WE HAVE THE EARTH TO LISTEN TO . . .

COMMUNICATION CONTROL EXERCISED

BY NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

> The cold statistics illuminate a national tragedy and a national disgrace. They demonstrate that the 'first American' has become the 'last American' in terms of an opportunity for employment, education, a decent income, and the chance for a full and rewarding life (United States Subcommittee on Labor and Welfare, 1969, p. 3).

Despite the revelations of the 1969 Kennedy Report and subsequent legislative measures, the status of Native American students within the American public school system remains relatively unchanged. Giles points out that the majority of Native American students are enrolled in public schools and " . . . there is overwhelming evidence that public schools have consistently instituted programs and sanctioned a prevailing attitude that has contributed to the demise and consequent state of affairs for the Native American - truly, a national tragedy" (Giles, 1985, p. 10).

Statement of the Problem

Several attempts have been made through legislation and research to remedy and explain the failure of the American educational system to adequately educate Native American students. Three different trends in thinking can be discerned in these legislative and research initiatives. Initial attempts, ethnocentric in nature, viewed these

students as culturally deprived. According to Deloria,

> People seriously believed that if an Indian child was brought within the purview of non-Indian education at an early age, that corruptive influences of Indian people would not affect them and they would grow up to be "normal"-which is to say, they would naturally adopt and exemplify all the values and perspectives of the non-Indian society (Deloria, Vine, 1991, p. 16).

Next, they were considered to be culturally different in beliefs, attitudes and communication style. While the reality of cultural difference was acknowledged, the belief prevailed that Native American students lived within the same context and conditions as non-Indian students (Deloria, 1991). Current thinking about Native American education does not stop with recognition of the impact of cultural difference. Such thinking views the social and economic conditions in which Native American students live as influential in the educational process (McDermott, 1987). Many Native American people are impacted by poverty and the resultant negative social conditions, such as poor health, substandard housing, alcohol and substance abuse, and inadequate parenting skills (Hanson and Eisenbise, 1981). This perspective has resulted in legislation requiring the establishment of Native American advisory committees in school districts receiving federal funds for Native American educational programs. Although Native Americans have been "placed within the process," . . . they have not been "allowed to determine the content" and "few schools . . . have been able to do very much about improving education as a whole" (Deloria, 1990, p. 12).

Implementation of reform measures and expenditure of resources have failed to adequately address the educational needs of Native

American students. In spite of assertions that American public schools provide for sound, equitable education, McDermott (1987) believes many Native American students reject this education. Thus, the questions arise: "What is it with them anyway"? and "What is their situation that school seems to go so badly"? (McDermott, 1987, p. 361-362).

According to Solomon, research has consistently demonstrated that parental support and involvement in the educational process is conducive to student success (Solomon, 1990). Several researchers note, however, that Native American parents are often not visible participants in the educational lives of their children (Benally, Cole, and Quezadda-Aragon, 1987). Parents of Native American students, particularly those who are considered to be low income, are often " . . . silent bystanders in the educational experiences administered to their children" (Dobson and Dobson, 1975, p. 90). Because communication between home and school is an important element and because, in the education of children, Native American parents do not appear to be visible participants in their children's education, then communication linkage between the home and school may be inadequate for fostering mutual trust and understanding.

It was the purpose of this study to describe the process of parent-school communication from the perspective of the Native American parents in a consolidated, rural school district in the southwestern region of the United States. The questions which guided this study include:

1. What conditions mediate the communication process between Native American parents and school personnel?

2. What effects do these mediating conditions have on the communication process?

A further purpose of this study was to generate data through qualitative research methods which provide a theoretical explanation of the communication process grounded in a reality which is perceived by the Native American community.

Significance of the Problem

Latham (1985) found that the daily attendance of Native American students is significantly less than that of other students in public schools. Data indicate that the mean annual dropout rate of Native American students in grades nine through 12 is 33.2 percent for students enrolled in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and BIA contract schools and 24.4 percent in public schools. Latham (1985) points out that Native American dropout rates in public schools are probably as high as in BIA and BIA contract schools because students drop out of public schools into BIA schools. It is estimated that the dropout rates " . . . can escalate as high (and even higher than) 50 percent in some schools" (Latham, 1985, p. 30).

Lack of education leads to a number of social concerns which are related, primarily, to conditions of poverty. A Bureau of Census report based upon 1980 national census data indicates that Native American people live in conditions of poverty at a significantly higher rate than most of the general population. This report also indicates that the unemployment rate among Native American people is twice as high as that of the general population (Bureau of the

Census, 1985). Other studies indicate that social concerns such as alcoholism, health problems, child abuse and neglect, and homelessness are embedded within conditions of poverty.

Asetoyer found that alcohol abuse is endemic among Native American people in the northern plains area, particularly among reservation people (Asetoyer, 1990). Alcohol use and abuse extends to Native American adolescents. According to one study, substance abuse is widespread among Native American adolescents. Alcohol was found to be the most commonly abused substance (Austin, 1988). Gale found that Native American adolescents used alcohol three times more frequently than adolescents in the general population. Alcohol use was associated with issues of self perception and peer acceptance (Gale, 1989). In a later study, Gale related Native American school drop out to high rates of alcohol abuse and conditions of poverty (Gale, 1990).

Fischler found that alcohol abuse and poverty were causal factors in cases of abuse and neglect of Native American children. This study also indicated that the lack of parent role models among Native American people reared in boarding schools is a causal factor in cases of child abuse and neglect (Fischler, 1983).

In a review of Indian Health Service (IHS) medical charts in IHS facilities in the southwest region, May found that alcohol related illness accounted for over twenty percent of the requests for IHS medical services (May, 1988). According to Lamarine, Native American health issues are related to conditions of poverty and the devaluing of the Native American culture within American society (Lamarine, 1989).

A study conducted in one rural Idaho county revealed that homeless Native Americans were highly transient, frequently unemployed and coped with extreme levels of emotional stress. Many of these individuals were alcoholic and had experienced time in jail (Huff and Johnson, 1988).

Solomon (1990) and Crispeels (1990) state that research clearly indicates parental involvement impacts childrens' education in a positive manner. Historically, middle class families have had a comfortable interaction with schools and school personnel. This interaction is abetted by the reflection within American schools of middle class values and norms. Often, however, administrators and teachers hold low expectations of and negative attitudes toward low income minority students and their parents. These attitudes have prevented effective parental involvement (Crispeels, 1990). D'Angelo and Adler (1990) identify communication as a major variable in developing parental involvement.

Using data pertaining to Native American dropout rates, the research indicates that American public schools are failing to adequately address Native American educational needs (Giles, 1985; Latham, 1985). Research identifies parental involvement as a major contributor to student success (Solomon, 1990). Yet, parental involvement by Native Americans continues to be inhibited. Open communication occurring in an environment of trust and respect has been identified as a major factor in increased parental involvement (D'Angelo and Adler, 1990). The connection between the effect of parental involvement upon improved student success and the effect of

proactive school communication interchange upon parental involvement suggests the need for a close examination of patterns of communication between school personnel and Native American families. This study was designed to investigate the environment, process, and effects of communication between Native American parents and school personnel from the perspectives of Native American people.

An extensive search of the literature indicated that few studies have examined the problem of communication between Native American families and school personnel. Most studies have addressed the issue of Native American family/school personnel communication as a subset of a larger study. A 1975 study conducted by Dobson and Dobson resulted in a theoretical model for developing Native American parental involvement. The Dobson and Dobson study focused on the ways in which Native American parent participation could be meaningfully integrated into the educational process. This study was designed to investigate the communication process between Native American parents and school personnel through qualitative research methods.

This study focused on the communication process as perceived and interpreted by Native American people. The purpose of the study was to identify conditions which Native American people perceive as constraining to the communication process and to formulate theoretical explanations of that process grounded in a reality perceived by Native American people. It is anticipated that these findings will be used by school administrators, teachers, and Native American people to create mutually agreed upon ways of exchanging information from which trust and respect can be developed.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation: Changes can occur within an autonomous cultural group when it has contact with another cultural group. Acculturation implies that one group has the power to dominate the other (Roberts, 1976).

Coding: Coding refers to the method of data analysis applied in grounded theory research. Analysis occurs through the processes of: (1) open coding, whereby data are broken down into discrete pieces of phenomenon, labeled conceptually, and arranged into categories according to conceptual similarities; (2) axial coding, whereby data are reassembled in new ways by "making connections between the categories" through the use of the "coding paradigm" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 96); (3) selective coding, whereby the central category is identified and the other categories are related to it.

Coding Paradigm: The coding paradigm is a model by which subcategories are linked to categories "in a set of relationships denoting causal conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 99). Through application of the coding paradigm, categories are fully developed and relationships between categories can be determined through their properties and dimensions.

Communication: This term is used to refer to the process of the creation of meaning between individuals or groups (D'Angleo and Adler, 1990).

Culture: Culture refers to "the total way of life developed and lived by a group of people" and "encircles the separate and idiosyncratic meanings of persons, defining the bounds of collective understanding" (Roberts, 1976, p. 1)

Emic: This term refers to the view from within the culture. The emic view is subjective in nature (Agar, 1986).

Enculturation: Enculturation is the process by which a culture is acquired by children and becomes part of their thought and behavior (Roberts, 1976).

Ethnography: Ethnography is the work of describing a culture with the aim of understanding that cultural point of view. Ethnographic fieldwork involves observing, asking questions, participating in the observed group, and testing perceptions through member validation (Saville-Troike, 1982, p. 4).

Ethnographic Interview: The ethnographic interview is a research method employed to gather data in the informants' own words by asking questions and recording the responses. Depending upon the nature of the research and the researcher's style, the interview process may be formal or informal and utilize scripted or open-ended questions (Spradley, 1980).

Etic: Etic refers to the view from outside the culture. It is objective in nature and frequently based upon research (Agar, 1986).

Grounded Theory: "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that

phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship to each other (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23)

Member Validation: Member validation refers to the method of confirming research findings through written or oral response to the findings by research informants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Native American, Indian, American Indian: These terms refer to any individual who is an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe. This definition is typically used by governmental entities to identify individuals as Native American; however, some individuals may be excluded due to inability to establish tribal membership. Therefore, I shall include any individual who is recognized by Native American people as being of Native American descent.

Participant Observation: Participant observation refers to that method of research in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people over some length of time. The participant observer seeks to perceive the environment from the natives' point of view (Spradley, 1980).

Perspective: This term refers to the understandings an individual develops to explain the "dynamic process of interaction between self and environment and the resulting combination of an individual's beliefs and actions in relation to that environment" (Cusick, 1973, p. 3).

Thick Description: This term refers to a detailed report providing sufficient depth and range for the reader to understand the researcher's findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Triangulation: Triangulation refers to the application of differing research methods to confirm researcher findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness: Trustworthiness refers to research methodologies employed to insure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. The elements of trustworthiness are: (1) credibility refers to the truth of the findings and is determined through participant observation, researcher participation over time, triangulation, member validation, and collected documents; (2) transferability refers to the ability to transfer findings from one context to another and is determined by thick description; (3) dependability refers to the ability to derive the same findings if the study is replicated in a similar context and is determined through an audit trail; and (4) confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are the product of the inquiry focus and is determined by an audit trail available for external audit (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Summary

The American system of education has failed to provide an environment in which Native American children thrive. Further, it has failed to prepare Native American students to participate fully and equally in American society. These failures are demonstrated in the academic regression and lack of academic persistence of Native American students. The continued conditions of poverty in which Native American people live are evidence of education failure.

Studies indicate that while parental participation in the education process enhances students' academic achievement, Native American parents rarely participate in the educational lives of their children. Effective communication between parents and school personnel has been related to parental participation in the educational process. The purpose of this study was to examine the process of communication between Native American parents and school personnel.

This chapter presents the statement of the problem, significance of the problem, limitations, and definitions of terms.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter II contains a synopsis of selected literature related to the education of Native American people. A historical overview examines the influence of colonizing nations through mission schools and the progression of United States policies and various legislative enactments imposed upon the Native American nations. Further studies illuminate the cultural incongruence between Native American nations and the dominant Anglo-European society through the variance in kinship structure, cultural values and world view, and communication styles and patterns. A view is given of the contemporary state of education of Native American students and the roles ascribed to and assumed by their parents in the educational process. The chapter concludes with an examination of studies related to the process of intercultural communication.

Historical Overview of Native American Education

As colonizing nations sought to establish control over land and resources on the North American continent, each developed educational policies directed toward the indigenous peoples. Each was driven by its own interests; however, exploitation was central to all.

The Franciscans established missions as an integral part of Spanish colonizing. Early Spanish military and missionaries were aware that education is a form of cultural transmission and cultural change (McIntosh, 1987, p .6). Fray Pedro de Cardova and other Franciscans began establishing missions as early as 1510. The Catholic form of Christianity spread rapidly through New Spain, resulting in the installation of ten bishops by the end on the sixteenth century (Hampton, 1986, p. 63). The Spanish, motivated by interest in land and mineral resources, sought to exploit Indian people through forced labor and conversion (Eder and Reyhner, 1986, p. 31).

The French Jesuits established missions along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers. Unlike the Franciscans, who segregated themselves from the native peoples, the Jesuits lived among the Iroquoian and Algonquian people, learning their languages and customs. The fur trade was the primary interest of the French (Hampton, 1986).

As were the Spanish Franciscans and French Jesuits, the British clergy were integrally involved in colonizing efforts. In 1617, King James asked the Anglican clergy to collect money to build churches and schools for Indian children in Virginia. Within a few years, the Reverend John Elliot developed a plan to bring Indian people into Puritan praying towns. The Indian people were required to give up their "heathenish ways" (Eder and Reyhner, 1986, p. 42) in order to be accepted by the Puritans (Eder and Reyhner, 1986). A house was built on the campus of William and Mary College in 1723 for Indian

students. However, 21 years later, the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy refused to send any more of their sons. They felt that those who had been educated were no longer useful in their communities (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

The United States' interest in divesting the native peoples of land and resources resulted in a policy of forced assimilation. In 1789, Congress was given the fundamental authority by the Constitution to regulate commerce with the tribes, to make treaties, and to control public lands occupied by and reserved for the tribes. Policy was often achieved by trading treaty provisions for education in exchange for ceding lands. Schools were established as agents for transmitting Anglo-European values and spreading Christianity. A 1789 treaty with the Oneida, Tuscarora, and Stockbridge was the first to have educational provisions. These early schools were established by Protestant missionaries (NEA Report, 1987). During the next 84 years, the Senate approved almost 400 treaties, 120 of which had educational provisions. Essentially, these were land cession treaties, providing for westward movement and white settlement on tribal lands. The treaties ceded almost one billion acres of land to the United States government (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

The Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 incorporated a plan to civilize the Indian by providing social and educational services (Eder and Reyhner, 1986). The 1818 House Committee on Appropriations Report reflected the thinking of the times:

> In the present state of our country one of two things seems to be necessary. Either those sons of the forest should be moralized or exterminated. . . Put into the hands of their children the primer and the hoe, and

> they will naturally, in time, take hold of the plow (Eder and Reyhner, 1986, p. 44).

Further institutionalizing the schooling of native people by missionaries, Congress established the Civilization Fund in 1819 to provide support to religious groups and others willing to live among and teach Indians. The Civilization Fund was operated until 1873.

Legislation passed in the 1830 was to have deep and lasting impact on the Native American nations. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized President Jackson to exchange tribal lands in the east for land in the west (Eder and Reyhner, 1986). The position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs was created in 1832 and placed within the War Department. This office was to coordinate relations between the federal government and Indian tribes. The office was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1869. However, the transfer had little effect on educational policy; mission schools still remained the primary source of education.

