.6% (15)	18.4% (9)	4.1% (2)
Not interfering in the affairs of others unless asked to do so	12.2% (6)	34.7% (17)	42.9% (21)	10.2% (5)	0% (0)
Working to meet present needs	12.2% (6)	28.6% (14)	36.7% (18)	20.4% (10)	2.0% (1)
Cooperating (vs. competing) with others to complete task or reach goal	10.2% (5)	36.7% (18)	36.7% (18)	14.3% (7)	2.0% (1)
Importance of nonverbal behaviors in communication	10.2% (5)	34.7% (17)	38.8% (19)	16.3% (8)	0% (0)
Spirituality as a way of life	10.2% (5)	20.4% (10)	46.9% (23)	16.3% (8)	6.1% (3)
Community needs more important than own; emphasis on helping others	6.3% (3)	27.1% (13)	47.9% (23)	18.8% (9)	0% (0)

*Note: the number of responses per item is indicated in parentheses (#)

Table 6

Research Question Two: Traditional Native American Values - Conflicting or Congruent with Mainstream U.S. Values (Continued)

Traditional Native American Values	Very Conflicting	Conflicting	Neutral	Congruent	Very Congruent
Important to get along well with others	2.1% (1)	37.5% (18)	41.7% (20)	12.5% (6)	6.3% (3)
Sensitivity and understanding of others' nonverbal communication	2.0% (1)	42.9% (21)	40.8% (20)	14.3% (7)	0% (0)
Reliance on extended family	8.2% (4)	28.6% (14)	20.4% (10)	26.5% (13)	16.3% (8)
Important to respect nature and spend time in the natural world	4.1% (2)	22.4% (11)	38.8% (19)	24.5% (12)	10.2% (5)
Respect for elders	2.0% (1)	14.3% (7)	38.8% (19)	36.7% (18)	8.2% (4)
Sharing with family and friends	0% (0)	12.2% (6)	34.7% (17)	46.9% (23)	6.1% (3)

*Note: the number of responses per item is indicated in parentheses (#)

Differences in the meanings of non-verbal communication are also likely to exist between Native American and mainstream communities. As indicated in the literature, these differences in communication styles can lead to misunderstandings between mainstream American teachers and Native American students (Garrett et al., 2003; Sue & Sue, 2003). Additional values rated as more conflicting than congruent included *Spirituality as a way of life*, *Working to meet present needs*, and *Focus of doing what is right for oneself*. This data suggests that all these Native American values could be emphasized more in the current mainstream education system to make education more culturally continuous for Native American students.

Four traditional Native American values were rated as more congruent with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system than conflicting. These results suggest that the participating district may have already incorporated these values into their curricula or school-wide expectations. *Sharing with family and friends*, *Respecting elders*, and *Respecting nature and spending time in the natural world* are values that are typically embraced in some form or another by most public school systems. The two values with the highest congruence ratings, *Sharing with family and friends* and *Respecting elders*, are strongly emphasized in schools because they directly affect a student's behavior with peers and authority figures. The participating teachers also rated *Reliance on extended family* as more congruent than conflicting, suggesting that teachers in the participating district may already be seeking out extended family members as other potential supporters for their students.

Instead of rating a value as conflicting or congruent, participants could choose to rate the value as neither conflicting nor congruent. Over one-third of the participants rated 11 out of the 14 values as neutral. This finding indicates that many teachers in the participating district have either not thought in detail about the relationship between the two sets of values, do not want to

commit to viewing the values as conflicting or congruent, do not see traditional Native American values as conflicting or congruent with the values emphasized in the current mainstream education system, or do not see the importance of traditional Native American values in the Native American communities.

Research Question Three. What school climate interventions for Native American students did teachers perceive as effective?

Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of 21 different school climate interventions for Native American students. The researcher categorized these interventions under three headings: Student-Teacher Relationship, Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching, and Parent and Community Support.

Under the Student-Teacher Relationship category, all six interventions were rated as effective or very effective by at least three-fourths of the participants (see Table 7, p. 59). Based on the results of this study, interventions designed to improve the relationships between students and teachers appear to be effective to use with Native American students. These interventions target the development of cultural awareness, trust, genuine care and understanding, and healthy communication.

Three-fourths of participants rated *Increase knowledge of traditional Native American values* as a very effective or effective intervention to use with Native American students. By interviewing Native American youth, Coladarci (1983) and Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock (2003) also identified this as a characteristic of effective teachers. By becoming more knowledgeable about traditional Native American values, teachers are able to develop more meaningful relationships with their students. Over 90% of participants in this study rated *Show students you care about them; one on one positive interactions* and *Take personal interest in*

Table 7

Research Question Three: Effectiveness of Student-Teacher Relationship Interventions

