SCHOOL CLIMATE INTERVENTIONS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS:

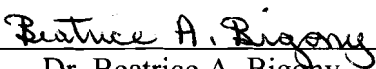MINIMIZING CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

School Psychology

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

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Title: *School Climate Interventions for Native American Students:*

              Minimizing Cultural Discontinuity in Public Schools

Graduate Degree: M.S. in School Psychology

Research Adviser: Beatrice A. Bigony, Ph.D.

Month/Year: August, 2006

Number of Pages: 45

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

This literature review focuses on the cultural discontinuity that occurs for Native

American students in the public school system and the effect it has on their academic

performance. The researcher introduced the topic by describing the current state of

Native American education and the need for intervention. The basic core traditional

values of Native Americans were described and compared to the mainstream American

values taught in the public schools. The cultural discontinuity hypothesis was

highlighted, along with specific school climate interventions that educational

professionals can implement to help Native American students succeed academically.

The researcher provided specific steps that can be taken by educational professionals to

improve school climate for Native American students, ultimately increasing their chances

for academic success.

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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 thesis advisor, Dr. Beatrice Bigony, for her ongoing support, comprehensive feedback, and expertise. She was a joy to work with and provided me with many insights and resources to investigate related to my topic. I would also like to thank Alan, my fiancé, for his words of encouragement and understanding as I worked through research and writing frustrations. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continuous love and support throughout the entire writing process.

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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, the high school dropout rate for Native American students was 15% in 2003 (cited in

Freeman & Fox, 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 2000-2001 dropout rates for Native American students in public schools were 5.7 % and

15.1%, respectively (Aronstamm-Young, 2003). 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, 1985; 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, 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 the 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 work from the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, specifically trying to connect the cultural discontinuity which Native American students experience to different

aspects of school climate. 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, educational professionals should work on improving these aspects of school climate to increase the retention rates of Native American students.

The specific ways in which educational professionals can improve aspects of school climate for Native American students will be discussed in this paper. 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 Native Americans using different levels of acculturation, 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. Educational professionals need to see the process of acculturation as ongoing and highly variable across situations 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). Educational professionals also need to seek out nonstereotypical, culturally relevant reading material (Reyhner, 1992) and incorporate a more visual teaching style into their instruction (Culturally appropriate curricula and practices, 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. Educational 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 the exists between the Native American community and the school (Gilliland, 1999).

By learning to view these aspects of school climate through a traditional Native American cultural lens, educational professionals will be better equipped to serve Native American students. Changes to school climate can then be put in place to incorporate Native American values into students' education. Through increasing cultural continuity at school for Native American students, educational professionals will be making a huge difference in the overall schooling and success of 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. Steps should be taken to provide these students with a more culturally continuous education. Educational professionals need to become more knowledgeable about the traditional Native American values and incorporate these ideals into the current mainstream educational system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the existing literature on the unique cultural issues Native American students face in public schools as a result of their cultural values. More specifically, this research paper focused on how traditional Native American values may conflict with the current mainstream education system and how that influences the school performance of Native American students. In addition, the role educational professionals can play in minimizing the impact of cultural discontinuity for Native American students was discussed in relation to school climate.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the basic core set of traditional Native American values?

2. How are the traditional Native American values and the mainstream American values in conflict with each other? How do traditional Native American values compare with the current ideals in public education?

3. What is the cultural discontinuity hypothesis?

4. What role can school climate play in combating the issues facing Native American youth?

5. How can educational professionals alter their school climate to be more conducive to

meeting Native Americans students' needs?

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 majority of persons in the 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 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 teacher-student relationships, student academic orientation, student behavioral values, guidance, student-peer relationships, parent and community-school relationships, instructional management, and student activities (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

It was assumed by this researcher that the literature reviewed in this paper represented the majority of Native American students' present school experiences across the United States. While much has been written on the past history of Indian education, summarized by Szasz (1974) and Szasz (1994), the focus of this literature review is on the current state of Native American education. This researcher also assumed that there was a basic core set of traditional values for Native Americans regardless of their tribal affiliation.

This study reviewed relevant literature on Native Americans from across the United States. The resources could potentially reflect tribe- or region-specific information that should not be generalized to the entire Native American population. Ideally, this researcher would have liked to examine only literature focusing on Wisconsin and Minnesota tribal nations, but, due to the limited written resources on Native Americans and education from these two states, such an examination was not possible.