As the Native nations were resettled and white settlement moved further westward, the concept of Manifest Destiny developed. Control of all the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans became a national priority. The notion of Manifest Destiny was embedded in the idea that God had given the land for white settlement and the ability to gain the land by conquest was proof of God's intent. During the 1850's the removal option ended and the reservation policy began. The era of reservation policy lasted until the 1930's. The concept of Manifest Destiny shaped the thinking of the times (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

After the Civil War, President Grant instituted the Peace

Policy. A Board of Indian Commissioners was appointed to supervise the appointment of Indian agents, teachers and farmers and the purchase of supplies. This board operated until 1933. The Commissioners divided the reservations up among religious groups (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

In 1870, Congress moved control of Indian education to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and appropriated funds to support schools among the tribes. Congress ended treaty making with the tribes in 1871 (Eder and Reyhner, 1986). Reservation schools were designed to devalue tribal culture, language, and religion. The reservation policy operated to force assimilation through coercion and forced dependence on the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau of Indian Affairs system was replete with corruption and incompetence (Eder and Reyhner, 1986). Ortiz points out that:

> The Agency dealt originally with defeated, dispirited Indians for whom, indeed, everything had to be done. Their lives were shattered. They had to be taken care of like children. Procedures were developed that by today's standards are shocking to the dignity of the human being. But these procedures were deeply rooted and were taught to successive bureaucrats as they came along (Ortiz, 1986 p. 18)

The first off-reservation boarding school was established at Carlisle, Pennsylvania by Colonel Richard Pratt. Motivated by humanitarian concern for the treatment of native people, Pratt felt that education was the only way conditions could be improved. Pratt developed the outing system which placed Indian students in the homes of white families for the purpose of learning and adopting white culture and values. Some of these students were used as servants (Kidwell, 1986). Pratt, as other advocates of Native American

people, viewed helpful measures through an ethnocentric lens (Kidwell, 1986). Pratt's position was:

> All the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him and save the man (Hampton, 1986 p. 68).

Three additional off-reservation boarding schools were established in 1884; Chilocco in Oklahoma, Haskell in Kansas, and Riverside in California. The policy of off-reservation boarding schools was initiated with the intent of removing children from the influence of their families and tribal communities and placing them in an environment where they would be immersed in the Anglo-European culture. The use of native languages was denied in order to weaken the cultural influence of native languages. Forbidding the use of native languages also increased the power of teachers who, generally, did not understand the native languages of their students (Kidwell, 1986).

The General Allotment (Dawes) Act was enacted by Congress in 1887. The intent of the Dawes Act was to end the dependency of Native American people by breaking up tribal lands into individually owned units. Each family was to be allotted 160 acres; each person over eighteen and orphans under eighteen were to be allotted 80 acres. Fee patent title was issued to each allottee to be held in trust by the federal government for 25 years. All the land left over after allotment was sold to the United States government to be used for education and civilization purposes. All allottees were given United States citizenship. A result of the Dawes Act was to reduce tribal land holdings from 140 million acres to 50 million acres. Not all reservations were allotted (Eder and Reyhner, 1986). A further

result of land allotment was the designation of ward Indian or citizen Indian. Ward Indians were considered eligible for federal assistance; citizen Indians were not. According to Giles, " . . . the presumption was that all Indians who resided permanently away from the tribe were competent to manage their affairs without federal assistance" (Giles, 1985, p. 7). In many cases, this resulted in individuals and families being cast adrift after years of forced dependence.

General Thomas Morgan, appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1889, instituted an educational plan which mandated compulsory attendance, standardized curriculum, textbooks, and instruction. Congress passed laws withholding annuities and rations from families who did not send their children to school (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

By 1900, there was a growing trend to educate Native American students in public schools. By 1912 there were more Native American children in public schools than in boarding and mission schools. The use of federal funds to support church schools was made illegal in 1917 (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

The Indian Citizenship Bill (Snyder Act) granted United States citizenship to Native American people in 1924. That same year, the Committee of One Hundred called for reform in the education of Native American students. The Committee cited the need for adequate facilities, competent educational personnel, increased public school attendance, and scholarships for high school and college attendance. These recommendations led to reservation schools offering six years of education and off reservation schools offering eight years of education (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

The Meriam Report of 1928 condemned the allotment policy and the Bureau of Indian Affairs' management of services. The report called for protection of Indian property and recommended that Indian people be given more freedom to manage their affairs. The report further recommended that elementary age children not be sent to boarding schools (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

The Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler Howard) of 1934 ended the allotment era. This act provided for a measure of tribal self government, Indian preference in Bureau of Indian Affairs hiring, and Indian religious freedom. John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the Roosevelt administration, tried to implement some of the recommendations of the Meriam Report. The Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to contract with states or territories to provide services for Indians, and allowed the federal government to pay the states for educating Indian students in public schools (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

The Indian Reorganization Act, which provided a period of hope for Native American people, carried the seeds of the termination era. After World War II, the mood in Congress was to bring to an end its constitutionally mandated responsibility for Indian affairs. During the 1950's, Congress passed initiatives to dissolve reservations and end the trust status of federally recognized tribes. The 1954 termination of the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin caused that tribe to move from a state of relative self sufficiency to a state of economic and social despair. The tribe was reinstated to federal trust status in 1973 (Gross, 1986). The policy of relocation was a companion to

termination. Native American people were moved from reservation or rural areas to metropolitan areas where they were provided housing and job training for the purpose of attaining economic self sufficiency. Unprepared for life in urban slums and trained for jobs which did not exist on reservations, many of the relocation people became social statistics. By 1970, 125,000 people had been relocated (Gross, 1986).

Wax (1971) describes termination era schools, whether Bureau, mission, or public, thus:

> The situation almost appears colonial, or at least caste like. Between Indian community and schools there is a strong social barrier, typified by the fences which surround the compound. Parents rarely visit the schools; teachers rarely visit the homes; each side finds interaction with the other uncomfortable.
>
> The consequences of this barrier between the school and the community is that the intermediate grades Indian children have begun to develop a closed and solidary peer society within the walls of the school (p. 83).

The termination era was recognized as a policy failure and ended in the 1970's. The 1975 Indian Self Determination and Assistance Act (PL 93-638) ushered in a new, but relatively short lived, period of federal policy. The purpose of the Act was to promote maximum Indian participation in the government and education of Indian people, and to support the right of Indian people to control educational activities. The political conservatism of the 1980's brought a shift from the policy of self determination to the policy of self sufficiency. The emphasis of this policy is one of economic development (Eder and Reyhner, 1986).

Historically, Native American people have been subjected to changes in policy action which have shifted with changes in

administration and national priorities. These policies of extermination, domination, assimilation, reorganization, termination, self determination, and self sufficiency have all, in one way or another, been attempts to eliminate the "Indian problem" (Joe, 1986, p. 2).

Cultural Incongruence

Native American people are often judged in contemporary society by historical circumstances and events which are the basis of misconceptions and stereotypes. As stated by Littlebear (1986, p. 222):

> Many non Indians continue to rely on these stereotypes and misconceptions - often confusing them with the truth - which categorizes Indians in the worst possible manner.

Native American children enter school with a cultural heritage that is appreciably different from that of the educational system itself (LeBrasseur and French, 1982, p. 11). The educational system reflects the culture and values of the dominant Anglo-European society. Teacher training is, primarily, monoculturally based in middle class norms. "Teachers of Indian students need to realize that they are not teaching the norm and that the students are being impacted daily by another dynamic culture" (Littlebear, 1986, p. 222).

The family unit is the primary transmitter of culture. Kinship patterns vary, remarkably, between the anglo-european culture and Native American cultures. This very pattern of kinship helps shape the way in which an individual views the world.

The nuclear family forms the center around which the Anglo-European kinship system is shaped. The typical genealogy chart, graphing the matrilineal and patrilineal branches of the family, is a visual description of the Anglo-European kinship system. The extended family is comprised of two distinct family groups, branching off from the nuclear family. There is little contact between the two branches except for social or ceremonial occasions. The familial relationships of nuclear siblings seldom extend beyond first cousins (Tafoya, 1982).

The circle is a more appropriate visual representation of the Native American kinship pattern. Siblings, sometimes including first cousins, are positioned in the center of the circle. This circle would be enclosed by another circle representing the matrilineal and patrilineal grandparents, as the principal care givers and providers. Great aunts and uncles could be included in this area. A third circle would represent aunts and uncles who may have the responsibility for supervising the children. The biological parents are located in the fourth, and outer, circle. While the biological parents are responsible for the day-to-day care of their children, they also fill the role of supervisors of nieces and nephews. This kinship system operates to spread the responsibility for child rearing among family members and between generations. It also provides for bonding to several significant people. Native American children are seldom lonely within their family unit (Tafoya, 1982).

The manner in which Native American people communicate, both verbally and nonverbally, differs from the communication styles of

other groups in American society. Typically, schools reflect the communication patterns of the Anglo-European culture. This variance in communication patterns results in misunderstanding, confusion, and distrust. Erasmus found that people from the dominant English speaking culture ". . . often perceive the discourse of nonmainstream speakers to be incoherent, disconnected, rambling, illogical and untruthful" (Erasmus, 1989, p. 273).

Storytelling is frequently used by Native American people as a method for illustrating a point or conveying an idea. The speaker does not tell the point of the story, but allows the listeners to draw their own conclusions (Erasmus, 1989).

Native American people place a high value on the appearance of calmness in verbal presentations. Calmness gives the appearance of knowledge and forethought before speaking. Native American people typically moderate their voices, thus, not speaking as loudly as Anglo-Europeans. They start speech acts over and rephrase less than is typical of Anglo speech. Anglos use voice volume and looking directly at individuals as methods to attract the attention of listeners; Native Americans generally do not. Native American people use fewer hand gestures or body movements than Anglos. Native Americans face those to whom they are speaking, but not as directly as do Anglos. Native American people do not interrupt while another person is speaking. Such action is considered to be rude. Native Americans determine the end of their speech action rather than having it ended by others. Anglos tend to end each others' speech actions by interrupting (Giles, 1985). Anglos, especially teachers, control

communication by acting as switchboard operators. They direct the speech turns by asking questions and directing individuals to respond. Indian children typically respond to switchboard control by embarrassed giggling or silence (Erickson and Mohatt, 1977, p. 8).

The American system of education is based upon Anglo-European values and reflects middle class norms. The value systems of the various Native American nations are dissimilar to the values of the dominant culture in many respects. While each Native American nation represents an individual cultural entity, the common elements of each can be drawn together to demonstrate a Native American value system. In contrasting the two value systems, sources of conflict become apparent.

Within the Native American value system, the group, especially the family or clan, is considered to be more important than the individual (Sanders, 1987, p. 83). Native American people emphasize group cooperation and value that process as the most effective method of task completion and problem solving. Anglo-Europeans encourage individual competitiveness. The dominant society awards individual winners. Native American society recognizes the group for outstanding performance. Decisions in Native American society are made by consensus, which is a time consuming process. However, when decisions are reached through this process, there is little dissension within the group. Decision making in the dominant society is based upon individual authority (Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1983, p. 20).

Native Americans emphasize watching and waiting before taking action. This process allows a person to take in information and test

perceptions before committing to action. Native Americans are taught to be visually aware of surroundings. Anglo-Europeans are more prone to act impulsively (Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1983). The value placed on nonverbal communication and patience are manifested in the watching and waiting behavior (Sanders, 1987).

Native Americans prefer to avoid direct confrontation and to deal with conflict situations in privacy. While the needs of the group, especially the family, are considered paramount, allowing others to have their individual perceptions of reality and to make individual decisions and act upon them is highly valued by Native American people. They tend to be non critical of others and are taught to not speak ill of others (Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1983). Self control, rather than control of others, is emphasized. Native American people do not shame others, particularly children, in public. If blame is to be placed, it is placed on the group rather than the individual (Sanders, 1987).

The attribute of sharing is greatly valued among Native American people (Sanders, 1987). The value of sharing is most visibly demonstrated by the give-aways during intertribal pow wows. Sharing is most often done quietly and without the knowledge of others. Tafoya notes that " . . . generosity is considered a virtue by Native American tribes, but it is a virtue that must be moderated by common sense so that an individual and his/her family are not neglected" (Tafoya, 1982 p. 23). The dominant society emphasizes the acquisition of material goods and assigns individual worth according to the amount of goods acquired. While the Native American sees

individual worth in terms of sharing, the dominant society sees worth in terms of acquisition.

Native American people prize privacy and non interference (Sanders, 1987). Generally, Native American people will not offer advice unless a request is made. They tend to dislike being involved in public performance (Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1983). While the dominant society ascribes value to privacy, privacy may not be respected in fact. Unsolicited advice and comment are commonplace within American society. Individual public performance is encouraged and rewarded.

Native American people believe that it is necessary to live in harmony with nature in order to lead a balanced life (Sanders, 1987). Native belief systems are holistic in nature; they do not compartmentalize aspects of life into discrete and separate units. The individual is viewed as one with the universe, past, present and future. It is virtually impossible to segregate spiritual from secular beliefs, because all are spiritual in nature. As an integral part of the universe, and each part dependant upon the other for existence, Native Americans believe that it is necessary to live in balance with nature. Without that balance, neither group nor individual harmony can be achieved.

The path the individual follows in order to live harmoniously within the universe in known as the "white road" (Smith, 1989). Each individual chooses if and how s/he will travel the white road. The earth is considered to be the mother that gives sustenance to all living things. All the needs for the survival of humankind is

provided by the earth. In turn, it is the responsibility of humans to be the stewards of nature and to take only that which is needed (Smith, 1989). By contrast, exploitation of natural resources as the right and privilege of humankind, is central to Anglo-European thought. The dominant society views humanity as the rightful ruler of the earth and domination of nature as beneficial to humankind.

Contemporary Issues in Native American Education

Erickson (1987, pp. 343-344) stated that:

> Learning is ubiquitous in human experience throughout the life cycle, and humans are very good at it. They are also good at fostering learning through deliberate instruction. Yet in schools, deliberately taught learning seems to be a problem. It is differentially distributed along lines of class, race, ethnicity and language background.

Illuminating Erickson's remarks, the 1969 Kennedy Report on the status of Native American students provided a dismal picture of confusion, rejection, and failure. This report indicated that 40 percent of the students dropped out of BIA boarding schools and that the dropout rate was higher for a small selected number of public schools (RedHorse, 1986, p. 42). RedHorse found that the dropout rates in the 1980 's were similar to those reported by the Kennedy Report. A 1982 Office of Indian Education report indicated that 45 percent of all Indian students who entered grade school would not graduate. In reference to Native American students, RedHorse (1986) wrote, "A 1983 report estimated the national dropout rate as high as 60 percent, and a 1986 report suggested a rate as high as 85 percent" (p. 41).

A possible explanation of the high dropout rate of Native American students may be the pattern of "progressive regression" (RedHorse, 1986, p. 41). While most Native American children scored at or slightly above the national norm upon school entry (Giles, 1985), the Kennedy Report found that Native American students scored two grade levels below the national norm on standardized achievement tests administered in high school. This process of progressive regression was found as Native American students fell further behind as they progressed through grade levels (RedHorse, 1986). RedHorse cited a 1983 report which indicated that 64 to 74 percent of Native American students score below the national norm on standardized achievement tests.* A 1985 study conducted by the Arizona State Department of Education found that Native American students scored lower on reading, language and mathematics of all racial and ethnic groups across all twelve grades. A later study indicated that ". . . progressive regression still prevails among Indian students" (RedHorse, 1986, p. 41). Little Soldier (1988) wrote

> As a population, Native American students do not fare well in the educational settings provided by the dominant society. Continued low achievement and high dropout rates bear witness to the fact that serious problems exist. The longer that Indian students remain in school, the wider the gap becomes between the achievement of these students and the majority population (p. 4).

Giles points out the problems inherent in estimating the percentages of Native American students who drop out of school. Studies vary in definitions of the term dropout and vary in methods

of gathering and analyzing dropout data (Giles, 1985). Citing Coomb, Giles (1985, p. 7) states,

> Because Indian children are enrolled in several types of schools, and various regional methods of organizing and calculating data are used, it is very difficult to secure comparable dropout figures. Estimates of Indian dropout vary according to region; nevertheless, there is overwhelming and consistent evidence that Indian students maintain the distinction of having the highest dropout rate according to nearly every study, regardless of region, ethnic composition, or methods of calculation.

In 1983, 19.7 percent of federally recognized Native American students were enrolled in 227 BIA schools; 80.3 percent were enrolled in public schools in 26 states. In 1984, 20 percent of federally recognized Native American students were enrolled in an estimated 213 BIA schools; 80 percent were enrolled in public school in 26 states. Data gathered from the average daily attendance for both years indicated that Native American students from both BIA and public schools were in attendance four percent less than all students in public schools. Data indicated a high mobility rate among Native American students. These students moved for a variety of reasons, sometimes repeatedly in a single year. BIA schools experienced a mid-year increase in enrollment (Latham, 1985). Latham noted that a substantial number of public school drop outs returned to some form of schooling for certification or general equivalency diploma. Native American students, as a rule, did not (Latham, 1985).