Intervention	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective	Effective	Very Effective
Increase knowledge of traditional Native American values	2.0% (1)*	10.2% (5)	12.2% (6)	51.0% (25)	24.5% (12)
				75.5%	
Show students you care about them; one on one positive interactions	0% (0)	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	32.7% (16)	63.3% (31)
				96.0%	
Sensitivity and understanding of nonverbal communication	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	18.4% (9)	51.0% (25)	26.5% (13)
				77.5%	
Follow through with what you say you will do to build trust	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.0% (1)	49.0% (24)	49.0% (24)
				96.0%	
Give students several choices instead of telling them what to do	0% (0)	6.1% (3)	18.4% (9)	42.9% (21)	32.7% (16)
				75.6%	
Take personal interest in students' lives, culturally and academically	0% (0)	0% (0)	8.2% (4)	46.9% (23)	44.9% (22)
				91.8%	

*Note: the number of responses per item is indicated in parentheses (#)

students' lives, culturally and academically as effective or very effective interventions. Likewise, Coladarci (1983) and Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock (2003) found these to be qualities of effective teachers, as identified by Native American youth. The remaining three Student-Teacher Relationship interventions, *Following through with what you say you will do to build trust*, *Sensitivity and understanding of nonverbal communication*, and *Give students several choices instead of telling them what to do* were highlighted by Garrett et al (2003) as areas teachers should seek to improve upon with their Native American students. All three of these interventions received strong support from participants, obtaining effective or very effective ratings between 75% and 96%. Overall, the results suggest that the teachers surveyed have found interventions designed to improve student-teacher relationships effective to use with Native American students.

All interventions under this category had extremely low ineffective percentages, with the highest combined rating for ineffective and very ineffective totaling 12.2% for *Increase knowledge of traditional Native American values*. For most of the other five interventions, the ineffective and very ineffective percentages were almost negligible, suggesting that only a small percentage of the participants perceived the student-teacher relationship interventions to result in insufficient or no progress for students. *Sensitivity and understanding of nonverbal communication* and *Give students several choices instead of telling them what to do* received the highest neutral ratings. Almost one-fifth of participants perceived these interventions to be neither ineffective nor effective (neutral). These participants may not have used the interventions with their students and therefore do not have an opinion of their effectiveness, or participants may have implemented the interventions, but the student progress made, individually or collectively, was too inconsistent to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Under the Effectiveness of Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching category, three out of the six interventions were rated as effective or very effective by at least three-fourths of the participants (see Table 8, p. 62). According to the results of this study, several interventions designed to improve the curriculum content and style of teaching for Native American students hold merit in the eyes of the participating teachers. These interventions are designed to help Native American students more successfully transition between home and school.

As evidenced in Table 8, the participants believe the *Use of culturally appropriate instructional techniques to accommodate learning styles* is an effective intervention to use with Native American students. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (n.d.), Rohner (cited in Reyner, 1992), Gilliland (1999), and Garrett et al. (2003) confirm the idea that Native American students have different learning styles than many mainstream students and that use of culturally appropriate instructional techniques is one way teachers can minimize these differences. In addition, participants offered strong support (with almost 86% of participants rating this intervention as effective or very effective) for *Make curriculum content relevant for all students*, an intervention aimed at inclusion of everyone, even Native American students. Tsai and Alanis (2004) and Reyhner (1992) discuss the rationale behind incorporating culturally relevant content into curriculum. *Use of cooperative learning groups*, a technique supported in the literature (Garrett et al, 2003), also received substantial support from participants in this study. The idea behind this intervention ties in well with cooperation and group orientation, two values typically embraced by traditional Native American cultures. The high effectiveness percentages associated with *Integrate music, drama, stories and legends into instruction* and *Create culturally congruent classroom environment* suggest that the teachers surveyed have found it valuable to interconnect their lessons and classroom environment with aspects of Native

Table 8

Research Question Three: Effectiveness of Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching Interventions

Intervention	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective	Effective	Very Effective
Use culturally appropriate curriculum materials	0% (0)*	8.2% (4)	40.8% (20)	38.8% (19)	12.2% (6)
				51.0%	
Make curriculum content relevant for <u>all</u> students	0% (0)	2.0% (1)	12.2% (6)	51.0% (25)	34.7% (17)
				85.7%	
Use culturally appropriate instructional techniques to accommodate learning styles	0% (0)	0% (0)	8.2% (4)	55.1% (27)	36.7% (18)
				91.8%	
Use cooperative learning groups	0% (0)	2.0% (1)	20.4% (10)	61.2% (30)	16.3% (8)
				77.5%	
Integrate music, drama, stories and legends into instruction	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	26.5% (13)	38.8% (19)	30.6% (15)
				69.4%	
Create culturally congruent classroom environment	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	24.5% (12)	44.9% (22)	26.5% (13)
				71.4%	

*Note: the number of responses per item is indicated in parentheses (#)

American cultures. Gilliland (1999) and Garrett et al. (2003) identified these as strategies for actively engaging Native American students in the classroom.

