

BALEIICHIWEE (THE STORY OF UNDERSTANDING): THE
CONSCIENTIZATION PROCESSES OF EFFECTIVE
TEACHERS OF AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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DEDICATION

The work in this paper is for Florence, Ruby, Lilian, Casey, Sodizin, Breezy, Aylia, and Jordan; for my family in the past, present, and future, and for all the students who need a good reason to go to school.

I promise this is only the beginning.

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ABSTRACT

The success of all students is an intimate concern for all good teachers and those who engage daily with American Indian students have a vested interest in identifying what works in their unique contexts, in spite of the difficult circumstances presented on American Indian reservations in Montana. Engaging in education that is effective is a concern that has many levels of complexity, but this study focuses on community perspectives on effective teaching and on the teacher and his/her conscientization process as two of the essential pieces to this puzzle. Qualitative focus group data was used to construct a list of characteristics/qualities grounded in community values and a list of effective teachers was compiled through “community nomination”. A collective case study gathered the living educational theories and teaching philosophies of six nominated teachers, compared these to the community-determined characteristics/qualities, and examined elements of each teacher’s life history that played a role in developing and informing each effective teacher’s pedagogy. It was determined that conscientization played a significant role in molding effective pedagogy, and social intelligence provided the precursory relationships that allowed teachers to effectively teach students according to a responsive pedagogy in the optimal zone of cognitive efficiency. A new model for adaptive teaching in cross-cultural contexts was proposed as were suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public education in America is considered an inherent right for all children, originally designed to create opportunities for advancement to positions of able contribution to their communities (Spring, 2006). Today's U.S. educational agendas are concerned with providing equal opportunities for all students so that every student reaches his/her full potential as a contributing member of a positive, functional, and productive society. In order to actualize these beliefs the classroom must be a place where every student, minority or majority, has access to teaching experts and a clear path to academic achievement. The actual condition of schooling, however, still holds only limited hope of creating satisfactory and/or successful learning experiences for marginalized students. Many stakeholders including educators, administrators, policy makers, and parents, are concerned because these students seem to experience significant gaps in achievement along with discrimination and labeling related to their cultural backgrounds (Spring, 2006). The fact that marginalized students as a group are failing in U.S. educational systems along with the fact that these groups have race, socioeconomic status, and geography in common raises concerns that all students are not receiving equitable, quality education which will allow them to achieve their full potential (President's Commission on the State of Education, 2010). Factors contributing to their educational inequalities include, but are not limited to, ineffective curricular components, resource limitations, financial inequalities and constraints, staff turnover rates, and

teacher quality and cultural preparedness. Furthermore, research has contributed to these problems defining marginalized students as “disadvantaged”, “at-risk”, or “deficient” (Bettleheim, 1965, Ornstein & Vairo, 1968; Ornstein 1971; Doll & Hawkins, 1971; Hiram, 1972), and it has been argued that these labels have effectively limited potential positive results for minority students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Agbo, 2004; Cuban, 1989). However, there is also a body of literature revealing evidence of social wealth, support, enthusiasm, energy, persistence, and resilience among these students that waits as a kind of unaccessed, potential inertia; many of these students possess a large number of assets that remain untapped except by a few unique educators (Ladson-Billings, 1994). If these assets could be capitalized upon by truly effective teachers in a consistent manner, the educational outcomes for these students have the potential to see significant improvement. This fact underscores the salient need for teachers with a higher degree of cultural competency. Being culturally competent in the United States means teachers must be able to reach marginalized students comprised of a number of different ethnic, racial, and cultural groups, one of which is the original inhabitants of North American, the American Indians. It is important to note, however, that although American Indians are often seen as a collective race, their population is made up of a large number of unique and diverse tribal groups with their own languages and traditions. In fact, there are 562 tribes in the United States representing 50% of its linguistic and cultural diversity (NEA, 2011). Addressing this level of diversity means not only is there a need for contextualized, culturally competent teachers, there is also a great need for Indigenous

teachers with specific Indigenous knowledge and skills who can work effectively in Indigenous communities with Indigenous students (Grande, 2004; Lipka, 2002).

Indian Education in Montana

This study focuses specifically on Montana's population of struggling American Indian students. Montana is a unique state in that it has a relatively high population of American Indians. In Montana 6.2% of the population is American Indian, however, this 6.2% is made up of American Indians from 13 different tribes, living on seven Montana reservations in addition to a significant population of "urban" Indians (even though the state is considered "rural"). In addition, because American Indians are experiencing the fastest growth rates in the state and have the youngest population, 11.8% of Montana K-12 students are American Indian (OPI). Montana has mandatory legislation written into its state constitution that requires that all students shall learn about the history and contemporary contributions of American Indians and that educators shall work to close the achievement gap between Indian and non-Indian students in the state. Since 1972, when the law known as MCA 20-1-501 was codified, countless hours have been dedicated to curricular improvements and professional development for educators and administrators designed to achieve Indian Education for All (IEFA) goals. Yet, in 2011, after nearly 30 years of effort, only small pockets of success and minimal and inconsistent gains in achievement for Native students have been documented. For example, on September 8, 2011 the opening line of the Big Horn County News reads, "Lodge Grass High School loses state funding". The article explains how Lodge Grass

High School, whose population is 99.5% American Indian, is listed in the bottom 5% of Montana schools and that the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) attempted to reform the school by bringing in its own state employees, but abandoned the school because it was “not cooperating,” withdrawing funding and causing the school to have to scramble to find new teachers and administrators to begin the eminent school year. Two pages later a public announcement explains that children in the Lodge Grass District must attend this school because it is the only one allowed within their bussing district (Big Horn County News, 9/8/11). A seemingly straightforward solution to a failing school has itself failed in spite of the fact that it was executed by the department charged with setting state standards and enforcing educational methods, both traditional and multicultural, expected to create school success. Very recently, in the March 23, 2012 *Atlantic*, reporter Sarah Yager, discussed a promising new approach to school reform, considered a “transformational approach” involving relationship-building between schools and community through liaisons and home visits that seems to helping districts in the bottom 5% that have been targeted for restructuring.