This researcher discovered that there were a limited number of resources on Native American students and school climate. Specifically, literature discussing Native Americans and their perceived school climate or specific school climate interventions for Native American students was minimal. Another limitation the researcher encountered was a lack of literature containing perspectives and recommendations from school administrators, school counselors, and tribal leaders or elders regarding the schooling of Native American students. Furthermore, the researcher did not find suggestions from the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) regarding Native American education and the reasons for the high dropout rates.

It is also important to note that the researcher primarily restricted her focus to Native American students and their issues; she did not consult the multicultural literature regarding lack of academic success by minority students in general.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The researcher will begin this chapter with a brief discussion 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, this 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 educational professionals to minimize the cultural discontinuity Native Americans encounter in mainstream public schools.

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 the 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 educational professionals working with Native American students can be made, it is important to address each student individually according to his or her unique needs. However, 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, educational professionals can ultimately 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 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 when circumstances arise within their extended family network (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 themselves. 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. The values of community and sharing are closely tied to the Native American value of cooperation.

Cooperation in Native American culture, like community and sharing, stems back to Native American history. Cooperation, in the simplest sense, was a means of survival. The Blackfeet Cultural Committee (cited in Gilliland, 1999) stated that "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 a 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). The 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 Garret 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) pointed 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 the Native American culture, 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 like 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).

Northup (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. For 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 (1994) 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 (see Table 1, p. 16). These differences collide in mainstream public schools, creating cultural discontinuity for Native American students. This

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 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].

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 educational professionals.

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 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, educational

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 also important for educational professionals to realize that a student might

refer to non-immediate family members by close kinship terms (i.e., brother, sister, aunt, uncle,

grandmother, grandfather) and to acknowledge and respect their close kin relationships.

Educational 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 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).

Educational 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. Elders have helped us get to where we are and have the wisdom and accumulated life experience to get us to where we want to be if we just listen. Elders can help educational 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 elders into the classroom, educational 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 (1994) describes the "reciprocity principle" that exists among the Mescalero Apache tribe that keeps most families on the same economic playing field (p. 71).

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, then, 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, educational professionals can have students set 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, educational professionals could incorporate stories into their curricula that illustrate the Native American values of community and sharing. Such strategies, easily incorporated into classrooms, will allow inclusion of Native American students 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.

Educational 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 partially discussed above (see pages 12 to 13), 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, educational 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 versus 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. Educational 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. Educational 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, try to influence others through physical aggression, interrupt others, or use verbal suggestion or coercion, methods commonly used by mainstream Americans, governments, and institutions. 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 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, when in his culture he is exhibiting a normal sign of respect (Sue & Sue, 2003). Another common nonverbal behavior that is misinterpreted by educational 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). Educational professionals need to be careful when interpreting nonverbal communication of Native American students and 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 thought to be not on time in mainstream American culture, may be viewed as occurring "on time" in the Native American culture (Farrer, 1994, p. 4).

This difference in time orientation between the two cultures clearly creates some problems for Native Americans 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. Educational professionals need to be aware of this difference and work one-on-one 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 contrasts 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). Educational 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 at 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). Christenson, a professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Wisconsin 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 "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 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, educational professionals can use an array of techniques and curricula so that more students' needs are meet beyond those of mainstream American students. Educational 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 educational 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). Educational 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 improving 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, educational 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 pages 15 to 25).

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 dropout 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). Educational 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.

In addition, educational professionals should strive for improvement in the following areas with their Native American students: accurately interpreting nonverbal communication

(i.e., eye contact, 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 on the traditional Native American values, educational 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, educational professionals can help students feel confident about their identity as a Native American and as a student.

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. 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. Educational 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 educational 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 American 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, educational professionals need to seek out additional reading material that is more culturally relevant and nonstereotypical 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, educational 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 and all students will benefit from reading books written from a nonmainstream 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 educational 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 in 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 done to improve school climate for Native American students. One of the most frequently cited interventions in the research is cooperative learning groups, a heterogeneous group of students working together to achieve a common goal. The group is rewarded based on the success of the group as a whole, creating 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 in classroom environment. To make the classroom environment more welcoming to Native American students, educational 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 educational professionals can use in their classrooms as ways of adapting to Native American learning preferences include the following: use teaching techniques used as 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. Educational 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 and 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 educational professionals can get Native American parents involved in their children's education. The first step 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 educational 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, educational 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 a student, instead of solely troubling information, as well as invitations for parents and other relatives to participate in upcoming activities (Gilliland, 1999).