All interventions under this category had extremely low ineffective percentages. No interventions were rated in the very ineffective range and the highest ineffective rating percentage was 8.2%. This suggests that only a small percentage of the participants perceived these interventions to result in insufficient or no progress for students. Of the six interventions, four received a neutral rating (neither ineffective nor effective) of 20% or higher, indicating that more than one-fifth of participants perceived these interventions to be neither effective nor ineffective (i.e., no experience with intervention, student progress was inconsistent with intervention). One of these interventions was the *Use of culturally appropriate curriculum materials* – an intervention that is closely tied to the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. Two-fifths of participants rated this intervention as neither ineffective nor effective. One possible explanation for this finding may be that participants have struggled to find and/or purchase culturally appropriate curriculum materials. Therefore, participants may have rated *Use culturally appropriate instructional techniques to accommodate learning styles*, an intervention that they have more control over and that requires fewer resources, as a more effective intervention.

Under the Parent and Community Support category, one out of the nine interventions, *Have Native American home-school coordinators working in the school system*, was rated as effective or very effective by at least three-fourths of the participants (see Table 9, pp. 64-65). Based on the teacher perceptions in this study, interventions designed to improve parent and community support for Native American students were not seen as effective as a whole as either student-teacher relationships or curriculum content and style of teaching interventions. Parent

Table 9

Research Question Three: Effectiveness of Parent and Community Support Interventions

Intervention	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective	Effective	Very Effective
Teachers become part of the community through attending/participating in events	8.2% (4)*	2.0% (1)	26.5% (13)	42.9% (21)	20.4% (10)
				63.3%	
Increase communication between school and home	0% (0)	4.2% (2)	22.9% (11)	35.4% (17)	37.5% (18)
				72.9%	
Share ideas with parents for working with students at home	0% (0)	6.1% (3)	24.5% (12)	42.9% (21)	26.5% (13)
				69.4%	
Have Native American home-school coordinators working in the school system	0% (0)	8.2% (4)	16.3% (8)	42.9% (21)	32.7% (16)
				75.6%	
Provide parent training in early childhood education	2.0% (1)	6.1% (3)	26.5% (13)	26.5% (13)	38.8% (19)
				65.3%	
Use parents as resources	0% (0)	8.2% (4)	24.5% (12)	44.9% (22)	22.4% (11)
				67.3%	
Bring Indian and non-Indian elders into the classroom to talk with the students	2.0% (1)	8.2% (4)	34.7% (17)	36.7% (18)	18.4% (9)
				55.1%	

*Note: the number of responses per item is indicated in parentheses (#)

Table 9

Research Question Three: Effectiveness of Parent and Community Support Interventions

(Continued)

Intervention	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neither Ineffective Nor Effective	Effective	
Recruit parents and grandparents as volunteers	2.0% (1)*	12.2% (6)	26.5% (13)	36.7% (18)	22.4% (11)
				59.1%	
Sponsor or open up school facilities for Native American events	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	30.6% (15)	36.7% (18)	28.6% (14)
				65.3%	

*Note: the number of responses per item is indicated in parentheses (#)

and community support interventions may include getting involved in the community, communicating with parents on a regular basis, offering parent training programs, bringing parents into the classroom to share aspects of their culture, dialoguing between the tribal council and the school, and recruiting parents and tribal elders as volunteers.

Two Parent and Community Support interventions obtained effective or very effective ratings of 72% or more: *Increase communication between school and home* and *Have Native American home-school coordinators working in the school system*. Both of these interventions are designed to increase communication between school and home; the only difference is “who” is doing the intervention – the teacher or a Native American home-school coordinator. Several interventions received effective or very effective ratings from 61% to 71% of participants. These interventions included: *Teachers become part of the community through attending/participating*

in events, Share ideas with parents for working with students at home, Provide parent training in early childhood education, Use parents as resources, and Sponsor or open up school facilities for Native American events. A commonality of these interventions is that the teacher controls their implementation with minimal responsibility placed on the Native American parents or community members. In addition, the interventions are not directly tied to school and, therefore, may not take place at school. Two interventions, *Bring Indian and non-Indian elders into the classroom to talk with the students* and *Recruit parents and grandparents as volunteers*, received lower ratings (50%-60% of participants rated these interventions as effective or very effective). Teachers may be hesitant to ask Native American parents or community members to come into their classrooms, as many Native American adults are reluctant to even enter through the school doors, let alone trust education professionals, due to the negative educational experiences (i.e., forced boarding schools) Native Americans have experienced in the past.

Even though the effectiveness percentages were not nearly as high for the parent and community support interventions as for the interventions in the other two categories, all interventions under this category had low ineffective percentages. The highest combined rating for ineffective and very ineffective totaled 14.2%. This suggests that only a small percentage of the participants perceived these interventions to result in insufficient or no progress for students. Of the nine interventions, eight received neutral ratings (neither ineffective nor effective) of 20% or higher, indicating that at least one-fifth of participants have not found these interventions to be effective or ineffective, or that they have not used these interventions with their students, and therefore, do not have an opinion on their effectiveness. Implementation of these interventions requires interaction with members of the Native American community, involvement in events outside of school, and recruitment of volunteers. Some of the factors possibly hindering teachers'

implementation of these interventions include time constraints, home residence in other communities, and/or feeling uncomfortable about interacting with the Native American community.