What Latham found continues to be the norm today. Tribal leadership recognizes the importance of education to the continued functioning of tribal governments and service agencies within the governments. According to RedHorse, tribal leaders understand the

effects of cultural conflict on student performance. The gaps between the norms common to formal school structures and those retained by Native American families, RedHorse notes, are frequently viewed as deficiencies or cultural deprivation by educators (RedHorse, 1986).

Ogbu points out that both historical and comparative research demonstrates that factors within schools and classrooms have always operated against the adjustment and performance of minority students. He states that

> This is true even where schools are integrated so that minority and white children have available to them the same staff, facilities, curriculum and services. Among the subtle mechanisms that have been found in such a situation is the lowered expectation of teachers and administrators. Another mechanism with increasing significance is the labeling of minority children as having educational "handicaps". Because of this, a disproportionate number of minority children are channeled into special education, which is inferior education. Then, too, there are problems arising from cultural differences between minority students and school personnel. The failure of school personnel to understand and respect minority children's culturally learned behaviors often results in conflicts that obstruct children's adjustment and learning (Ogbu, 1987, p. 319).

Giles (1985, p. 10) notes that:

> . . . the ramifications of deficient education are obvious: it guarantees the continuation of abject poverty and the demise of our Indian people - a grim commentary on this nation's unfulfilled responsibility to its people.

The attrition rate of Native American students is not the problem, but indicative of a number of issues that need to be considered and addressed. One issue in particular is that of communication. Poor communication between those of the dominant culture and the Native American cultures increases the tendency for a lack of understanding. Good communication practices need to be

accompanied by accurate information about students. Close attention needs to be given to identification of students' needs and problems and sound judgment made in addressing those needs and problems. The reasons for the high attrition rate of Native American students must be looked for in the "complex social and economic circumstances" of Native American families and communities (Stuhr, 1987, p. 25).

Parents, or the familial care giver, are the most important people in a child's educational life. These are the individuals who teach children how to behave in society. Parents influence how children view themselves and their place in the world. Streeter (1986, pp. 214-219) points out:

> What children learn and how interested they are in learning is closely related to how their parents feel about education. This becomes very significant when working with students not from the dominant culture. When schools and students come from different cultures parents attitudes and training of children at home become very significant. Young children look towards parents and other people they love to provide guidance in an environment foreign to them.

School entry is often the initial point of intercultural communication process for the Native American child. Parental involvement becomes an issue when Native American children enter school. Intercultural communication, or the lack of it, may first become apparent at this point. The quality of the relationship between the teacher and parents is important because it will be reflected in the child's attitude and behavior (Benally, Cole, and Quezada-Aragon, 1987, pp. 6-7). Frequently, Native American parents are not visibly involved in the educational process. Lack of involvement is often interpreted by educators as disinterest or lack

of caring. Fear, feelings of inadequacy, and lack of experience may be the more accurate interpretation (Benally, et al., 1987). Care must be given to establish open communication channels between the school and Native American families to insure accurate communication. Chilcott found that the communication between schools and five Yaqui communities were negative in nature (Chilcott, 1983, p. 5). A New Mexico Bureau of Educational Planning and Development report indicated that the Jicarilla Apache parents appear to receive the most information about school second hand through students or other community members. This report pointed to the need for better communication between the school, tribe, and community (New Mexico Bureau of Educational Planning Report, 1984, p. 133).

Communication channels between state boards and departments of education and Native Americans should be developed or enhanced. Frequently, Native American parents and communities do not understand policies which affect the education of their children, and state boards and departments of education do not understand the concerns of Native American parents and communities. Lack of communication creates an environment of misunderstanding, confusion, and distrust and results in activity that does not always address the problems Native American students have with educational systems (Office of Indian Education Report, 1980, p. 26).

Historically, Native American parents have been excluded from the educational process. In the contemporary world, that exclusion may be caused by either institutional or cultural factors.

> Excluding Indian parents from the education of Indian children has not worked and, in fact, has made Indian parents very suspicious of modern American education.

> A century and a half of enforced acculturation under the guise of education has had lasting detrimental effects on all Indians. These effects will continue unless Indian parents are involved in schooling their children and they will continue until teachers start viewing their students as individuals who represent the sum total of experiences, good and bad, wrought by two different cultures and two different attitudes (LittleBear, 1986, p. 224).

Intercultural Communication

Communication may be viewed as a social act for the purpose of transmitting messages between individuals. Viewed from this perspective, the implication exists that what communication participants produce together is more important than what occurs in the individual participant (Asante, Newmark, and Blake, 1979, p. 26). If the participants are from different cultural backgrounds, one must attend to the verbal presentations and thinking processes which influence the message, whether it is transmitted verbally or nonverbally. The myriad of cultural influences each participant brings to the communication act can serve to enhance or interfere with the communication process.

Intercultural communication does not necessarily imply difference in linguistic background. People who share the same language, but who have different cultural backgrounds, may experience communication failure. Individuals bring the cumulative results of relationships, cultural heritage, personal history and status perceptions into communication interactions. The initial contact with an alien culture can result in cultural shock, leading to discomfiture and communication dissonance (Asante, Newmark, and Blake, 1979).

Sitaram and Haapanen (1979) cite a relationship between values and communication. They state that values are communicated, explicitly and implicitly, through symbolic behavior. Further, the way in which people communicate is influenced by the values they hold. In other words, communication serves as a carrier of values and communication behavior is shaped by the value system.

Sitaram and Haapanen (1979) consider values to be the most important variable in intercultural communication. Differences in values create gaps in communication and could create such a barrier that communication fails. An ethnocentric position, the view that one's own culture is superior, is a critical barrier to intercultural communication.

A requisite for the occurrence of open dialogue is that it occur in a climate unencumbered by distorting factors.

> The term "distorted communication" designates all forms of restricted and prejudiced communication that by their nature inhibit a full discussion of problems, issues, and ideas that have public relevance (Mueller, 1973, p. 19).

Mueller identifies three patterns of distorted communication: directed, arrested, and constrained. Directed communication results from governmental interference in language structure and communication, as typified by totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany. Arrested communication refers to the "limited capacity of individuals to engage in communication" (Mueller, 1973, p. 19) because of a restricted speech code. Constrained communication refers to control of the communication process imposed by groups or individuals "in order that their interests prevail" (Mueller, 1973, p. 19).

> The intentional or unintentional suppression from public debate . . . is equivalent to manipulated, thus distorted communication (Mueller, 1973, p. 23).

Mueller articulates the conditions for the occurrence of nondistorted communication thus:

> Nondistorted communication implies that those engaging in communication would not be separated by attitudes which create social distance and that they would be sharing similar or mutually comprehensible expectations and values. In such a model, the boundaries between private and public language would be suspended in the sense that groups or individuals could articulate their deprivations in public and no longer have to confine their discussion to the private sphere (Mueller, 1973, p. 20).

The occurrence of successful intercultural communication requires an environment relatively free of distorting factors. Individual participants must demonstrate acceptance of differing cultural norms and values, a willingness to engage in open dialogue, and the ability to adapt communication to varying styles.

Summary

The educational experience of Native American people differs dramatically from that of any other group in the United States. Occurring within the framework of government to government relationships structured by treaty rights and responsibilities, Native American people have been subjected to policy changes and legislative mandates which have impacted educational opportunity and experience.

Native American children were thrust into educational environments which had no understanding of, and no tolerance for, the culture and values which shaped their lives. Indeed, education was

perceived by society at large to be the tool for acculturation of Native American people. During the early phase of Native American education, and extending well into the twentieth century, attempts were made to separate Native American children from their parents and the perceived corrupting influence of their culture.

The culture of the various Native American nations differ fundamentally from the eurocentric based culture of American society. The ways in which Native Americans perceive the world are reflected in their particular cultural norms and values. Non-understanding and non-acceptance of those cultural differences create distance and distortion in the communication process between Native American parents and school personnel.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine, through the perceptions of Native American parents, the process of parent-school communication. Their interpretation of events, life experiences, and relationships are essential to an understanding of that process. Viewing the communication process through the eyes of Native American parents requires a research mode which differs from that traditionally applied in educational research.

Traditional scientific methods of research, based on the philosophical assumption that a discoverable reality exists which can be predicted and controlled, maintains a separation between the researcher and the object under study. Qualitative research methods, proceeding from the assumption of "multiple realities" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 33), holds that the researcher and object of research are "inseparable" (Crowson, 1987, p. 3). According to Asante, Newmark, and Blake (1979), research methods in the positivistic tradition are not adequate for an examination of communication between cultural groups. For that reason, qualitative research methods were utilized to produce a detailed description of the communication environment and process. From this description,

inferences were drawn and theoretical statements, grounded in the reality presented by Native American people, were made about parent-school communication interactions. This chapter discusses the methods and procedures applied in this study.

Participants

Members of the Native American community were not merely research subjects, they were research participants. The research was "a function of the group studied as well" (Agar, 1989, p. 19). Participants in the study included parents and extended family members of Native American students and other members of the Native American community. These were individuals such as tribal elders and tribal agency employees who are involved in the day to day lives of students and their families.

Twenty individuals agreed to participate in structured and non-structured, open-ended interviews. Ten of these individuals were parents of students and ten were elders, extended family members, or tribal employees.

Research Design and Trustworthiness

Ethnographic research consists of the researcher's role, the research setting, and the collection of data. The purpose of research design is to build trustworthiness into the study. Adherence was maintained to Lincoln and Guba's methods of establishing trustworthiness during the course of this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility is demonstrated through participant

observation over an extended period of time, triangulation, member validation, and collection of pertinent documents; transferability can be achieved through the thick description used in this study; dependability is assured through an audit trail; and confirmablity can be achieved through an external audit (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The techniques employed in this study will be discussed under the various subheadings below.

This study was initiated in August, 1990 and data collection continued through October, 1991. Ethnographic methods of research were used to collect the data in this study. These methods suited the purposes of this study because they are "designed to show how social action in one world makes sense from the point of view of another" (Agar, 1989, p. 12). The data collection methods employed included participant observation, interviews, and the collection of relevant documents. These combined methods provided emic and etic qualities to the study from which inferences were drawn.

The grounded theory approach was utilized to analyze the data. This method of analysis is integrated within the entire research process.

> A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship to each other (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

Researcher

The researcher is a member of a Native American tribe which differs culturally, linguistically, and geographically from the

tribal groups involved in this study. Being of mixed Native American and Anglo ancestry, the researcher has experienced the cultural frameworks of both traditions. In the view of this individual, it is not possible to attach "Indian" or "White" labels to the specific behaviors, beliefs, feelings, or points of reference within one individual. This researcher, throughout life, has been influenced by two cultural groups and attributes the emergent individual to the melding of two cultural perspectives. The researcher participates in tribal life, the larger Native American community, and within American society from a bi-cultural perspective.

Throughout the course of this study, the researcher maintained an awareness of the potential for bias emanating from the bi-cultural persona of the researcher. As Crowson points out, the recognition and statement of the potential sources for bias allows the researcher to reduce the chance for bias to contaminate the study. This action enhances the trustworthiness of the study (Crowson, 1985).

Setting

The setting in which this study was conducted is a rural consolidated school district located in a southwestern state. The study focused on the Native American community served by this school district. The selection of the setting as the focus of research interest was facilitated by the employment of the researcher by a major land grant university.

While several tribes are represented within the Native American community, the two tribes which have reserve areas within, or

adjacent to, the school district represent the majority of the Native American population. Encompassed within the district are two communities whose populations are primarily Native American. The population of the Fordam community is approximately 90 percent Native American and the population of the Clear Creek community is approximately 40 percent Native American. Both communities are very small rural towns with populations of approximately 300 each. Agriculture is the primary economic base for each community.

The tribal agency of one of the two predominant tribes is located within the boundaries of the school district. The tribe is the largest employer of Native American people in the school district area. The tribal administrative and social services offices are located in the tribal agency complex. The tribe operates two businesses which are located on reserve land within the school district. The tribe also administers a housing complex of approximately forty single family dwellings which provides low cost housing for tribal members.

The school district provides a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade educational program for a population of approximately four hundred students. Because of the public school funding methods employed by the state, a major utility company located within the school district provides enhanced revenue to the district. A magnificent school physical plant has been created by the wealth generated through the corporate tax base. The entire educational program and the administrative offices are housed in one large structure. Each educational level occupies a separate wing of the

building. There are separate buildings for technical programs and physical education. The school district also enjoys a well-appointed sports complex. Advanced technological equipment is integrated into the educational program.

Each school setting has unique and individual qualities. While differences in settings exists, Cusick (1973) believes that the data resulting from qualitative research methods are transferable to other situations. He states,

> . . . what is reasonable behavior for one human being in a given situation will, at least in some way, be reasonable behavior for others given the same situation (Cusick, 1973, p. 5).

The quality of transferability serves to enhance the trustworthiness of this study.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is the primary method of data collection employed by researchers working in the ethnographic tradition.

> By participating, and not just observing, the researcher . . . comes to the fuller understanding that belongs uniquely to the members of that culture (Crowson, 1987, p. 5)

Participant observation was ongoing throughout the course of the study and was undertaken "with the aim of understanding another way of life from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1980, p. 3).

The recording of observations began in August, 1990. As relationships were developed with community members on an interpersonal level, the researcher's role expanded from observer to participant observer. Cusick (1973) points out that maintaining a

balance between the emic and the etic view permits the researcher to remain objective.

Depending upon the nature of the study, the participant observer may be open about the research role or may choose to collect data in a covert manner. The role of the researcher and the purpose of the study were explained to members of the Native American community from the inception of the study. The researcher further "establishes legitimacy" by participating in the day to day lives of community members (Crowson, 1987). Legitimacy is critical to the development of rapport and trust, which allows access to the ways in which community members perceive the world.

Procedure. Acquaintanceship with the community members was established in order that rapport and trust could develop. Participation in community life progressed from "dropping by" the tribal agency to participating in social events, attending community meetings, facilitating youth group activities, serving on a tribal board, and informally serving as a source of information. A written record of field observations were maintained in a field note journal. Maintaining researcher objectivity through emic and etic perspectives, establishing legitimacy through participant observation, and engaging in prolonged field work facilitate the trustworthiness of this study.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with community members after a level of trust and rapport was established. Gaining insight into community

members' perceptions required asking them questions. As Crowson states, "the interview provides an opportunity to gather data in the respondents' own words," and to "seek information directly from the persons who are most in the know in a setting" (Crowson, 1987, p. 34).

Ethnographic interviews may be formal or informal. That is, they may be take place during fortuitous, yet unplanned, circumstances. Or, they may be planned and formally scheduled (Spradley, 1980). Classifications of interviews (Crowson, 1987) can be determined by "their degree of structure, their degree of overtness, and the quality of the relationship between interviewer and respondent" (Crowson, 1987, p. 35; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 268). According to Crowson, interviews may be structured or unstructured, usually becoming more structured as specific information is elicited. Researcher openness and the quality of interviewer/respondent relationship are a function of trust and rapport building (Crowson, 1987).

The researcher began interviewing community members in February, 1991. The interview process continued through October, 1991. One respondent served as the major informant for this study. This individual speaks his native language, is culturally knowledgeable, and has served his tribe in a major leadership position. He was selected by the researcher to read and comment on the findings of the study. He commented, " . . . I'm no dissertation critic, but this is very good. In fact, I would say it is excellent".

Strengths and weaknesses are inherent in interviews. Crowson points out that "the major strengths of interviewing are also its

central weaknesses (Crowson, 1987, p. 34). During the interview, the interviewee has primary control of the content, veracity, and degree of the information. A strength of interviews is the past and future qualities provided by the interviewee reflecting on past events and speculating about the future. Crowson further points out that the interview is a useful "tool of triangulation" (Crowson, 1987).

Procedure. Thirty-three interviews were conducted with twenty individuals from February, 1991 to October, 1991. Before interviews were conducted, it was necessary for the researcher to become recognized by community members. Access to prospective informants was gained by developing rapport with trusted community members.

Interviews were both informal and formal in nature and occurred in a variety of settings. Some interviews resulted from unplanned meetings while others were requested and formally scheduled. Each interviewee was fully informed about the purpose of the research and permission was requested to use the information provided. The relationship between the researcher and each interviewee was congenial.

A set of questions was developed to guide the formal interviews. The questions were posed in an open-ended manner in order to generate a free flow of information and elicit broad responses. The interviews became more focused over time in order to confirm the data which had been collected earlier.