Thirdly, educational 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. Educational professionals should emphasize to parents 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). Likewise, 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 educational 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, educational 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, educational professionals will not only be getting Native American parents involved in their children's education, but will also be culturally enhancing their students' curriculum. Parents can also by used to help create a cultural study center in their child's classroom (Gilliland, 1999).

The sixth way educational 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 educational 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). Educational professionals should make sure to meet with volunteer parents prior to their first day to answer any questions they may have and to go over the plans for the day (Gilliland, 1999).

Finally, educational 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. Educational 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, educational 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 educational 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. Educational professionals must become a part of the community, keep the communication flowing with parents, help parents help 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 the student-teacher relationships, content and style of schooling, and parent and community involvement within the school, educational professionals will be on the right track to helping Native American students succeed academically. Also, 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). Educational professionals need to make school a place where Native American students feel respected, encouraged, and at peace with their cultural identity.

Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

Summary and Critical Analysis

The purpose of this literature review 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.

Chapter II pointed out the heterogeneous nature of the Native American population. The researcher wanted readers to understand the magnitude of the between- and within-group differences that exist among the Native American population. Due to differences that exist among Native Americans, it is impossible to generalize any research findings to all Native Americans. As a result, educational professionals need to be careful not to stereotype members of this population. They need to 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 educational professionals to be aware of their students' value systems in order to design and implement the 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.

The basic core set of traditional Native American values was also discussed in Chapter II. These values included an extended family structure, a respect for elders, community, cooperation, sharing, harmony and balance, spirituality as a way of life, noninterference, nonverbal communication, and a present time orientation. A comparison of traditional Native

American values and mainstream American values was included in the discussion to illustrate the inherent conflicts between these two very different value systems. The differences between the two value systems are evident in most public schools and, as a result, often create cultural discontinuity for Native American students. Educational professionals need to be aware of how their Native American students' value systems may conflict with the mainstream value system of U.S. public schools. This knowledge and awareness will allow educational professionals to make specific modifications in their classrooms (i.e., develop cooperative learning groups, incorporate silences into instruction, invite elders from the community into the classroom) that reflect traditional Native American values. These modifications, in turn, will benefit all students and create a more effective learning environment for their Native American students.

The researcher concluded by addressing 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 involvement. This researcher found that student-teacher relationships can be improved through education and training. As previously stated, educational professionals need to become more knowledgeable and appreciative of the basic core set of traditional values of Native Americans. By doing so, educational professionals will be able to interact more effectively with their students and will appear more caring and respectful to their Native American students. Knowledge of traditional Native American values will also help educational professionals adapt the curriculum content and style of teaching to meet Native American students' needs. Culturally appropriate curricula, textbooks, instructional practices, and teaching styles need to be implemented in the school to help students transition successfully from home to school. Educational professionals also need to increase Native American parent and community

involvement in the schools by 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, and recruiting parent and tribal elders as volunteers. A dialogue between the tribal council and the school should also be established to gain insight into their perceptions of Native American students' needs. By addressing these three areas of school climate, student-teacher relationships, curriculum content and style of teaching, and parent and community involvement, educational professionals will be better able to relate to and serve their Native American students.

According to the literature, many Native American students are struggling in school or have already dropped out. In order to reverse this trend, educational professionals must address the cultural discontinuity Native American students are facing within the public schools by implementing intentional school climate interventions like the ones in this paper. Until educational professionals become more knowledgeable about the traditional Native American values and incorporate these ideals into the current mainstream educational system, Native American students will continue to struggle academically or dropout of school. School climate interventions must be implemented to provide Native American students with a more culturally continuous education.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should further assess the cultural discontinuity Native American students face in public schools. Interviews with students, teachers, administrators, school counselors, and parents could provide educational 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 educational professionals working with this population.

Researchers also need to explore how different social factors affect Native American student's academic performance (i.e., racism, poverty, alcoholism). 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 suggest ways to overcome the negative impacts of the U.S. educational system on Native American education (i.e., forced boarding schools), which has greatly impeded parental and community involvement in the public education process.

Moreover, additional research should focus on specific school climate interventions and their effectiveness with Native American students. These interventions should address student-teacher relationships, content of schooling, and lack of parental support – the three main reasons Native American students drop out of school (Coladarci, 1983). The results of these studies would provide educational professionals with valuable information 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 us 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, school counselors, parents, tribal leaders and 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 as to their effectiveness.

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