In addition to rating the effectiveness of school climate interventions, participants were invited to describe other school climate interventions for Native American students that they have found to be effective. Eighteen participants elected to respond to this open-ended question, many providing several different interventions within their response. The researcher categorized the school climate intervention ideas under the same three headings used on the survey (Student-Teacher Relationships, Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching, and Parent and Community Support) and calculated frequency rates for each (see Table 10, below). The researcher counted only one response per intervention category per participant. Therefore, if the participants provided more than one response per intervention category in their answers, the researcher counted this as only one when calculating the frequency percentages.

Table 10

Other Effective School Climate Interventions for Native American Students

Type of School Climate Intervention	Frequency
	(Number of Responses)
Parent and Community Support	9
Student-Teacher Relationships	5
Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching	3
Other Miscellaneous Responses	4

Of the 18 participants who responded to this item, nine provided responses related to increasing parent and community support, five provided responses related to building and improving student-teacher relationships, and three provided responses related to curriculum content and style of teaching. These findings support the literature's grouping of the three types of school climate interventions: Parent and Community Support, Student-Teacher Relationships, and Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching. In addition, the results indicate that many of the participating district's teachers have identified the need for addressing these areas of school climate, especially with regard to increasing parent and community support. The researcher was unable to categorize four responses into the three types of interventions, and thus they are listed under "Other Miscellaneous Responses." Of these four responses, two participants noted that most methods discussed in the survey are effective regardless of race or culture. For a complete list of responses see Array of Other Effective School Climate Interventions, Appendix E.

Summary of Results

Fifty certified teachers completed the survey for this research study, the majority of them being classroom teachers. The breakdown between the different grade levels taught by participants was skewed. Almost two-thirds of the participants reported working at the elementary level and nearly one-fourth at the middle school level. Therefore, the number of high school teachers surveyed was minimal.

Results revealed that the participants indicated varying degrees of support for the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. Of the fifty participants, 30% indicated some degree of disagreement with the hypothesis, 38% indicated agreement with the hypothesis, and 32% indicated neutrality. The fact that nearly one-third of participants did not want to commit themselves to agreeing or

disagreeing with the hypothesis suggests that these participants may be unfamiliar with the hypothesis or that they do not want to commit to a hypothesis that connects the negative educational outcomes of Native American students to the current mainstream education system.

In addition, the majority of participants do not view traditional Native American values as conflicting with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system, with the exception of one value – *Not very interested in planning for future*. Several of the other values that were rated as more conflicting than congruent dealt with relationships and working with people. Overall, the majority of teachers in the school district surveyed do not view the traditional Native American values included on the survey as conflicting with the values emphasized in their schools.

Participants did, however, rate many of the school climate interventions targeted at making education more culturally continuous for Native American students as effective, especially interventions targeted at student-teacher relationships and curriculum content and teaching style. The interventions designed to strengthen parent and community support through increasing communication between home and school were also rated as effective.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis and the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students. Fifty teachers in a rural Wisconsin school district with a predominantly Native American student population responded to a survey aligned with the following research questions:

1. To what extent do school teachers support the cultural discontinuity hypothesis as an explanation of the negative educational outcomes of Native American students?
2. To what extent do school teachers believe traditional Native American values conflict with the current mainstream education system?
3. What school climate interventions for Native American students do school teachers perceive as effective?

For this study, descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) were used to analyze the data in relation to the research questions. Analyses were conducted to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, the relationship between traditional Native American values and the current mainstream education system, and the effectiveness of certain school climate interventions for Native American students.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the survey does not have established reliability and validity (refer back to Chapter III, p. 45). A second limitation to the study is that the participants may not have responded openly and honestly due to the sensitive nature of the topics covered in the survey. Several participants noted on their surveys that they did not feel comfortable answering questions regarding traditional Native American values. Other participants indicated

that they believe school climate interventions should be effective for all students regardless of race. A third limitation of this study is its lack of generalization. Teacher perceptions were only obtained from one school district that serves Native American students from primarily one tribal entity. Thus, the findings should not be generalized to teachers in other school districts who may be working with Native American students from other tribal entities. In addition, a great degree of within-group differences exist among Native American populations.

Before understanding this research project, the researcher discussed the heterogeneous nature of Native American populations (refer back to Chapter II). The researcher wanted readers to understand the magnitude of the between- and within-group differences that exist among these populations. Due to these differences, it is impossible to generalize any research findings to all Native Americans. As a result, education professionals need to be careful not to stereotype members of this population. They need to know each student's tribal identity as well as learn to view each student as an individual when assessing his or her personal/social, academic, and career needs. But, also, it is important for education professionals to be aware of their students' value systems in order to design and implement appropriate school climate interventions. For example, an intervention that may be appropriate for a highly traditional Native American student may be completely inappropriate for a Native American student who solely identifies with mainstream culture.

Conclusions

Fifty certified teachers from a rural Wisconsin district with a predominantly Native American student population completed the survey for this research study. The breakdown between the grade levels taught by participants was skewed toward the elementary level, representing nearly two-thirds of the participants. The demographic information collected also

indicated that the majority of participants were classroom teachers.