Interviews were audio taped if the interviewee permitted the use of a tape recorder. The tapes were transcribed by the researcher. Those interviews that were not audio taped were recorded in the form

of interview notes.

An early approach to securing interviews ended in failure. The researcher distributed a letter explaining the research and requesting individuals to participate in interviews. The letter was distributed to tribal employees. There was no response to the letter. All of the interviews that were conducted resulted from prolonged interaction between the researcher and the informant.

Document Collection

Documents can provide an added dimension to research, providing information which corroborates information generated by observation and interviews. "Documents and records must be scrutinized carefully for their biases, inaccuracies, representativeness, and over all credibility" (Crowson, 1987, p. 38).

Procedure. The researcher was provided with documents prepared for grant proposals which detailed economic and population demographics for the area. Additionally, the researcher compiled samples of newsletters, correspondence, and memoranda. The grant proposals were supplied by the tribal agency. The researcher collected newsletters from the school district and the tribal agency. The correspondence and memoranda represent both the tribe and the school district.

The collection of documents, in combination with interviews and participant observation, serves the trustworthiness of this study through triangulation.

Data Analysis

The grounded theory method was applied to analyze the data from "the viewpoint of the perspectives" (Crowson, 1987, p. 42) of the Native American community. This qualitative method "uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 24). The findings derived from the data "constitute a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 24).

Analysis began "with the first collection of data" and continued throughout the course of the study (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 40). By remaining close to the data during the process of "coding," or data analysis, bias brought to the research field is reduced (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 57).

According to Strauss and Corbin, the test of "fit, understanding, generality, and control" is applied to determine the "applicability" of grounded theory to the phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Theory should "fit" the "everyday reality" portrayed through the data, "make sense" to the group that was studied, "be abstract enough and include sufficient variation to make it applicable to a variety of contexts related to the phenomenon", and "provide control with regard to action toward the phenomenon" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

Procedure. The data were initially analyzed through open coding, "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990,

p. 61). During this process, conceptual labels were applied to the individual phenomenon that were identified in the field notes and interviews. Each conceptual label was transferred to a three by five card and examined for similarities. The concepts were grouped according to similarities and organized into categories. The properties and dimensions, or "attributes or characteristics" which are located "along a continuum," were determined (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

In the second phase of the analysis, connections were made between the categories and subcategories through the process of axial coding. A coding paradigm was utilized to develop categories, or phenomena, in terms of their conditions, context, strategies, and outcomes. Analysis in this phase specified the conditions which accounted for the phenomena, the contexts in which they occurred, the strategies applied to "manage" or maintain them, and the outcomes of those strategies (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 97).

Selective coding was the final phase in the analytic process. From a brief written description, the primary phenomenon, or core category, was identified. Through the application of the coding paradigm, the remaining categories were integrated into the core category, thus relating the categories to the core category and to each other (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Adherence was maintained to Lincoln and Guba's methods of establishing trustworthiness during the course of this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility is demonstrated through participant observation over an extended period of time, triangulation, member validation, and collection of pertinent documents; transferability

can be achieved through the thick description used in this study; dependability is assured through an audit trail; and confirmability can be achieved through an external audit (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness

The researcher attended to trustworthiness throughout the course of this study. A control for contamination of the study through bias was instituted by recognizing, and stating, potential sources of bias. The researcher insured trustworthiness by remaining close to the data during collection and analysis, and maintaining objectivity through the emic and etic balance. Generalization of the findings from one setting to another is facilitated through the use of thick description in the presentation of the findings. The credibility of the findings is insured through the use of triangulated methods of data collection: participant observation, interviews, and collection of relevant documents. Additionally, member validation was employed to demonstrate the credibility of the findings. The fieldnotes, interview transcripts, collected documents, analysis memoranda, and coding notes provide an audit trail which serve to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to produce a detailed description of the Native American/school personnel communication climate and process which reflects the perceptions of Native American people. Qualitative research methods were utilized in this investigation to determine the conditions which mediated the communication process and

the effects of those mediating conditions on the process. Data were gathered through participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and collection of pertinent documents. The grounded theory method was applied to data analysis. The data were conceptually labeled and categorized through the process of open coding. Through the application of the coding paradigm, the categories were developed during the process of axial coding. During the process of selected coding, the central category was identified and the remaining categories related to it. Trustworthiness of the study is achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

This chapter presents a description of the participants in the study, the research setting, the research design, and the research methods and procedures.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter IV presents the data accumulated for this study. This chapter includes (1) a description of the research activity, (2) a description of the research field, and (3) a presentation of the collected data. A purpose of this study was to describe Native American perceptions of the conditions which mediate the ways in which Native American parents communicate with school personnel and how these perceived mediating conditions impact the communication process between Native Americans and school personnel in a rural school district. A further purpose was to generate theoretical explanations of the communication process grounded in the reality presented by the Native American people.

Description of Research Activity

Data were collected through ethnographic field work methods. The multi-modal data collection methods included participant observation, interviews, and a collection of pertinent documents.

The method of participant observation was utilized in the initial stages of research and continued throughout the course of this study. The purpose of the research and the role of the

researcher were explained to tribal and community leaders. Field observations were recorded in notation form immediately upon leaving the field or they were audio taped. The collected observations were written into an extensive journal in a timely manner.

Twenty individuals participated in open-ended interviews. The interviewees were, primarily, members of the two predominant tribes in the River View School District. Those interviewees who were not tribal members were either related to tribal members through marriage and extended family or were tribal employees. The interviewees included nuclear and extended family members of school age children, adult tribal members, tribal elders, and tribal leaders. The interviews were conducted from February, 1991 through October, 1991. The length of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two and one half hours. In order to capture the nuances of the responses, the interviews were audio taped, if the interviewee agreed to the taping. Nine interviews were audio taped. The audio tapes were transcribed by the researcher.

The process of data categorization was begun with the field notes. Through the process of open coding, the field notes were read and notations were made in the margins to indicate the concept represented in each passage. A determination of the contextual property and dimension of each concept was made from the data. This information was written in notation form on a three by five card. The same process was repeated with the interview data. The conceptual labels derived from the open coding process were then grouped into categories through the process of axial coding by which

sub-categories were related to categories. The core category was identified through the process of selective coding by which the principal categories were related to the core category and to each other.

The core category which emerged from the data is labeled "gatekeeping." Five additional categories emerged which are integrated into the core category. These categories include:

1. Native American distrust of schools.

2. Racial tension between the Native American community, the Anglo community, and Anglo school personnel.

3. Maintenance of tribal identity among Native American people.

4. Native American dependence upon governmental institutions and services.

5. Native American isolation.

Description of the Research Field

River View is a consolidated school district, encompassing three communities and several hundred square miles. A significant portion of the land within the school district is tribally owned. The populations of two of the communities, Fordam and Clear Creek, are predominantly Native American. The Native American student population at River View is approximately 52 percent of the total student population. One tribal agency is located within the boundaries of the school district and the reserve area of another tribe is located nearby. While these two tribes comprise the majority of the total Native American population, the Native American student population at River View represents several tribal groups.

Historically, the Native American people in the River View area did not intermarry with the Anglo population. Thus, the majority of the adult population is full blood Native American. A tribal leader explained,

> . . . they didn't want to do that because they believed that they shouldn't mix with the other cultures. They may have married other tribes but they didn't marry nonIndians, I guess.

Many of the school age children are full blood or, if mixed blood, are one-quarter or more Native American by blood quantum. Thus, the students are easily identified as Native American by their physical appearance.

The total student population of River View Schools fluctuated around 400. An approximate student distribution indicates that 170 were elementary, 140 were middle school, and 90 were high school. Surrounded by open land, River View Schools appear to extrude from the landscape and stand in stark contrast to the adjoining communities. The elementary, middle, and high schools occupy separate wings of a single building. This main building also houses the central administrative office. The physical, technological, and agricultural education programs are housed in additional buildings.

The amount of revenue that a particular school district receives determines the wealth of that district. According to state education agency data, River View School District is in the top one percent of the wealthiest districts in the state. The data indicates that River View School District receives almost four times the revenue received by the poorest district in the same state. The school facilities, constructed less than ten years ago, are spacious and attractive. In

addition to classrooms and media centers equipped with technological tools, noticeable features of the school complex include extensive sports facilities, agricultural and technological education equipment, and a professional quality auditorium. Portions of the facility appear to be utilized infrequently. The quality of the total educational plant, inclusive of material resources for professional and student use, exceeds that found in most school facilities in this country.

Most of the students, Native American and Anglo, who attend River View live in the surrounding communities. Several Native American students live in tribal housing authority homes, a cluster of approximately 40 tract houses located close to the tribal complex. Other students, primarily Anglo, live on farms and ranches within the school district. Fordam and Clear Creek are small, rural communities with populations of approximately 300 people each. While having some features in common, they are distinct and individual communities. Both communities are located several miles away from a major highway and are primarily agricultural communities.

A black-topped country road leads into the town of Fordam. The town is dominated by a grain elevator, the single business enterprise in the community. Fordam is a town without a business district; there are no stores, grocery markets, or filling stations. The community does have a U. S. post office and several Protestant churches. Some of the streets through the town are blacktopped while others remain dirt roads. A community member explained that the BIA was willing to pave the streets, but the Town Council wouldn't agree

to pay for the surveying. As a consequence, the BIA blacktopped the streets that run in front of Indian homes and left the others unpaved. According to this community member, all of the town council members are Anglo and the Native American community members have little influence in the conduct of town business. The population of this community is approximately 90 percent Native American. The predominance of houses built during the era of the family farm gives the town an appearance of age. Many of these older homes sit on two to five acre plots of land. Interspersed among the older homes are small, brick homes which are leased or owned by Native American people. These houses were built by the federal Housing and Urban Development Authority through tribal grants. A few families live in mobile homes situated on small acreages within the town. Fordam appears to be a community on the brink of demise. The lack of business requires that community members commute to other towns for employment or shopping. While some of the homes are neatly kept and in good repair, the litter of discarded household goods standing in yards and the visible disrepair of houses are testimony to the level of poverty within the community. While poverty appears to be universal within the community, indications of poverty are more apparent among the Native American population.

Approximately seven miles of country roads separate the communities of Fordam and Clear Creek. Native American people comprise approximately 40 percent of the Clear Creek population. As in Fordam, a grain elevator dominates the landscape. Two small food markets are located along the main street which runs through the

center of town. The school building, no longer operating as an educational facility, stands closed and unused. Several small Protestant churches are scattered throughout Clear Creek. A small section of "Indian homes," identified by their brick construction, are clustered in one end of town. Clear Creek appears to be more compact than Fordam with homes occupying smaller parcels of land. The town is primarily located along the main street and extends only about four blocks out from the center. Like Fordam, the Native American people in Clear Creek do not exert influence or authority in the governance of the community. The general atmosphere of a community struggling to survive is common to both Fordam and Clear Creek.

Locally known as the "Tribal Town," a planned community built by the tribal housing authority sits on tribal land. Similar in construction to the "Indian homes" in Fordam and Clear Creek, the housing authority homes provide low cost housing for tribal members. Unlike the apartment dwellings built by urban housing authority projects, the Tribal Town houses are single family residences. As in Fordam, Tribal Town has no markets or services within the community. Community members must commute between 15 and 25 miles for shopping, services, or employment. Within the community there are numerous signs of economic depression: out of commission vehicles left parked on streets or driveways, children at home during the school day, unemployed adults, and general signs of disrepair.

The tribal agency is a five to ten minute drive from River View Schools. A collection of low, modern buildings, the agency is built

adjacent to the old boarding school and agency building. The agency is the center for tribal government, administration of tribal business, and helping services. The old buildings are utilized for community programs and to house the tribal police. The tribe operates two business enterprises, a convenience store and a bingo hall. Both facilities are located on tribal land and in close proximity to the agency.

A major utility company is located in the area and provides a sizable corporate tax base for the school district. The funds derived from this company account for approximately 88 percent of the district revenue. Thus, the district is not totally dependent upon the state for financing the educational program. This corporate entity does not employ any Native American people from the Fordam or Clear Creek communities.

The communities within the River View School District are rural, agricultural communities. There is limited employment opportunity for the Native American people in the area. People must travel to the larger surrounding communities for jobs, shopping, services, and entertainment. Most of the Native American families have lived in the area for three generations or more.

Presentation of the Data

Presentation of the data includes a description of the communication environment, descriptions of the mediating factors and their impact on the communication process, and analysis of communication "gatekeeping."

An assurance of anonymity was made to those individuals who were interviewed. Because of those assurances, individuals are not identified by name. To further insure anonymity, neither the tribes, the communities, nor the state have been identified.

Parent-School Communication

Native American parents perceive the communication linkages with school personnel to be almost nonexistent. Communication between home and school is usually initiated by school personnel and is most frequently related to disciplinary actions or health related issues.

Communication Climate. An almost tangible aura of tension exists between the Native American community and River View School District personnel. The school system is generally perceived to be a racist institution by members of the Native American community. While most Native American parents are concerned about educational opportunity for their children, many do not believe that River View Schools provide equal educational opportunities for Native American students.

Interactions between Native American parents and school personnel often occur as a result of disciplinary actions. The parent may be informed by the student rather than school personnel but, generally, is not informed until after the action is taken. One parent described his experience of attempting to discuss his son's expulsion with various school administrators. The son, a middle school student, told his father that he had been expelled for pushing

a teacher. As the son explained the incident, he and his cousin were wrestling and after they were separated by a teacher, the teacher shoved him. He shoved the teacher back and subsequently was expelled. When the father received no contact from the school, he requested a conference in an attempt to get his son reinstated. He described the school administrators with whom he spoke as "hostile, unwilling to listen, unwilling to reason, and closed minded." He made "three or four" telephone calls to the school after this incident and received no decision about his son returning to school. Eventually, he transferred his son into another school district. At no point during the process did school personnel attempt to communicate with the parent, either verbally or in writing.

Another parent stated that she believed that her son was being disciplined unfairly and that she felt helpless to intervene on his behalf. She was concerned that, rather than being placed in in-house suspension, he would be expelled from school. In describing school personnel, she said, "they are all liars." She was considering transferring her children to another school district to prevent her son from being "picked on and yelled at."

The mother of a high school student who had been suspended commented to the principal that it appeared that Native American students were disciplined more frequently and more harshly than Anglo students. The principal reacted with such anger that the parent ended the conference.

Two parents of elementary age students perceive their communication interactions with school personnel, specifically

classroom teachers, to be successful. They indicated that they ask questions of their children's teachers and continue to ask questions until understanding is reached. Each parent emphasized that, having previously lived in more diverse communities, they had greater experience communicating with non-Native American people. One parent stated that while she interacted successfully with classroom teachers, she did not trust the school administration. "I watch and I listen. Too many promises have been made that haven't been kept."

In the view of Native American parents, communication with school personnel frequently occurs in a climate of distrust and hostility, particularly with school administrators. Native American parents perceive school personnel as being more concerned with "rules" and "being in control" than in the welfare of students.

Direction. As perceived by some Native American parents, communication with school personnel flows one way. Because most interactions occur as a result of disciplinary actions or health related issues, communication is frequently between parents and school administrators.

School administrators are described as being more concerned with "telling" and "referring to rules" than in listening or attempting to create shared meanings. One parent stated,

> They would not reason and would not listen . . .
> they were just concerned with rules and that's all.

A parent who has advocated the curricular inclusion of Native American culture believes that school personnel listen to her if it suits their purpose to do so. However, she believes that her

suggestions have been enacted in such a way that "it doesn't mean anything, It's nullified."

Native American parents believe that messages flow one way in the communication process: from school administrative personnel to parents. Messages from parents are perceived as being unheard, ignored, or discounted.

Communication Channels. School personnel rely on four methods to communicate with parents: the telephone, written messages sent home with students, parent conferences, and a monthly newsletter. In the case of Native American parents, tribal agency social workers are sometimes contacted to serve as intermediaries.

The telephone is a service that many Native American families cannot financially afford. In emergency cases, if the parent cannot be reached by telephone, the TV-C/JOM coordinator or a classified staff member is sent to the home. If it is a case that may need intervention, such as extended absence, an agency social worker is contacted. In those instances that a parent might receive a routine telephone call, such as advising a parent that a student has been placed in in-house suspension, those parents who do not have telephones are not contacted.

Sending written messages home with students is problematic in that the message may not reach the parent. The high rate of illiteracy in the Native American community makes reliance on written messages even more problematic. Many Native American parents dropped out of school before graduation and have limited reading and writing skills.

For one day each semester, school is dismissed for parent conferences. Each parent is scheduled for an individual conference with their children's teachers. Of those Native American parents who do attend the parent conferences, the majority are parents of elementary children. Typically, not many Native American parents participate in the scheduled conferences and they seldom request conferences at other times during the school year.

Each month a school newsletter is sent to every patron in the district. The newsletter contains information about extracurricular events, the school calendar, breakfast and lunch menus, and student news. Native American parents do not appear to consider it as a valued source of information. The issue of literacy accounts for some parents not referring to the newsletter; however, those parents who are literate do not use it as an information resource.

Communication Style. The communication styles of school personnel, specifically school administrators, and Native American parents differ in several respects. School administrators are perceived as "taking a superior attitude" and "talking down" to Native American parents. They are further perceived, in face to face verbal communication to speak "in a loud voice," interrupt another's speech, transmit information in an abrupt manner, and to control the process through bureaucratic means.

Typically, Native American people speak in a moderated voice, continue speech turns until the thought is completed, pause between speech turns, and allow time for the communication process to reach a conclusion. Native American parents may react to the administrative

communication style with silence, avoidance body movement such as turning the body away from the speaker, or anger. One parent stated that she ended a confrontive situation because she did not want to "give them the satisfaction of seeing me cry." Many Native American parents simply absent themselves from the process.

Communication Effectiveness. From the perspective of Native American parents, communication with school personnel is limited and ineffective. Few parents express satisfaction in their interactions with school personnel. School-parent communication was described as "very limited in nature" and "basically nonexistent."

Summary. Native American parent-school communication frequently occurs in a climate that is hostile and tense. It is often initiated by school personnel as a result of disciplinary actions. Communication is perceived to be one-way, controlled, and ineffective.

Distrust of Schools

The lack of trust in schools as institutions and in school personnel, particularly administrative personnel, was a theme common to all of the interviews. The causal conditions of this phenomenon revealed in the data include collective and individual educational experiences, student academic regression, discipline of students, and student drop out rate.

Educational Experience. The collective educational history and experience of Native American people is perceived as "devastating to

the spirit." In the historical sense, education is viewed as a tool that was used to destroy Native American cultures and languages and to assimilate Native American people into the dominant culture. The recounting of family stories about grandparents and great-grandparents who were removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools and the experiences they encountered evoked sadness and anger in the telling. Aspects of ancestral boarding school and public school experiences that were cited include the attempted destruction of native language, culture, and religion. Education was portrayed as an attempt to eliminate all identity with Native American culture. The names of Native American children were anglicized by boarding school personnel. A tribal elder explained that during his boarding school experience, children would be given a name according to some physical attribute or, if possible, their native name would be anglicized. The objective of the introduction and punitive enforcement of western culture and the English language was "to train us like Pavlov's dogs." A tribal elder summarized the conflict engendered by his educational experience thus,

> I went to school. I understand the white man. But my heart, my soul, my understanding is the Indian way. I live like the white man, but my soul's guideline is on the Indian way.

BIA boarding schools served as the predominant educational institution attended by the grandparents and great-grandparents of today's River View Native American students. Having become more tolerant and sensitive to the cultures of the students by the mid-twentieth century, these boarding schools were also attended by some of the parents of the River View students. While some

parents attended either public schools or boarding schools exclusively, others attended both.

The process of adapting to a public high school after attending boarding school was described by a tribal employee. As a boarding school student, he experienced success academically and athletically. He attributed his success to the culturally inclusive atmosphere of his learning environment. Public school attendance was necessitated by closure of the boarding school by the BIA. Finding the public school environment to be hostile and non-inclusive of Native American students, he became a school drop out. Eventually, he earned a diploma through a GED program and completed undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

A Fordam community member described her school experience "as a shoe that never fit." The examples she cited to illustrate her point included the discomfort of looking different from the other students, lifestyle experiences described in textbooks that she could not relate to, the curricular treatment of Native Americans as savages, and the embarrassment of not being able to dress like other students or having lunch money. She concluded that her educational experience was one of "embarrassment and pain." Although she dropped out of school during her senior year, she has been successful in her career field.

One Clear Creek resident considers schools to continue the assimilationist practices of the past. He stated that during his public school experience he was taught that "to be Indian is bad." The supremacy of Anglo culture was taught by covert denouncement of Native American culture. For example, male students were told that

only females have long hair and wear earrings. He remarked that schools

> . . . teach you're worthwhile, you're someone of value . . . only if you do your very best to be exactly like a white man. That, to me is, the big lie.

Academic Regression. The parents of elementary age students, particularly those in the primary grades, appear to be more satisfied with the school experience and academic progress of their children. Parents reported that academic growth begins to slow in the upper elementary grades and, in some cases, begins a reversal process in the secondary years. The reasons cited for this phenomenon included lower teacher expectations of Native American students, the unwillingness of the school district to conform to the needs of the students, the perceived irrelevance of the academic curriculum, and the lack of parental involvement in the secondary levels. Parents indicated that their children become frustrated and quit trying to achieve academically.

The mother of a fourth grade student reported that her son had been an academic achiever and had consistently scored at the ninety-ninth percentile on standardized achievement tests. During the third and fourth grade years, he has received failing grades and his standardized test scores have dropped. She indicated that extensive use of substitute teachers during his third grade year and the practice of humiliating Native American students by a teacher has led to his academic failure.

A recent graduate of River View schools explained that the high school students are tracked into either a college bound or a

non-college bound curriculum. During her high school experience, most of the Native American students were designated non-college bound. She perceived the non-college bound students receiving little instructional attention from teachers ". . . because they (the students) weren't worth wasting their time on."

The school, according to one tribal employee, does not accommodate the cultural background or socio-economic condition of Native American students. In his view, the school demands that the student conform to the culture of the school. He described schools as institutions that are ". . . set in concrete, carved out of granite blocks."

This individual further questioned the relevancy of some high school course work to the lives of Native American students. He opined that the curriculum is eurocentric in nature and is designed to serve the Anglo student. Citing the limitation of foreign language courses to European languages, he stated that Native American students would be better served by the inclusion of native languages in the curriculum.

The former student stated that parents are involved with the school while their children are in the lower grades and become less involved over time. Parents perceive themselves as being excluded from the schooling experience and unable to exert influence over the process. Ultimately, they decide, "They're going to do what they want so why waste your breath and go out there. Your kids aren't going to be treated right so why send them, why make them go." One

parent summarized the issue of academic regression by pointing out that young Native American children are frequently at the top of their classes. "They have no problem picking up the school curriculum until the time comes that education turns them off."

Student Discipline. Most members of the Native American community believe that different disciplinary measures are applied to Native American students than to Anglo students. The specific measures which were discussed included in-house suspension, suspension from school, and expulsion.

The in-house suspension policy is very controversial among the Native American families. The schools have closet sized rooms, approximately five feet square, that are designated as in-house suspension rooms. Each room contains one student desk, does not have a window, and is equipped with a door with a small window for monitoring by school personnel. Students are placed in in-house suspension for infractions that do not warrant suspension or expulsion. One parent stated that a group of parents kept records for a period of time, and that those records indicated that all of the students placed in in-house suspension were Native American. In previous years, designated restrooms were used for in-house suspension and the students had to eat their lunch "in the toilet."

According to one tribal leader, "disciplinary policies are inconsistent." She cited examples of coaches applying differing disciplinary actions to Anglo and Native American students for the same infraction. Another individual indicated that Native American

students are more likely to be accused of cheating by teachers, even though the cheating was done by Anglo students.

Native American students appear to be suspended from school at a greater rate and for longer periods of time than are Anglo students. A group of five students were suspended by the high school principal for smoking. According to one of the suspended students, only three of the students were smoking. The other two students, who are non-smokers, had been on an errand and stopped to talk to the three students. Although the students explained the circumstances to the principal, he held to the suspension action. One of the two students was a candidate for either valedictorian or salutatorian, an honor which is negated by the suspension. A parent of one student involved in the incident said that she would not inflict further punishment because of the suspension.

A middle school age student was expelled from school for fighting. His parent, a single parent father, was not notified of the disciplinary action by the school, either verbally or in writing. When he contacted the school to discuss the expulsion, he felt that he did not receive a hearing by school personnel and was treated with defensiveness and hostility. He perceived a concern by school administration only for rules and not for the educational welfare of his son.

Student Drop Out Rate. In the view of the Native American community, a disproportionately high number of Native American students drop out of school before graduation. The circumstances under which each individual decides to drop out vary; however,

frustration and despair are themes common to each case.

A young woman, 26 years of age, lives in Fordam with her grandmother and her five children. She dropped out of school during her senior year. As she spoke about her life as a student, children raced around through the small house, alternately playing and crying. She spoke about school quietly and without a great deal of expression. She indicated that she was happy at school, particularly when she played basketball. She recalled having difficulty in only one class, technology education, and that was because she could not calculate measurement. During her senior year, her parents moved away and she was left to live alone. When she got lonely, she would stay at her grandmother's house, which was nearby. Her eighteenth birthday fell during her senior year and she was eligible to receive a per capita payment from her tribe. She quit school when she got her per capita payment. She could not articulate a reason for quitting school or for failing to complete the training programs she had subsequently been involved in. She appeared to be drifting through life, living at a subsistence level.

A Fordam high school student was suspended from his vocational agriculture class for refusing to participate in the castration and artificial insemination of farm animals. According to his mother, he refused to do so because he considered it to be an unnatural act. This incident precipitated his decision to quit school. He has chosen to be tutored by tribal elders in the traditional and ceremonial ways of the people.

A young man who is thought to be a talented artist with great potential recently dropped out of high school. A community member said that he "has started drinking a lot." She spoke about him with sadness and said, "I guess he'll just wind up being a drunk."

Summary. There is a high level of distrust of school personnel among the people in the Native American community. This distrust is based upon historical and personal educational experience as well as a belief that their children will not receive an equitable education or be treated fairly by school personnel.

Racial Tension

The issue of racism was embedded within each interview and was portrayed as a factor which pervades the lives of Native American community members, influencing the ways in which they interact with school personnel. The emergent causal conditions of racial tensions were prejudicial attitudes and prejudicial behaviors.

Prejudicial Attitudes. Standing on the porch of her Fordam home on a cool, breezy February morning, an elderly woman, the care giver for her three young grandchildren, discussed her interactions with River View School personnel. She paused in her discussion and said, ". . . pardon me, but white people are prejudiced against Indians."

This statement not only summarizes the perception of the Native American community toward white people; it also shapes the ways in which the two races interact with each other. Interviewees described the attitudes of Anglo people as "racist" and "stereotypical."

Racial attitudes are rooted in historical conflict and have been transmitted across generations. The encroachment of whites onto tribal reserve lands and the ensuing loss of land through the allotment system, theft, and corruption set the stage for "bitter racial hatred." Cultural differences and varying value systems served to embed racial conflict within the texture of the total community.

A voracious desire for land and the concept of individual ownership were alien notions to the Native American people. Accustomed to the communal ownership of a tribal lifestyle, they were unprepared to cope with the forced land allotment policy and were easy prey for unscrupulous groups and individuals. Some individual Native American land owners elected to sell their land, particularly if they were unable or unwilling to become farmers or ranchers. Of the approximate 300,000 acres encompassed within the original reservation boundaries, the tribe retains almost 21,000 acres today or almost seven percent of the original land base.

One individual ascribed the attitudes held by the Anglo community to "fear" and "guilt." Fear is generated by the stereotyped perception of the Native American as a savage intent upon pillage and massacre, a perception which has been maintained through textbooks, oral historical accounts, and the mass media. Guilt is derived from knowledge of the inhumane treatment to which native peoples have been subjected through policies of genocide and forced assimilation.

Within the River View school district, the Anglo attitude is

typified by terms such as "cowboy mentality" or "redneck attitude." As articulated by one tribal employee, Native American people are considered to be "second class citizens. The Indian is supposed to be the serf, the plowboy." The Anglo community was alluded to as oppressive and the social environment was described as possessing ". . . an antagonistic element that is near the surface."

River View Schools, according to Native American community members, reflects the attitudes of the Anglo community. The low esteem in which Native American people are held is reflected by tracking Native students into a less challenging academic curriculum, low teacher expectations of Native students, and harsher punitive measures applied to Native students. A symbiotic relationship seems to exist between the school and the Anglo community through the 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) student organizations. Furthermore, this relationship appears to serve the interests of both the school and the Anglo community. The 4-H and FFA organizations not only provide extra curricular activity for the student members, they also serve as training laboratories for those students who will continue in the farming or ranching tradition of their families.

While the educational system appears to reflect the culture of the Anglo community, Native American people believe the school system attempts to make the Native American culture invisible. In the educational sense, the Native American is treated as an historical artefact.

> As far as history books are concerned, we don't exist; we don't exist in this century. We just ceased to exist when they were capable of overcoming us on all the levels that they did.

The Native American culture is not recognized and valued as a "living culture."

A Fordam community member indicated that the school administration negated a concession made to the Native American community to establish a Native American history class in the high school by hiring an Anglo preacher from the Clear Creek community as the teacher. Not only did this individual not have the requisite knowledge of Native American history and culture, he was not a certified teacher.

As Anglo people were resentful of Native American people receiving "free land from the United States government," so are they perceived as resentful of any special educational programs for Native American students. Reputedly, Native American students who receive school supplies through the Johnson O'Malley program are subjected to racist comments from some school personnel. In the view of one Native American parent, ". . . we gave up the whole United States for a pair of tennis shoes for our kids during the year."

Prejudicial Behavior. According to a tribal leader, ". . . school is a daily manifestation of prejudice for our Native American students." This statement is descriptive of perceptions Native American people hold in regard to Anglo behaviors within the school and the community.

Native American people consider River View Schools to be a mirror image of the Anglo community, reflective of the beliefs and behaviors embedded within that community. Community organizations and institutions, such as the fraternal lodge, the churches, the town

councils, and the school board are exclusively Anglo. Native American people maintain their own separate social, cultural, and governmental organizations. Segregation among students becomes obvious at the secondary levels; students sit in segregated groups in the cafeteria and walk in segregated groups through the hallways. Membership in the student organizations which receive the most support from the school and the community is predominantly Anglo and Anglo students receive more awards and academic recognition. The membership of two student organizations are predominantly Native American. There is not complete separation between the two student groups; however, as they progress through the grades the relationship most closely resembles that of the adult population.

Some Anglo parents actively encourage racial segregation by not allowing their children to interact socially with Native American students. This is particularly problematic among students who have reached the dating age. According to one Native American community member, some Anglo parents feel that the Native American students ". . . will never amount to anything and are not good enough" for their children to date. Native American students who excel in athletics interact more with Anglo students than those who do not. A former student stated that student segregation is not a result of student prejudice but results from ". . . the parents' way of thinking and putting it on the kids."

A tribal leader describes the separation between the Native American and Anglo communities thus,

> You still have two separate communities, you have white and Indian. Red and white. The Indian people to

> ourselves, the white people to themselves. That has never gone away. It's still here. It's still relevant.

Discrimination is perceived as being practiced through covert behaviors. Invisible boundaries appear to exist within the communities which are known but not openly acknowledged. While some discriminatory behaviors are evident within the school environment, others, such as tracking and curricular invisibility, cannot be observed through overt action.

The use of language which implies the superiority of eurocentrism and excludes the Native American is a covert form of discriminatory practice in the view of one community member. Terms such as "frontier" or "pioneer" evoke positive images only to Anglo people. Further, they either exclude Native Americans or connote negative messages. Concepts such as "manifest destiny," while promoting the national myth of the right to expand across the American continent, are insulting to Native peoples. Manifest destiny, according to one individual, is "just another term for military aggression."

Summary. Racial tension between the Native American and Anglo communities is pervasive throughout the River View School District. Engendered through the dual conditions of prejudicial attitudes and behaviors, racism impacts students, parents, school personnel, and each community member.

Maintenance of Tribal Identity

Issues of parent-school interactions were universally addressed within the context of tribal identity. Defined through culture and

values, maintenance of tribal identity emerged as a potent concern of the Native American community and as a primary variable in the communication process with school personnel.