One purpose of this study was to explore the cultural discontinuity Native American students experience while attending public schools. The literature suggests that there is a major cultural clash between traditional Native American values and the mainstream American values taught in the U.S. public school system. According to the literature, the issue of cultural discontinuity in the schools is a major contributing factor to the high dropout rate and low academic performance of Native American students. In this study, teachers were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. Mixed results were obtained. The difference between the number of participants who agreed or disagreed with the hypothesis was not substantial. Thirty-eight percent ($n = 19$) of the participants agreed with the hypothesis (although no participants strongly agreed), whereas 30% ($n = 15$) strongly disagreed or disagreed. It is important to note that a large percentage of participants indicated neutrality with regard to the hypothesis ($n = 16$, 32%), suggesting that many teachers may not have an opinion about the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, are not familiar with this hypothesis, or do not want to support a hypothesis that ties the poor educational outcomes of Native American students to the mainstream education system.

The literature also suggests that a basic core set of traditional Native American values exists (refer back to Chapter II). These values include an extended family structure; a respect for elders; an emphasis on community, cooperation, sharing, harmony and balance; spirituality as a way of life; noninterference; a strong reliance on nonverbal communication; and a present time orientation. Research suggests that inherent conflicts between the traditional Native American values and mainstream American values are evident in most public schools and, as a result, often create cultural discontinuity for Native American students.

In this study, teachers were asked to rate the degree to which they believe the traditional Native American values conflict or are congruent with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system. The majority (at least 50%) of participants rated only one out of the fourteen values in the survey as very conflicting or conflicting with the current mainstream education system – *Not very interested in planning for future* ($n = 34, 72.4\%$). This may be due to the strong emphasis placed on planning for the future in our current mainstream education system. This finding suggests that the majority of teachers in the school district surveyed do not view many of the traditional Native American values as conflicting with the values emphasized in their schools. Of the other values that were rated as more conflicting than congruent, many were related to relationships and working with others. These values included: *Cooperating (vs. competing) with others to complete task or reach goal, Do not try to interfere with the affairs of others unless asked to do so, Importance of nonverbal behaviors in communication, Sensitivity and understanding of others' nonverbal communication, Community needs more important than own, Emphasis on helping others, and Important to get along well with others*. Based on these results, the traditional Native American values related to community, cooperation, helping others, getting along, not interfering with others, and nonverbal communication are not emphasized to the same extent in the current mainstream education system as in Native American communities. Additional values rated as more conflicting than congruent included *Spirituality as a way of life, Working to meet present needs, and Focus of doing what is right for oneself*. This data suggests that these Native American values could be emphasized more in the current mainstream education system to make education more culturally continuous for Native American students.

Of the 14 traditional Native American values in the survey, 12 were rated by 30% to 48%

of the participants as neither conflicting nor congruent, indicating that many of the teachers surveyed perceived traditional Native American values to be neutral in relation to the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system.

The literature suggests that it is important for education professionals to be aware of how their Native American students' value systems may conflict with the mainstream values emphasized in U.S. public schools. This knowledge allows education professionals to design and implement specific school climate interventions, in their classrooms and school-wide, that reflect traditional Native American values. These interventions, in turn, will create a more culturally continuous and effective learning environment for Native American students.

Research points to three different areas of school climate that can be improved in schools to help minimize the cultural discontinuity Native American students face: student-teacher relationships, curriculum content and style of teaching, and parent and community support. This study examined teachers' perceptions of these three areas of school climate. In discussing this study's results and implications for the field of education, the researcher would like to highlight the school climate interventions that were rated as effective or very effective by at least 75% of the participants. Based on these high effectiveness percentages, the researcher believes that implementation of these interventions by education professionals will create a more culturally continuous education for Native American students, ultimately leading to more positive educational outcomes.

With regard to Student-Teacher Relationships, this study found that at least 75% of the teachers surveyed perceived the following interventions to be effective or very effective: *Follow through with what you say you will do to build trust; Show students you care about them, one on one positive interactions; Increase knowledge of traditional Native American values; Take*

personal interest in students' lives, culturally and academically; Sensitivity and understanding of nonverbal communication; and Give students several choices instead of telling them what to do.

These findings suggest that student-teacher relationships can be improved through teacher education and training that is focused on Native American students and their communities. As previously stated, education professionals need to become more knowledgeable and understanding of the basic core set of traditional Native American values. By doing so, education professionals will be able to interact more effectively with their students and will appear more caring and respectful to their Native American students.

Under the Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching category, the following school climate interventions were rated as very effective or effective by at least 75% of participants: *Use culturally appropriate instructional techniques to accommodate learning styles; Make curriculum content relevant for all students; and Use cooperative learning groups.* These results, in combination with the literature, suggest that knowledge of traditional Native American values can help education professionals adapt the curriculum content and style of teaching to meet Native American students' needs. Culturally appropriate curricula, instructional practices, and teaching styles need to be implemented in the schools to help Native American students transition successfully from home to school.