Culture. While the histories and cultures of the individual tribes in the River View School District differ, threads of similar cultural texture and hue can be woven together to create the tapestry of the Native American community. Cultural threads include history, kinship, language, ceremonies, and religion. The tribes share the common experiences of attempted annihilation, forced assimilation, and subjugation to changing federal governmental policies. Each experienced displacement through land cession treaties and reservation policy. A subsequent form of displacement occurred through the land allotment policy. According to one individual Native American people were ". . . moved from here, to here, to here" and the result of each move was to ". . . take our land away." The BIA relocation program initiated in the 1950's served to further displace individuals and family groups.

The United States government has historically interacted with Native American tribes on a government-to-government basis, albeit not governments of equal standing. Shifting from a policy of military aggression to a policy of paternalism, the federal government has been in the position to dictate terms to the tribes. A result of this unequal relationship is the change from the traditional form of governance to a constitutional form of government, which parallels the American form of representative government. Traditionally, a leader who was respected by the

community was selected by consensus of tribal members. As described by one individual, "the white man destroyed our government and forced his own type of government on us." Because of the differences in culture and values, constitutional government is perceived as ". . . not working for us. It's like a little toy."

Historically, education has been used as a tool to effect the assimilation of Native American peoples into the American culture. All tribes were subjected to the boarding school policy which attempted to acculturate young Native American children by removing them from their families and communities. A tribal elder described with great amusement an incident early in this century in which he and his sister ran away from boarding school. The boarding school was located in the community, yet some miles away from the rural homes. Some of the other students told him that his sister had "run off." He volunteered to catch her and bring her back to school. He was able to outrun his sister, and when she arrived at their home, he was standing on the porch waiting for her.

Native American kinship systems differ from the European based kinship system of American society. While the nuclear family is considered the basic family unit within the dominant culture, Native American families maintain extended family networks. An individual explained that his tribe does not recognize the relationship of aunt or uncle. Sisters and brothers of biological parents are considered to be mothers and fathers of the child and grandparents are very important caregivers of children. The extended kinship system provides a child with a family regardless of circumstances.

> You always have a mother and father; you always have brothers and sisters. No matter what happens, they will always be there."

In the rural communities of River View School District, Native American families maintain the traditional extended family network. Many children are being raised by grandparents or live, periodically, with other family members. The family members with whom children live are considered to be the parents, and may be referred to as " mama or daddy" by the children. The issue of language retention is a matter of concern within the Native American community. Most of the native speakers are elders of the tribes; some younger adults are bilingual. The majority of individuals who can speak their native language are full blood. A tribal elder commented that when he was a youth, "98 percent of the people could speak the language; now, 98 percent can't." He lamented that, ". . . the things that are of value are gone. They out lived their usefulness or are gone through neglect."

An attempt to establish a language class at the agency did not meet with success. Lack of interest, unwillingness to work and study, and reliance upon rote memorization as the teaching methodology were cited as reasons for the failure. Opinions vary within the Native American community regarding the appropriate role of the school in the retention of native languages. Some individuals believe that the school system should include a class in a native language in the foreign language curriculum. Others believe that transmission of tribal language is a family responsibility.

Attired in her tribal clothing, a high school age girl is escorted around the dance arena by a male tribal elder. As they stop

at each of the cardinal points, she receives instructions and a blessing with a sacred eagle feather. A very young boy, about four years of age, dressed in the feather bustles of a fancy dancer, is escorted around the arena by an elder, a man approximately 80 years of age. They walk slowly around the circle, hand in hand. As they reach the beginning point, the man stoops down on one knee to talk to the child about his introduction to the people. The social and ceremonial aspects of the tribal dances are important features in the life of the Native American community. Commenting on the transmission of culture through tribal dances, one tribal leader stated,

> It's a sense of strength that is fellowship and coming together. It's sharing information and communicating who we are, where we are, where we came from and carrying this thing on from one generation to the next.

Many, but not all, individuals and families participate in the contemporary tribal dances. Some of those who do not participate consider contemporary dances to be a dilution of traditional ceremonies. One elder stated,

> . . . there's no ceremony. People talk ceremony but it's not there. Old people dignified the dance by dance costumes. Now people go in slacks and tennis shoes. Now it's social.

Christianity, represented by various protestant sects, is the dominant religion within the Anglo communities. While some Native American people attend Christian churches, the majority participate in the peyote meetings of the Native American Church or attend the Sun Dance. Some participate in both Christian and traditional religious exercises.

As explicated by community members, traditional native religions teach spiritual and environmental unity.

> Our church is the earth. We wake up with a prayer, go to bed with a prayer. We think it all day. We walk outside and make it.

Traditional beliefs engender "the acceptance of each individual . . . and whatever they value," and the incorporation of ". . . one's concept of god into one's total lifestyle."

Values. Traditional values, according to one community member, is the constant which has insured the survival of Native American people. While the requisite changes and adaptations of a "living culture" have occurred, those values common to all tribes have remained the same "throughout all these generations."

Traditional Native American people revere the earth and attempt to live in such a way that a harmonious balance within the environment is maintained. Humankind is considered to be a responsible steward of the earth. In return, the mother earth provides everything that humankind requires for survival. The Native American view of the relationship between humankind and the environment contrasts sharply with the eurocentric notion that natural resources are to be exploited for service to humankind.

Cooperation, as opposed to competition, is a value held among Native American people. Individuals are encouraged to use "their inherent gifts for the good of the tribe." While cooperation and the welfare of the group are emphasized, individuality is recognized and valued. Each individual is considered to have a gift,

> And no one was told that their gift was not for them because they were a man or because they were a woman or

> because they were a child or because they were too old. If that gift came to you at any time in your life, in any form, it was encouraged.

In the traditional way, childrearing is a responsibility shared across generations. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, and older siblings are involved in the caregiving of young children. Children are included in family activities from an early age and are encouraged to learn through observation and participation. Punitive or shaming methods are not applied as disciplinary measures with children. Rather, they are subjected to "talks" or "added chores."

The acquisition of material possessions is not considered a virtue among traditional people. "Striving for increased material possessions" is perceived as being "an empty and meaningless way of life." While material possessions may be enjoyed, sharing possessions with others is considered to be a worthy virtue and one which earns the respect of others.

Traditional Native American people consider loud and aggressive behavior to be rude. Speaking in a moderated voice and allowing each person to speak without interruption is viewed as appropriate and courteous behavior. Traditional people tend to not gaze or look directly at the person to whom they are speaking, particularly if that individual is a stranger or slight acquaintance.

Summary. The survival of Native American people is considered to be dependent upon the maintenance of tribal identity as defined by the culture and traditional system of values. The world view and behaviors shaped by traditional values and culture impact the ways

Native American people interact with school personnel and the community at large.

Dependence

Generations of forced dependence upon the federal government for survival has led to a dependent lifestyle among some Native American people. Governmental dependency is considered to be a result of federal governmental policies and poverty.

Governmental Policies. The nineteenth century conflicts between the Native American tribes and the United States resulted in treaties forced upon the native nations. The United States, considered to be the "military aggressor" by native peoples, "laid the foundation of the State of America on the blood of Native American people." The United States was able to force the opening of tribal lands to white expansion because "they had more guns than we had." As one individual stated,

> In terms of fighting the government, they soon realized the U.S. government was too powerful to fight. So they agreed to go into these treaties and be moved.

The United States was thorough in its attempt to destroy Native American cultures, first through genocidal policies and then through reservation policies which disrupted traditional ways of life and overlay a thin veneer of Anglo culture. Reservation life subjected native peoples to an invasive and systematic dismantling of their cultural way of life. Traditional economic pursuits, practice of traditional religions, use of native languages, and continuance of a

tribal lifestyle were prohibited by physical and mental abuse or devalued through ridicule. Native American people were confronted with the dilemma of death or adaptation. Many chose, and were abetted in the choice, to become dependent upon the United States government.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs assumed a paternalistic role in the relationship between Native American tribes and the United States government. During the reservation era, native people were completely dependent upon the Bureau for survival. The BIA agent was responsible for the provision of shelter, food, medical supplies, and education for the young. Further, the BlA agent served as the representative for the tribe or individuals in negotiations with any outside agencies.

As the reservation policy was replaced by a policy of land allotment for many tribes, an entire generation had become totally dependent upon the BIA. Unprepared for survival in the Anglo dominated world, tribal groups and individuals relied upon the Bureau agent to negotiate the daily affairs of life. People developed a "hang around the fort mentality," a dependency upon goods and services provided by the BIA, which has been passed down from generation to generation. The brutal treatment suffered during the forced marches and containment on reservations engendered feelings of anger, hatred, helplessness, and despair among Native American people. The ensuing "taught dependency" upon the BIA resulted in individuals with "low self esteem" and "no motivation from one generation to the next."

As stated by one individual, "This extreme paternalism is almost a tradition now in government to Indian relationships." The continued paternalism of the BIA has led some individuals to believe that they have no need of an education because they will be "taken care of" by the government. The extent of, and response to, BIA service was explained thus,

> Why worry about it if Uncle Sam's going to take care of everything. He's going to give me a house. . . take care of it, mow my lawn, give me food, help me pay my bills. So why worry.

Poverty. Allotment policies served to cast individual Native American families into an impoverished condition from which they had little hope of escaping. The implied intent of the allotment policy was to assist the Native American to become self sufficient farmers. The concept of individual ownership, particularly ownership of the sacred earth mother, was alien to a people who had no experience in agriculture and no desire to become farmers.

> They didn't have the expertise to farm, the money to buy tools and machinery, the know how to keep it going, or the money to buy seed. They didn't have the perspective on business, to borrow and pay back money.

Theoretically, individuals' land allotments were secured by "governmental ward" dependency status. In fact, many people lost their land through unscrupulous business practices and collusions between BIA agents and Anglo bankers, farmers, or attorneys. According to a tribal elder,

> Some crooked white man and the agent issued patent titles and loaned money on land. The Indians didn't realize they had to pay the money back plus interest. Then the bank foreclosed.

A group of families lost their land through a government program instituted to demonstrate the self sufficient status of some Native American people. The government picked out ten families thought to be "competent to live like whites." Not long after being given their "competency papers," which removed them from ward status, they lost their land.

Many families elected to lease their land to white farmers and attempted to live on the lease revenue. The BIA served as the leasing agent, negotiating contracts between the Anglo farmers and the Native American people. Unable to survive on the "lease check" alone, the BIA provided rations of food to supplement family incomes "through the 1920's." When the supplemental assistance program ended, the Native American people were "forced to go out and assimilate into white society."

Lacking in education, job or business related skills, and, in some cases, fluency in the English language, many Native American people were totally unprepared to seek employment outside the Native American community. Driven by circumstances of need, dependency upon the BIA for survival continued. The anguish and humiliations experienced by past generations have been passed down through oral family histories.

> They still remember. The old people. They can tell you that and they pass it on to their children and their children's children.

There are few employment opportunities for Native American people within the River View School District area. While the tribes

are the major employers of Native American people, they cannot provide full employment for all those individuals seeking jobs. The school district employs two Native American people as classroom teachers and four as classified staff. While the student population is approximately 52 percent Native American, the certified staff is only six percent Native American. The classified staff is slightly under 50 percent Native American.

Because jobs are limited in the area, most individuals must commute to surrounding communities for employment. A significant number of people are either unemployed or employed part time. Conditions of poverty, inadequate education, depression, and alcohol or substance abuse are major factors in the non-employment of many individuals.

Alcoholism is perceived as a major social problem in the Native American community. According to a tribal social worker, "alcohol is the drug of choice among Indian people," and the rate of alcohol addiction in the area is high. Alcohol is considered to be the major factor in child abuse and neglect cases, unemployment, physical and mental health cases, accidents, and suicides. One individual attributes alcohol abuse to the lack of self esteem which results from racial tension.

> So when we have to go face them, go to school, go to work, you have that friction. Then that self esteem will hit them, they'll start drinking . . . and get fired from their job.

Tribal social workers cite inadequate parenting skills as a major contributor to child abuse and neglect and excessive school absences. Many people believe that BIA boarding schools are

must rely upon itself to create a condition of economic well being among tribal members, in the view of many tribal leaders.

Land is the tribe's primary economic asset and most secure source of revenue. The tribe owns approximately 1,600 acres of the 21,000 acres of reserve land. The remainder, original allotment land, is owned by individual tribal members. The Bureau of Indian Affairs area office conducts all of the business related to tribal land through its realty department. Under current federal policy, tribes can exercise the option to contract services provided by the BIA directly from the federal government and conduct their own business. Fearing the loss of their land base through mismanagement, tribal leaders have left the management of tribal lands in the hands of the BIA. The BIA is leasing tribal land to area farmers and ranchers for seven dollars an acre. The current open market rate ranges between 12 and 15 dollars an acre.

One business venture that failed was a ranching operation. The tribe purchased a herd of registered cattle and hired a tribal member who had a third grade education to direct the ranching operation. The venture failed within the first year. This attempt was followed by a buffalo herd operation, which also failed.

Two business ventures which have succeeded are a high stakes bingo operation and a convenience market. Based upon the shelf inventory and limited volume of shoppers, the market appears to be marginally profitable. One tribal employee described the market as a "little ticky tacky store." The bingo operation is the most

profitable business enterprise, attracting players from surrounding states.

The high rate of unemployment, dependency upon welfare, and the limited success of tribal business initiatives render the Native American community economically unempowered.

Political Powerlessness. Even though they are the majority population in the community, Native American people do not have a voice in local governance through elected representatives. Despite attempts by Native American community leaders to persuade and educate, the Native American community has not coalesced into an effective political unit. Many people do not "believe in voting" because they do not "believe that there can be a difference." A tribal employee described the Native American community as "politically naive and apathetic."

Historically, Native American people form political alliances around family groups rather than vote as a single unit. Referred to as "tribal politics," this phenomenon serves to silence the Native American voice in elective forums. One individual explained,

> If an Indian files for a school board seat, two or three other Indians file for the same seat to split the vote, and the white farmer slides on in. It's jealousy.

In recent years, one Native American person has been elected to the school board. "He was strong and he was good, but he eventually bowed out of it." Anglo dominated institutions are perceived as "a real lonely place for one person."

Native American people apply the tradition of family alliances to tribal government. Tribal leadership, perceived by some as a

source of jobs and influence, is often the target of tribal politics. Individuals elected to executive or legislative positions are expected to favor family members with tribal jobs. This practice, fed by suspicion and hostility, creates friction within the Native American community which borders on "internecine warfare."

The past six tribal leaders have been removed from office by initiative petition. One tribal employee believes that if a large educational gap exists between the leader and the group, the group will choose a leader that is less able, but more comprehensible to the group. Another individual explained the phenomenon of tribal politics thus, "people feel so helpless, so dispirited, that they turn on each other."

Summary. Framed within the context of history and culture, Native American people perceive themselves to be isolated by economics and politics from the community at large. They believe themselves to be powerless and without a voice to influence the institutions that effect their lives.

Gatekeeping: A Theory of Limited Communication Control

Native American parents act as gatekeepers of the communication process. They test the environment to determine the degree of racial tension and cultural rejection. If tension and rejection is high, communication is very unlikely to occur. If tension and rejection are low, communication is more likely to occur but is limited in

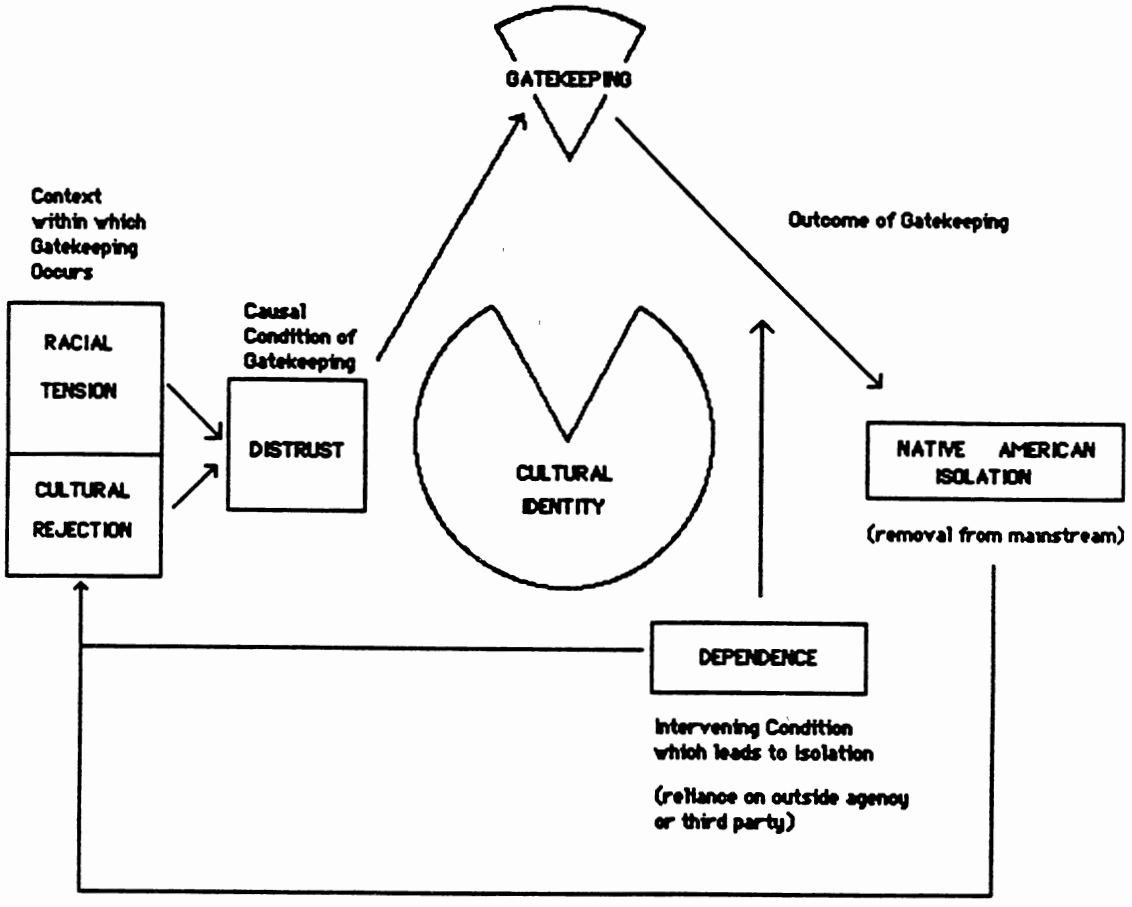
nature. The communication distance which Native American parents create serves to maintain a condition of isolation (Figure 1).

Discussion

Considering themselves to be the victims of a hostile environment, many Native American parents feel they must entrust their children to an institution that does not want them and does not respect them. Under these conditions, communication between parents and school is limited. It is perceived by Native American parents to occur within the context of racial conflict and cultural devaluing.

Many Native American parents have a deep distrust of schools and school personnel. This condition is grounded in interpretations of personal experience and derived from observations of the educational experience of contemporary Native American students. Personal school experiences were described as moderately negative to extremely negative. Two individuals, both of whom attended schools in less rural, more culturally diverse settings, indicated that they had good school experiences. Native American parents believe that educators and the school environment are responsible for the phenomena of academic regression among Native American students, their lack of academic persistence, and their exclusion from educational opportunities.

Native American parents believe that they are not valued or respected by school personnel and that they will not be listened to. Further, they do not feel that they have adequate power or resources to demand an equal voice in the communication process. Considering



Through Gatekeeping, Native American parents determine the occurrence or non-occurrence of communication interactions for the purpose of confrontation avoidance, perceived devaluation, or perceived protection of children.

Figure 1. Gatekeeping: Limited Control of the Communication Process

themselves to have limited power or influence to effect decisions or impact events, Native American parents exercise the control they do have. They control the occurrence or non-occurrence of communication events through their presence or absence, availability or non-availability, interaction or non-interaction. Interaction between parents and school personnel does occur. Yet, the barriers to an open and equal exchange of information and ideas are believed to be so great that they prevent communication from occurring.

Native American parents are very well attuned to the school environment and predicate their actions upon their perceptions of that environment. Two salient factors that are applied to "environmental testing" are perceptions of the degree of racial tension and perceptions of the degree of cultural rejection. Racial tension results from ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors. Cultural rejection is defined as the non-understanding and devaluation of Native American culture. When racial tension and cultural rejection are perceived to be high, interactions are unlikely to occur. If they do occur within this environment, Native American parents are prepared for a confrontive situation. Interactions are more likely to occur if the parent perceives the environment to be one of low racial tension and low cultural rejection. While these interactions may not lead to a free flow of information, they do result in some level of exchange. Environments that are perceived to be of low racial tension and high cultural rejection or high racial tension and low cultural rejection may not be confrontive, but result in very limited exchange.

Regardless of the environment in which interactions occur, Native American parents maintain a degree of communicative distance between themselves and school personnel. Distancing occurs as a result of the desire to avoid confrontations, the belief that interactions will not be useful, and the belief that interactions will be harmful to their children. Confrontive interactions are perceived to be harmful. They engender feelings of anger or rage and cause the parent to avoid future interactions. Previous interactions that are perceived as unsuccessful or negative experiences result in parents avoiding further interactions. They believe that attempting to communicate is a futile effort. Some parents avoid interacting with school personnel because they believe that their children will suffer negative consequences if school personnel become angry with them. Negative consequences, such as minor disciplinary actions or being passed over for honors, are perceived as occurring in covert ways.

The strategies Native American parents employ to effect communicative distancing include: physical avoidance, non-availability, non-responsiveness, silence, facial expressions and body movements. Many parents prevent interaction from occurring by not going to the school. They seldom attend parent-teacher conferences or involve themselves in PTA or volunteer service. Many Native American parents do not enter the school building during the course of the school year. The lack of telephone service allows many Native American parents to be unavailable through lack of contact. The use of written messages frequently receives no response. In some

cases, non-response to written messages may be attributed to the lack of literacy skills or non-receipt of the message. Silence is often employed as a strategy to create distance. The lack of verbal engagement prevents interaction from occurring. On a subdued level, Native American parents employ facial expression and body movement to maintain communicative distance. Lack of eye contact, facial non-expression, and turning the body away from the speaker serve to effect a sense of distance.

The introduction of a third party serves to intervene in the communication process. If requested by either school personnel or parent, the social services department of the tribal agency provides services appropriate to the needs of the family. The tribal employee often serves as a conduit for the passage of information between the school and home. Serving in an advocacy role, the tribal employee explains family behaviors to school personnel within a cultural context.

The Native American community perceives itself to be isolated from the community, and the institutions within the community, at large. This isolation is perceived to be a result of conditions of poverty, political powerlessness, racism and bias, and cultural difference. Within this environment, and under conditions of parent-school interactions complicated by distrust, Native American parents take action to control the communication process through "gatekeeping." They do so to manage perceived threats, bias, and unfair treatment of children by means of avoidance, non-availability, and silence so that they might avoid confrontation and reduce

conflict. Creating a communication distance between themselves and school personnel serves to maintain this condition of isolation. This seeming paradox, taking actions which produce negative results, is explained by the need to maintain self respect, dignity, and the perceived need to protect children. Native American parents "gatekeep" the communication process and create "communicative distance" through what they perceive to be necessity.

Summary

Communication between Native American parents and school personnel is mediated by the conditions of Native American distrust of educational institutions, and environment of racial tension, maintenance of tribal identity, governmental dependency, and separation of the Native American community.

Many members of the Native American community share a sense of distrust and suspicion of school personnel based upon historical and personal educational experiences. A belief exists that Native American students will not be treated fairly within the school environment or receive educational opportunities commensurate with those offered to Anglo students.

The racial tensions which dominate relationships between the Anglo and Native American communities are mirrored in the school environment. The prejudicial attitudes and behaviors which impact interactions between Native American parents and school personnel simmer below the surface of the environment and are usually expressed in a covert manner.

Native American world view and behaviors are shaped by tribal culture and values and impact the ways in which Native American people interact with others. The maintenance of tribal identity is considered to be crucial to the survival of Native American people.

Generations of Native American people have survived through dependency upon the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a condition which persists today. Dependency is exacerbated by poverty, alcoholism, and unemployment. Dependency behavior impacts the ability of Native American people to communicate effectively with individuals outside the Native American community.

Communication between Native American parents and school personnel is impacted by cultural difference, racial tension, distrust, and an unequal balance of power. Communication often occurs in a climate of hostility and is perceived to be one way, controlled, and ineffective.

Native American parents act as gatekeepers of the communication process. They determine the occurrence or non-occurrence of communication interactions by determining the degree of racial tension and cultural rejection present in the environment. The communication distance created by Native American parents serves to maintain the isolation of the Native American community.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The data collected in this study provided a view of the parent-school communication process from the perspectives of Native American parents. Present in the perceptual realities provided by the group is an emerging theory which has utility for educational practice.

This chapter presents a summary of the study which reflects the grounded theory generated by the research design, the data collection, and the data analysis. The summary is followed by recommendations and conclusions.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted in a consolidated, rural school district in a southwestern state. The study focused on the perceptions and interpretations of events of the Native American community members.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine parent-school

communication from the perspectives of Native American people. The research focused on the perceived conditions which mediate the communication process and the interpretations of how these conditions impact the process.

Research Participants

Participants in this research included Native American parents, extended family members, tribal elders, and tribal employees. The researcher, in the role of participant observer, served as the primary data gathering instrument.

Data Collection

Multi-modal qualitative research methods were used to collect the data. These methods included participant observation, open-ended interviews, and document collection.

Participant observation was a primary tool used in the data collection process. In the initial stages of the research, the role was more observer than participant. As the researcher became known to community members and rapport developed with individuals, participation in the day to day life of the community increased. The purpose of the research, and the role of the researcher, were explained to community members.

Through the use of the open-ended interview, the researcher collected the stories of Native American people in their own words. The interviews provided rich data through descriptions of personal experiences, interpretations of those experiences, the sharing of

historical and cultural knowledge, and discussion of the social conditions of the community. The weakness of the interview method was controlled by replication of information revealed by the informants (Crowson, 1987). The interviews were conducted from February, 1991 to October, 1991.

The collection of documents provided an additional dimension to the data base. The collected documents include demographic and economic data, written communication in the form of letters and newsletters, memoranda, and minutes of meetings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis occurred through grounded theory analytic procedures. Data were conceptually analyzed and, then, organized into categories as determined by conceptual similarities. The properties and dimensions of the contexts within which categorical phenomena occurred were defined. A "paradigm model" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 99) was utilized to develop the categories. The identified concepts were linked to the categories as (1) conditions which give rise to the phenomena, (2) the context within which the phenomena occurs, (3) the strategies employed to bring the phenomena about, (4) the conditions which affect the phenomena, and (5) the outcomes of the phenomena. A brief explanatory description of the phenomena was developed from the collected analysis memoranda. The central phenomenon was identified from this description. The remaining categories were integrated into the central phenomenon through application of the paradigm model. As the data were linked, a theoretical explanation of the phenomena emerged from the data.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study include the perceived conditions which mediate communication between Native American parents and school personnel as well as the ways in which those conditions impact the communication process. Further, an emergent theory grounded in the data explicates Native American "gatekeeping" of the communication process.

Distrust of Schools

A shared distrust of schools among Native American community members is based upon historical and personal experience and the educational experience of contemporary Native American students. Distrust results in the belief that Native American children will not be fairly treated or offered equitable educational opportunities. The climate in which communication interactions occur is partially shaped by the dissonance produced by distrust. The condition of distrust leads to the gatekeeping of communication interactions.

Racial Tension

Racial tension, engendered by prejudicial attitudes and behavior, is perceived to be pervasive throughout the school district. The lack of cultural understanding and nonacceptance of cultural differences create a divisive and suppressive environment. Native American people believe that they are consigned to a subordinate position within an ethnocentric environment.

Communication interactions are mediated by distrust, which is fueled by racial tension. Gatekeeping occurs within the context of this phenomena.

Maintenance of Tribal Identity

Native American people have struggled to maintain the beliefs and values which define the tribal culture and identity. The maintenance of tribal identity is perceived to be essential to the survival of Native American people and the Native American community. The ways in which Native American people interact with others are selected from the repertoire of behaviors created by the culture. The phenomenon of tribal identity maintenance serves as the pool from which strategies for gatekeeping are drawn.

Dependence

The conditions for governmental dependency were created by the federal government during the nineteenth century. During the era of forced removals and restrictive reservation policies, Native American people were totally dependent upon the federal government for survival. The creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs served to institutionalize the paternalistic relationship between the federal government and Native American people. Dependency behavior persists today and is exacerbated by conditions of poverty and chemical dependence. The communication process is impacted by the presence of outside agency personnel, serving as representatives for Native American parents. Thus, governmental dependency serves as an intervening condition in the communication process.

Native American Isolation

The Native American community perceives itself to be isolated from the community at large by conditions of cultural difference, prejudice, and unequal distribution of economic and political power. This sense of isolation extends to the institutions within the community, particularly the educational institution. In this environment of isolation, the roles of communication participants assume dimensions of domination and subordination. These conditions preclude an exchange among equals. Increased isolation is an outcome of gatekeeping.

Gatekeeping: A Theory of Limited Communication Control

Communication between Native American parents and school personnel occurs in an ethnocentric environment that is non-understanding and unaccepting of cultural differences. Native American parents perceive themselves to have limited power to influence communication events and the outcomes of those events. Native American parents exercise limited control through gatekeeping the communication process. They determine the occurrence or non-occurrence of interactions through their presence or absence. The degree of interaction in which Native American parents engage is ascertained by environmental testing; that is, determining the degree of racial tension and cultural rejection present in the environment. If both tension and rejection are perceived to be high, interaction is very unlikely to occur. If both tension and rejection are

perceived to be low, interaction is more likely to occur, but it will be limited in nature. Native American parents create a communication distance between themselves and school personnel for the purpose of managing perceived threats, unfair treatment of children, and avoiding confrontation. In the perception of Native American parents, gatekeeping the communication process and creating communication distance is necessary to maintain personal dignity, avoid confrontation, and protect children.

Recommendations

The contemporary relationship between the Native American community and school personnel is embedded in historical circumstances and mediated by distrust, racism, unequal distribution of power, and conditions of poverty. The findings of this study can be applied by school administrators, tribal leaders, and researchers to ameliorate these conditions which, ultimately, impact the educational experiences and opportunities of Native American students.

School Administrators

School administrators are instrumental in establishing the communication climate within the school environment. And, as Ogawa points out, administrators are most directly involved in communication with individuals and organizations external to the day to day school participants (Ogawa, 1984). Various methods can be employed to build trust, an essential element to the creation of an open communication climate.

If parents are unwilling to go to the school, administrators can develop a program for home visitations. Parents could be informed through public announcements, newsletters, and messages sent home with students. Involvement of the tribal agency in the dissemination of information would assist in its dispersal among community members. Broadcasting information through the many channels available would provide a control for accuracy. Teams comprised of school personnel and Native American paraprofessionals would be effective in establishing rapport between home and school. Individuals who are trusted and respected in the community, particularly those who are bilingual, could facilitate acceptance of school personnel by Native American parents and community members.

A school is uniquely equipped to assist in meeting community literacy needs. Facilities and materials can be made available to community groups as well as professional expertise. Working cooperatively with tribal agency personnel, school administrators could develop adult literacy programs.

The identification of common goals and the cooperative establishment of needs based programs between administrators and tribal leaders would provide school personnel with in depth knowledge of the community. Joint endeavors could contribute to the development of collegial respect between school administrators and tribal leaders.

Consistent participation in the Native American community activities would demonstrate an interest in, and valuing of, the community and its concerns. Meaningful participation would require

attendance of a variety of activities over time in order to gain acceptance and credibility.

Community trust would be enhanced by the active recruitment and employment of qualified Native American teachers and administrators. This action would demonstrate a recognition of, and commitment to address, the need to provide Native American role models. Additionally, certified Native American staff members would create a cultural voice within the educational institution.

Native American people feel invisible within the academic curriculum. The inclusion of a Native American history course in the high school curriculum would help create a climate of cultural understanding and demonstrate a recognition of the importance of cultural validation.

Developing a process by which community members would have input in the selection of text books and instructional materials could provide a community check for the cultural accuracy and sensitivity of the curriculum. This process could also provide for periodic community review of existing curricular materials.

Sensitivity to the inclusion in, or provision of, extracurricular opportunities of Native American students would demonstrate a commitment to the welfare of all students. The participation of Native American community members in extra curricular activities would serve to give Native American people a sense of inclusion in the life of the school. School administrators could encourage participation through the creation of an environment in which Native American parents felt welcome.

A series of staff development activities could be implemented to increase the cultural sensitivity and multi-cultural perspective of school faculty and staff. Utilizing the community as a cultural resource, and community members as facilitators of staff development programs, would provide a forum in which Native American people would have expert knowledge and educators would be the learners. In this context, the balance of power would shift and Native American people could experience authority within an institution from which they feel excluded.