In this study, only one out of the nine interventions listed under the Parent and Community Support category was rated to be effective or very effective by at least 75% of the teachers surveyed: *Have Native American home-school coordinators working in the school system.* This finding suggests that many of the teachers surveyed have not found the other parent and community support interventions to be consistently effective or have not implemented them in their classrooms and/or school. In contrast to the results of this study, the literature suggests

that increasing Native American parent and community involvement in the schools improves the chances for positive educational outcomes for Native American students. Some strategies noted in the literature include getting involved in the community, communicating with parents on a regular basis, offering parent training programs, bringing parents into the classroom to share aspects of their culture, dialoguing between the tribal council and the school, and recruiting parent and tribal elders to be volunteers.

Recommendations

Future research should further assess the cultural discontinuity Native American students face in public schools. Interviews with students, teachers, administrators, school counselors, and parents can provide education professionals with valuable insight into the specific aspects of the public school system that react negatively with Native American values. Obtaining Native American students' perspectives on the issues affecting their education, as well as tribal leaders' and elders' perspectives, would be extremely valuable for education professionals working with Native American populations.

Due to the fact that the grade level breakdown between participants was skewed toward the elementary level, similar studies should target the perspectives of middle school and high school teachers. It is in these school years that Native American students experience decreased academic achievement and may possibly drop out of school. As a result, middle school and high school teachers may have different attitudes toward traditional Native American values. Future research should also examine what traditional Native American values elementary teachers stress in their classrooms that are no longer emphasized by the time students reach middle school and/or high school.

Researchers also need to explore other plausible explanations for the poor academic

performance and high drop out rates of Native American students, including how different social factors (i.e., racism, poverty, drugs and alcohol) affect Native American students' academic performance. Likewise, researchers should assess teacher expectations or lack of expectations for Native American students and the degree to which they affect Native American student performance. Additionally, researchers need to investigate ways education professionals can overcome the negative impact the U.S. educational system has had on Native American education in the past (i.e., forced boarding schools), which has greatly impeded parental and community involvement and support in the current public education process.

According to the literature, many Native American students are struggling in school or have already dropped out. In order to reverse this trend, education professionals must address the cultural discontinuity Native American students are facing within the public schools by implementing intentional school climate interventions like the ones supported by the results of this research study. Additional research should focus on the specific school climate interventions identified as effective for Native American students. The results of these studies would provide education professionals with more details regarding the specific ways they can improve school climate for Native American students, ultimately increasing their chances for academic success.

Clearly, there are many areas of Native American education that still need to be explored in order for educators to determine the cause of the low achievement and high dropout rates of Native American students. In order to gain a better understanding of Native American students' needs, researchers should gather information from a wide variety of sources (i.e., students, teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, tribal leaders, elders). In addition, school climate interventions designed to minimize the cultural discontinuity Native American students face in U.S. public schools should be implemented and, then, evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

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Appendix A: IRB Exemption Form



Research Services
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P.O. Box 790
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790

715/232-1126
715/232-1749 (fax)
<http://www.uwstout.edu/rs/>

Date: April 28, 2008

To: Jamie Lee Nord

Cc: Beatrice Bigony

From: Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB)

Subject: **Protection of Human Subjects in Research**

Your project, "*School Teachers' Perceptions of the cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis and the Effectiveness of School Climate Interventions for Native American Students*" is **Exempt** from review by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. The project is exempt under Category 2 of the Federal Exempt Guidelines and holds for 5 years.

Please copy and paste the following message to the top of your survey form before dissemination:

<p>This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46</p>

Please contact the IRB if the plan of your research changes. Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

***NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

SF:cb

Appendix B: Survey Cover Letter

December 10, 2007

Dear Teacher:

You have been selected to participate in a survey regarding school climate interventions for Native American students. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Knowing your heavy work schedule, the researcher greatly appreciates your willingness to participate in this survey.

Your responses will be used in an Education Specialist Thesis project entitled, "School Teachers' Perceptions of the Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis and the Effectiveness of School Climate Interventions for Native American Students." This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of school climate interventions for Native American students, as well as the degree to which traditional Native American values conflict with the current mainstream education system.

The completion of the survey implies voluntary participation in this study. If at any time you do not feel comfortable with the study, you have the right to withdraw your participation. The risks are minimal; however, it is possible that psychological stress and/or anxiety may be brought on while filling out the survey if one has extremely strong emotions regarding the negative educational outcomes many Native American students experience. Confidentiality is guaranteed; there will be no identifying information used in this study. Benefits of participating may include increased knowledge and curiosity about school climate interventions for Native American students. The results of the study may help education professionals in the future determine whether or not implementing a certain school climate intervention may be beneficial for Native American students. By completing and returning the following survey you are agreeing to participate in the project entitled, "School Teachers' Perceptions of the Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis and the Effectiveness of School Climate Interventions for Native American Students." If you choose to participate, please feel free to utilize the attached envelope to return the survey to Erin Prey, school psychologist, at Keshena Primary School, who will be collecting all the surveys for the investigator. Again, your participation will remain anonymous; therefore, your answers will not be linked to your identity. In addition, the name and area of your school will remain anonymous.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator: Jamie Nord, M.S.Ed.
612.747.3679, wiesnerja@uwstout.edu

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IRB Administrator
Sue Foxwell, Director, Research Services
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.
UW-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

I want to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and for your punctual assistance in collecting this information.