Native American people trained as paraprofessionals would provide a Native American presence in the school setting and to whom Native American parents could relate. These individuals could serve as a communication conduit to parents and community members. Also, they could serve to facilitate cultural understanding and acceptance.

Tribal Leaders

Tribal leaders are a communication link to the Native American community. They serve as external spokesperson for tribal members and as information sources to tribal members. Through these roles, tribal leaders can influence the relationship between the Native American community and the school district, thus, impacting the communication process between Native American parents and school personnel. Suggested actions may be adapted to fit the cultural perspectives and needs of the community.

Tribal leaders could develop a communication network with school administrators through the creation of an informal relationship among

equals. Periodic telephone calls and visits to the school would demonstrate an interest in education and the work of the school. Information which is relevant to the educational needs of Native American students could be transmitted to school administrators on a consistent basis.

Tribal leaders could enhance the knowledge of, and sensitivity to, tribal culture and values through the inclusion of school administrators in community activities. School administrators could be specifically invited, in a timely way, to attend community events. The events could be varied to demonstrate the diversity of community needs, values, and concerns.

The involvement of school administrators in the planning of tribal education programs would provide professional expertise to the tribe. It would also demonstrate to school administrators the educational needs of the Native American community. They could gain an appreciation of the historical context of Native American education and insight into the legal relationship between Native American tribes and the federal government.

Tribal leaders could communicate the value of education to tribal members through public forums, tribal newsletters, and action. Action could involve focusing leader attention on educational issues, assisting in the formulation of legislative initiatives which would impact the education of Native American people, and the allocation of tribal resources to educational programs.

A comprehensive community education program in political action could be planned and implemented which would focus on voter

registration and school board elections. Tribal leaders could develop and train a cadre of tribal members which represents various family groups. Using community input to select respected individuals for a cadre team could encourage community acceptance of the program. A multi-phase program could include: (1) training team members, (2) determination of community education concerns, (3) educating community members about the political process, (4) voter registration, (5) community selection of school board candidates, and (6) bloc voting action. The element of community education could be an on-going process.

Selecting school board candidates through consensual agreement and successfully electing Native American people through unified community action would provide a Native American voice in the educational process at the policy making level. Perhaps more importantly, such action would serve to equalize the power differential between the Native American and Anglo communities.

Researchers

This study examined the conditions which mediate communication between Native American parents and school personnel and the effects of those conditions on the communication process. Further investigation of the questions examined in this study is needed for a more complete understanding of communication interactions between Native American parents and school personnel.

The Native American participants in this study were members of the two predominant tribes in the school district area. Further

studies should be conducted among other tribal groups to determine if replication of the perceived mediating conditions and their effects might occur. Also, further studies pertinent to communication between Native American parents and school personnel should be undertaken to determine if their findings would support the grounded theory which emerged from this study.

This study was limited to one rural, consolidated school district. Further studies should be conducted in other school districts of varying sizes with high Native American student populations to determine replication of the findings of this study. Findings derived from research conducted among Native American parents in urban school districts with a diverse tribal population could be compared to findings from rural populations to determine if similar mediating conditions are perceived to occur.

The mediating conditions identified in this study should be examined to enhance understanding of their individual influence on the communication process between Native American parents and school personnel. Examination of each of the mediating conditions as discrete units might allow for identification of those specific conditions which were most influential.

Conclusions

It is a commonly held belief that solutions to educational problems can be derived through the application of greater financial resources. This study occurred in a school district which is favored by abundant financing for the educational program. The physical

facilities are attractive, spacious, and appointed with amenities seldom found in public school buildings. Computers are located in each classroom for individual student use and instruction. In addition to the existing resources and materials, each classroom teacher is provided with an individual budget for the purchase of classroom materials. In an educational setting which is well financed, a significant percentage of Native American students regress academically during their educational experience, experience discipline problems which result in in-house suspension or expulsion, become chemically addicted to alcohol or other substances, engage in sexual activity resulting in pregnancy, and leave school before graduation. In this environment of educational abundance, Native American students are failing. One conclusion that can be drawn from these conditions is that economic resources do not solve all educational problems. Money is not a cure-all.

One might conclude, then, that it is the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individual educators that are fundamentally important to the educational process. Students are more likely to learn and to thrive in an environment in which they feel accepted and valued. And, parents are more likely to participate in the educational process if they feel welcome and respected.

Another conclusion drawn from this study is that the imposition of an ethnocentric cultural view upon an educational institution effectively prevents the inclusion of culturally different people. The attempt was made to forcefully acculturate Native American people through the boarding school experience. It failed. Subjecting

Native American children to an educational environment which is eurocentric in nature is similar to the boarding school phenomenon.

A final conclusion is that Native American people must be actively engaged in the identification of educational problems and the search for solutions. Their voices and their stories must be heard, recorded, and analyzed. That work can be best accomplished through the application of qualitative research methods.

The historical passage of Native American people through the American educational system has impacted, but not destroyed, tribal cultures. Few communication bridges have been erected to traverse the distance between a culture which thrives on competitiveness and rapid change and a culture which continues to listen to the earth. The cultural wellsprings which define Native American communities have provided the resiliency required for survival. As stated by a tribal leader,

> We've come a long ways in a hundred years. We lived through the final removal. We lived through the allotment. We lived through two world wars. We lived through Viet Nam. We lived through Iran. We lived through all the recessions, the depressions. We're still here. We're going on. It's the 1990's, almost the year 2000. A new century. We're going on even though we don't have a lot. And we're carrying our ways with us.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

The questions below were developed to guide the interview process. They were utilized in an open-ended method and do not constitute an interview script.

1. Who would you go to for accurate information?

2. Who would you go to for accurate information about school?

3. What is your highest level of schooling?

4. In regard to schooling, are you typical of other family members?

5. When you talk to school personnel do you usually contact the school or does the school contact you?

6. When you talk to school personnel is it usually for positive, negative, or informational reasons?

7. When you talk to school personnel, do you feel that you are listened to?

8. When you talk to school personnel do you feel that you are understood?

9. When you talk to school personnel do you understand what is being said to you? Do you leave the communication contact feeling that questions are answered, information complete, messages understood?

10. Do you feel that you are treated as a respected equal by school personnel?

11. Do you believe that your communication with school personnel is important?

12. Do you believe that your communication with school personnel impacts your student's school performance?

13. Do you believe that your relationship with school personnel impacts your student's school performance?

14. Typically, who initiates communication between your family and school personnel? How is communication initiated?

15. Do you perceive the communication you receive from school personnel to be timely?

16. Do you perceive the communication you receive from school personnel to be trustworthy/truthful?

17. Do you or your extended family speak your native language?

18. What is your or your extended family's experiential background with non BIA/tribal bureaucratic organizations?

19. If you believed that school policy needed to be changed, who would you talk to?

20. Do you believe that education is important?

21. What do you want for your child(ren)? What role does education fill in achieving these goals?

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO TRIBAL EMPLOYEES

Letter to Tribal Employees

Participants in this study were assured confidentiality. Because of those assurances, only edited portions of the text of this letter is presented.

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Administration program of the College of Education at _____ University. My dissertation research topic is communication between Native American parents and school personnel. I am interviewing Native American parents (and extended family members) of students at _____. If you have children who attend _____, I would appreciate having you share your thoughts and experiences with me in an interview. I guarantee that all interview will be confidential and that no names will be used.

I can be reached at the tribal complex through _____. Also, I can be reached at: _____

APPENDIX C

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEWS

Excerpts from Interviews

Sample 1

Question: When this incident happened how was contact with you made? Were you contacted by the school?

Respondent: No. My son just came home and told me that he had been expelled.

Question: At any point did the school make an effort to contact you by letter or by telephone?

Respondent: No, no they didn't.

Question: So the contact with the school was initiated by you?

Respondent: Yeah.

Question: This is going back to perception or feeling. When you contacted the school how did you feel that you were received?

Respondent: I felt that it was a hostile reception.

Question: Did you talk with the school administrator or the teacher?

Respondent: Both. Well, of course he justified what he did. And the high school principal also justified what he did. But they denied saying what my son told me they said to him. And, I think when I talked with the principal of the school itself, I think that he is-it's just my personal opinion is that he was very naive as far as working with Native Americans.

Question: When you say naive, what do you mean?

Respondent: I mean that he-of course I don't mean naive in a derogatory or negative sense-I don't mean it that way. What I mean is that-I read some years back-I read-I forget exact, I've even forgot who wrote it, but there was an article that said that the Native American is the invisible minority. And what they meant was that white America has-white America looks upon the Native American as being just like them.

Question: How?

Respondent: In other words there is no difference. If fact, my youngest son, when he was born-our name is _____, which is obviously not Anglo Saxon, but yet on his-and the doctors and nurses knew me and his mother-and yet on his birth certificate for race they put Caucasian.

Question: That's very recent history -

Respondent: But, see to me - of course this is just my personal opinion - I don't have any research data to back it up or anything, but just from living here in this area that I've come to understand is the fact that white America tends to look upon the Native American as being just like them. And for that reason there is no difference. In other words, we're not even a minority because we're just like white people. And that's what I meant when I was talking to that principal down there. I told him that in dealing with Native Americans that you can't, especially when you deal with their parents or their grandparents, I said, you can't come to them in the same way that you would come to non-Native Americans. And, I said, if you do, if you think that, then you're being naive. And I said, well I didn't say it to him, but I know that the entire public school system in America tends to look upon the Native American as non-existent. You know we're a century ago when we rode horses and wore feathers and carried lances and like that. We don't ride in cars and wear business suits and hundred dollar Bostonian shoes and like that-we don't do that. Because we just lived a hundred years ago when they rode horses and fought with the cavalry-that's where Indians are. There aren't any Indian now. We're all just like white people. And that's the way the white population tends to look upon us is that we simply don't exist. And if there is someone who claims Native American descent, well then, they're just like you. They're just like me. In other words, they've gone so far as to say we're all alike. And that has carried on into we're all equal. Well, what do you mean by equal-you know, what does that mean-define the term for me. When you say equal what do you mean by equal. You know there are instances where the Native American is put down because they get their education paid for. Now I could understand the non-Native American being somewhat upset over that because he has to pay an awfully high price for his education. But then on the other hand if you look at it from the Native American point of view, our forefathers paid in blood for you and I just to be here. Just to sit here and talk to each other, our forefathers paid with their blood and their lives. And the non-Native American tends to not take that into consideration whereas we do because we are a-the culture is still strong in us and we still strongly believe in

what our culture stands for. And because of that, the fact that our education is paid for us by the federal government we tend to feel that we have it coming to us. It belongs to us because of what our forefathers had to go through in order for us to just be here physically-just to be alive-because the federal government had a policy of genocide-to kill us out like we were a bunch of roaches or something. And that mentality, Indians and cowboys, you know, it's still very much alive. And it's a very racist attitude.

Question: When you say that white people tend to look at Indians as just like them, does that carry over to the same opportunities?

Respondent: No. Hun uh. It doesn't carry over.

Sample 2

Question: What do you see as the purpose of school?

Respondent: In the general sense I think education has a double meaning. The first meaning of education that one teaches ones children from the educator's words is to say "by getting an education you'll be able to get a job when you get out of school. You will have skills that are necessary to live in todays world." I don't believe that's true myself. I believe that education-I remember one thing from Thoreau, which is-I just barely glanced through those things but I grabbed one thing out of many-and he said to take a free spirit, an intelligence in school is like taking a meandering brook and making it into a canal. To me, that's what the educational system is for, and in the past we have known that this particular group of people would very well take a meandering brook and channel it into a canal and make everything go the direction they want it to. Education, to me, is very similar to that. You create a group of people, you don't pay any attention to their individualism, you don't pay any attention to their culture, you don't pay any attention to their future, but you prescribe a certain amount of lessons that you say fits them and you give it to all of them at once and therefore, all of them are trained in a very similar manner and you are fodder for the industrial world. That's how I see it and I think that's how it is. I don't know that's how it is; I've seen many people with an education who have chosen their own fields and have really taught the world and have done some beautiful things. But I think those are the ones that have a creativity that isn't stifled, too. For Native American children, I think it's one of the most devastating things that can happen to the spirit. I think that education-now, I've got four children. A couple of them do real great in school, enjoy it and hang in there; and a couple of them can't understand why they're there and don't go and I'm happy with that - either one, how they choose it. But for Native American children, I see it as a shoe that never fit. I've tried it on, I've walked in it and I've worn it and I've done very well in it; I was a great student. I made straight A's all through school because I chose to. There were very few areas in school that I could excel. I wasn't a great athlete, I certainly didn't look like the blonde cheerleader, I never fit in those groups that they had, the cliques. I never had a boy crazy attitude because I was the youngest with four older brothers in a tradition that said when you find the right guy that's it, but in the meanwhile you don't act like the fool and embarrass your

family. So, my form of saying because I don't have the clothes, I don't have the money, because I don't have the prestige, my brains are so much better than yours, I'm going to outrank you in every situation I can. I think that's how my girls look at it as well. I thought it was the most stifling situation. I have a semi-claustrophobia anyway, but it was absolute misery to me to be in school. And, so I don't have any problem when my children leave there. It devastates your very spirit. If you go into class beginning in the kindergarten areas and you never look like the other guys who are in the group; the Dick and Jane books which is what I was in, if you never can relate to those incredible houses that they live in-with drapes yet-you know; if you can't ever relate to being real thrilled about the revolutionary army wiping out a tribe on the east coast knowing that it wasn't even your tribe, but cheez those were my people, too, somehow; if you can't ever relate to not having lunch money; if you buy your clothes in the second hand store, did one of these girls wear it first. Then, there's nothing there for you but embarrassment and pain. And you, eventually, unless you're an athlete, and it's like my boy is one of the greatest athletes I've ever seen, but he chooses to wear his hair long and always has all his life and had had nothing but misery and pain from his coaches. Nothing but. From the time that he was a child and breaking every record he could until now. Because of the long hair alone.

APPENDIX D

EXCERPTS FROM FIELDNOTES

Excerpts From Fieldnotes

Names and place names have been deleted from the fieldnotes in order to maintain the confidentiality which was assured to the participants in this study.

Sample 1

We drove from the agency to the home in _____ - the grandmother's home - a small white frame house. There was litter in the yard, looked as though things that were broken or discarded were moved to the yard and left there. There was a car in the drive. We were met at the door by several children and were invited in. The grandmother, a very elderly woman, was the first introduced. She seemed friendly, said that she hoped I could find a job for her, that she needed a job. I wondered if she might be in the initial stages of dementia. Children seemed to be everywhere. _____ invited us to sit at the kitchen table. It was mid-afternoon and food was left on the table. The window screens were torn and flies were in the house. _____ is twenty-six years old. She has five children; they are pre-school age and range from nine to twelve months apart in age. There is no father in the home. _____ dropped out of school; she has entered voc-tech programs, but has not completed a program. She did not know why she dropped out of school. She said school was okay.

Sample 2

The dance ground is surrounded by huge old trees. A speakers stand sits on the east end of the arena. Brush arbors form a semi-circle around the dance ground and a set of bleachers on the west end enclosed the circle. A permanent concession stand sits on the south side of the area. A barbecue stand had been brought in. Unlike large, or even small, intertribals, there were only a few booths selling art or craft works. Several camps were set up in the camping area on the south side. There were a few tipis, most were tents, and some were camping in their vans.

We arrived about 9:00 p.m. on Thursday evening. We went with _____. _____ has _____ relatives through marriage. She had talked to a woman at a peyote meeting about my study. The woman agreed to meet me at the dance and talk about the problems at school. This dance had a different feel than most intertribal dances. Not many tourists, the few Anglos were easily sighted. _____ found the woman, who had decided that she didn't want to talk.

I saw the young woman I had visited. While she was not dressed in tribal clothes, all of her children were. The grandmother was out on the dance ground during specials. She appeared to be somewhat disoriented. Again, I wondered about her physical condition.

I visited with several people. This was a time for visiting with friends and family. I talked to _____, met her children who are living in _____, so far from home.

VITA

Karen Sunday Cockrell

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: WE HAVE THE EARTH TO LISTEN TO . . . COMMUNICATION CONTROL EXERCISED BY NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal: Born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, August 14, 1943, the daughter of Allie Louvinue Johnson Sunday and Clarence Floyd Sunday.

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