Sincerely,

Jamie Nord, M.S.Ed.
University of Wisconsin-Stout
School Psychology Graduate Student

Appendix C: Survey

This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

SURVEY:
SCHOOL CLIMATE INTERVENTIONS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

I. Respondent Information

1. School (Please specify grades, i.e. K-12, K-5, 6-8, 9-12, etc.)

- Elementary School Grades: _____
- Middle School Grades: _____
- High School Grades: _____
- Other Grades: _____ Please elaborate: _____

2. Years of service working with Native American students: _____ years

3. Present Position/Title: _____

II. Hypotheses for Negative Educational Outcomes

As you may know, many hypotheses exist to explain the low academic achievement and high dropout rates of Native American students.

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following hypothesis (as one plausible explanation), using the five-point scale below.

- 1 = Strongly disagree**
- 2 = Disagree**
- 3 = Neutral**
- 4 = Agree**
- 5 = Strongly agree**

4. The cultural discontinuity hypothesis attributes the negative educational outcomes of Native American students to the conflict that exists between traditional Native American values and our current mainstream education system
.....1 2 3 4 5

5. Please list other plausible explanations for the negative educational outcomes of Native American students:

Please continue on the back of this page

III. Traditional Native American Values in the Current Mainstream Education System

Please rate the following traditional Native American values according to the degree to which you believe they conflict or are congruent with the values emphasized in our current mainstream education system, using the five-point scale below.

- 1 = Very conflicting**
- 2 = Conflicting**
- 3 = Neither conflicting nor congruent**
- 4 = Congruent**
- 5 = Very congruent**

- 6. Reliance on extended family.....1 2 3 4 5
- 7. Respect for elders.....1 2 3 4 5
- 8. Community needs more important than own; emphasis on helping others..... 1 2 3 4 5
- 9. Cooperating (vs. competing) with others to complete task or reach goal.....1 2 3 4 5
- 10. Sharing with family and friends.....1 2 3 4 5
- 11. Working to meet present needs.....1 2 3 4 5
- 12. Not very interested in planning for the future.....1 2 3 4 5
- 13. Harmony and balance:
 - a. Important to get along well with others..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Important to respect nature and spend time in the natural world.....1 2 3 4 5
- 14. Spirituality as a way of life..... 1 2 3 4 5
- 15. Noninterference:
 - a. Focus on doing what is right for oneself.....1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Not interfering in the affairs of others unless asked to do so.....1 2 3 4 5
- 16. Nonverbal communication:
 - a. Importance of nonverbal behaviors in communication..... 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Sensitivity and understanding of others' nonverbal communication.....1 2 3 4 5

Please continue on the next page

IV. The Effectiveness of School Climate Interventions for Native American Students

Please rate the effectiveness of the following school climate interventions for Native American students, using the five-point scale below.

- 1 = Very ineffective**
2 = Ineffective
3 = Neither ineffective nor effective
4 = Effective
5 = Very effective

17. Student-Teacher Relationships

- a. Increase knowledge of traditional Native American values..... 1 2 3 4 5
 b. Show students you care about them; one on one positive interactions.... 1 2 3 4 5
 c. Sensitivity and understanding of nonverbal communication..... 1 2 3 4 5
 d. Follow through with what you say you will do to build trust..... 1 2 3 4 5
 e. Give students several choices instead of telling them what to do..... 1 2 3 4 5
 f. Take personal interest in students' lives, culturally and academically..... 1 2 3 4 5

18. Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching

- a. Use culturally appropriate curriculum materials.....1 2 3 4 5
 b. Make curriculum content relevant for all students.....1 2 3 4 5
 c. Use culturally appropriate instructional techniques to accommodate
 learning styles (i.e., observation, hands-on, visual).....1 2 3 4 5
 d. Use cooperative learning groups..... 1 2 3 4 5
 e. Integrate music, drama, stories and legends into instruction..... 1 2 3 4 5
 f. Create culturally congruent classroom environment (i.e., emphasize
 cooperation over competition, set aside quiet time)..... 1 2 3 4 5

Please continue on the back of this page

Please rate the effectiveness of the following school climate interventions for Native American students, using the five-point scale below.

- 1 = Very ineffective
 2 = Ineffective
 3 = Neither ineffective nor effective
 4 = Effective
 5 = Very effective

19. Parent and Community Support

- a. Teachers become part of the community through attending/participating in events..... 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Increase communication between school and home..... 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Share ideas with parents for working with students at home..... 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Have Native American home-school coordinators working in the school system..... 1 2 3 4 5
- e. Provide parent training in early childhood education..... 1 2 3 4 5
- f. Use parents as resources (i.e., guest speakers, parent advisory committee members).....1 2 3 4 5
- g. Bring Indian and non-Indian elders into the classroom to talk with the students.....1 2 3 4 5
- h. Recruit parents and grandparents as volunteers (i.e., classroom volunteers, field chaperones).....1 2 3 4 5
- i. Sponsor or open up school facilities for Native American events.....1 2 3 4 5

20. Please describe other school climate interventions that you have found to be effective:

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY.

Appendix D: Array of Other Plausible Explanations

Please list other plausible explanations for the negative educational outcomes of Native American students.

Responses Listed by Theme (n = 38)

1. Home Environment with Regard to Parental Support and Stability

Home environment

There is not the "value" of getting an education instilled in the students from home (some students).

Lack of parent support

Young parents struggling to raise children; children being moved from home to home

Minimal support at home; chaotic lifestyle

Lack of structure in some homes; too many uncertainties (daily) for some students

Dysfunctional families

Stability in the home; parent support

Family life; lack of at home role models

I don't think the conflict between traditional Native American values and our current mainstream education system is the problem; drugs, alcohol, and young unwed mothers without much parenting skills has been the issue affecting the negative educational outcomes.

Domestic abuse; working parents

Weak family support

Lack of parental involvement

Educational, family, and recreational experiences

Family structure does not always foster strong education support at home; many children come to school with heavy burdens (i.e., parents in jail, living with grandparents, etc.).

2. Education is Not Valued or Seen as Important

Perception toward school (some feel it is not important)

Little value in formal educational process

Lack of interest in school and its importance

Value of formal education

Boarding schools earlier gave negative attitude

Little "support" or "belief" in the educational system; significant people in the student's life don't hold "education" as something of value which could be because of their own educational experiences

Too many negative parental attitudes toward education based on their own experiences; attitudes rubbing off on kids

Education not seen as important compared to other problems facing families here

When students start school in Kindergarten, they are already below academic levels, which would be expected; the achievement gap continues to widen with each year.

Lack of skills to build on

3. Social/Community Problems (i.e., drugs and alcohol)

Drugs, alcohol, community problems

Drug and alcohol issues among peers

"Fitting in" in the community is more important than doing what is right for them

AODA issues

I don't think the conflict between traditional Native American values and our current mainstream education system is the problem; drugs, alcohol, and young unwed mothers without much parenting skills has been the issue affecting the negative educational outcomes.

Poverty; drugs; alcohol; gaming

Excessive use of drugs and alcohol

Social problems on reservation

4. Lack of Effort and Motivation from Students

No self-control and the work ethic of working toward a goal and achieving it; no motivation/lack of effort; apathy (They just don't care.)

Lack of motivation

Lack of stamina

Lack of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation too important to some students

Lack of motivation

5. Conflict Between Poverty and Middle Class

Some of the problem is conflict between poverty and middle-class values/communication

Poverty

Severe poverty; disconnect between middle class teachers and those in lower economic levels

Poverty mentality

Low income

6. Students' Negative Behaviors that Conflict with Academics

Negative behaviors that conflict with academics

Attendance; behavior

Lack of self-respect

Poor avoidance

7. System-Level Challenges

Not held accountable for actions

Students are not held accountable for their actions

Administration not supporting teachers too often

Need higher expectations from ALL

8. Living in the Present Day, Not Looking Toward the Future

A lot of students live in present day and don't look toward the future; some think that they can live off of their per-capita payments.

Students don't really think beyond today

Negative future outlook/job prospects

9. Other Responses

Parental upbringing

"Aha" process training

Poor medical and dental health

Different learning styles

Perhaps you should compare the rates to inner city schools in Wisconsin and Minnesota – you'll find them similar

Appendix E: Array of Other Effective School Climate Interventions

Please describe other school climate interventions that you have found to be effective.

Responses Listed by Type of Interventions (n = 18)

1. Student-Teacher Relationships

Getting to know students on a personal level; giving students self-pride; praising students

Treat with respect

The one-on-one time is extremely important - the students are very needy for attention

Being able to talk with students about their culture

Just having conversations with parents and students (non-school related); letting them know you truly care about them; showing them respect

2. Curriculum Content and Style of Teaching

Love and logic intervention for both teachers, parents, administration

Students working one-on-one or in small groups

Using appropriate "voice" avoidance of parental and using adult voice in interventions; scaffolding - vocabulary/word meaning is often lost in conversation/instruction

3. Parent and Community Support

Parent involvement in the classroom and school activities

Extended family has helped me become closer to the students.

School wide celebrations; meals open to families

Bringing in outside organizations; reaching out to tribal officials, etc. to ensure students know other people outside of the building (i.e., police officers, fire fighters, veterans)

We need to do more to involve others (19f-19h on survey).

Having counselors, social workers, parent involvement coordinators, and nurses available

for students

Just having conversations with parents and students (non-school related); letting them know you truly care about them; showing them respect

Just phone calls, notes home, keep open communication with parents, etc.; respect

Newspapers; honor roll ceremonies

4. Other Responses

The middle school is left out of traditional events.

Having a consistent discipline program for everyone, not a program just for certain people depending on who they are, who their relatives are, etc.; have a person in charge of discipline who doesn't make excuses for kids' behavior

Any of the interventions mentioned above will work for students; race is not an issue, culture is not the issue; make education fun, kids will learn.

Most methods work for any student - regardless of race (i.e., positive interactions, self-worth, caring about them).