Our long inability to reach IEFA goals in Montana, even with OPI intervention, suggests that either there is not a clear understanding of the actual problem to be solved by the mandate, or the problem is not solvable. Isolated success stories indicate that the potential for Native students to do stellar work in school exists, but the current drop-out rates, the achievement gap, and low college attendance and graduation rates indicate that educators have been unable to realize this potential consistently (OPI). In all of our studies of multicultural methods, pedagogy, curriculum, etc., there has been little in-depth

study of those few cases of teachers who have consistently produced stellar Native students. There is also little evidence that American Indian parents and students have been asked for feedback about the qualities they desire in their children's education and in those who teach them or about what markers they use to measure the effectiveness of educators and the students they educate.

Therefore, the goals of this study were twofold: 1.) to articulate an American Indian perspective on teacher effectiveness and 2.) to examine the conscientization processes by which these teachers have arrived at effective theories, philosophies, and pedagogies. Conscientization is a term coined by Brazilian theorist, Paulo Friere (1970). In this study, teachers are experiencing conscientization in a specific teaching context as they develop their personal theories about education. The creation of these theories then leads to the process of creating a teaching philosophy that is influenced by history, environment, and culture. Teachers then reflect on this philosophy which brings about changes in the way a teacher teaches. These changes in turn impact the effectiveness of the teacher. As the teacher continues to remain immersed in his/her teaching context, conscientization processes continue to occur further refining living educational theories, teaching philosophies, and teaching practice.

The Need for This Study

The success of all students is an intimate concern for all good teachers and those who engage daily with American Indian students have a vested interest in identifying what works in their unique contexts. Disproportionately high rates of poverty,

unemployment, substance abuse, mortality and morbidity (CDC, 2011) have created a crisis state in Montana American Indian communities and teachers are much more literally “in the trenches” in these contexts than they may be in other mainstream Montana schools. In Montana, 52% of American Indian children live in poverty, born into communities where the average household income is \$25,600, just \$5,000 above the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Nearly all American Indian households in Montana are considered low income because the measure of low income is twice the federal poverty level. According to the CDC, in Montana, American Indians experience 111% more premature deaths than whites. Traumatic death injuries led the causes of death in every age category from age 5-45. The death rate from traumatic injury including suicide and homicide is twice as high in the American Indian population as with whites. As of 2006, the median age at death for white women in Montana was 82 years and for white men, 75 years. For American Indian women in Montana the median age at death was 65 years and for Indian men, just 57 years of age. Of particular importance is the larger proportion of American Indians who died at younger ages. One quarter of whites died at or below age 67 years, while one quarter of American Indians died at or below the age of 42. Additionally, American Indians in Montana are more than twice as likely to die from alcohol-related causes and are over four times more likely to use drugs. While there are a number of factors contributing to these statistics including rural geography, resource limitations, and historical trauma, this state of crisis makes effective education even more important because it is seen as one of the few possible solutions to these issues. Engaging in education that is effective is a concern that has

many levels of complexity, but this study focuses on community perspectives on effective teaching and on the teacher and his/her conscientization process as two of the essential pieces to this puzzle.

Education that serves its constituents is essential if community members are to feel that academic institutions have the best interests of their children in mind. Institutions that fail to recognize their role in the community and their responsibility to remain responsive to its needs and perspectives risk becoming separated from supportive social structures that contribute to a teacher's ability effectively educate students. Upon examination of the idea of what it means for a teacher to be effective, it becomes clear that measures of effectiveness are sure to vary by community and culture because values and worldviews have a marked impact on life goals and these differ among people groups. In addition, because few studies have involved minority parents and students in assessing teacher effectiveness, this study gives teaching philosophies context by grounding the perceptions of effectiveness within the community values. Much of the research done in the area of teacher effectiveness relies on "experts" such as other teachers or administrators or formal assessment measures to make the call in regards to "teacher excellence" (Grande, 2004). The problem with relying on these "experts" or "insiders" is that institutions and/or systems put in place by dominant cultures in colonized communities bias those involved in them to the point that they are unable to make evaluations free of the Western language and epistemic frameworks of the system (Grande, 2004). Therefore, finding an authentic American Indian evaluation of good teaching must include those within the culture most intimately affected by the methods

and outcomes of education, such as parents and students. Foster (1991) coined the phrase, “community nomination” and validated a researcher’s reliance upon relevant members of the community to make authentic evaluations of people and things within their own cultural context. Utilization of these types of data collection may differ from mainstream measurements, however, the ways in which Native people evaluate the effectiveness and value of the education provided within their communities is crucial to create a new perspective that can inform current understandings. Therefore, in the context of this study, it is important to know the perspectives on teacher effectiveness held by American Indian parents and students. Then in response to these views the research is able go on to further investigate effective teachers.

In an affective sense, validation of the pedagogy occurs when teachers feel they have connected well with students and have in some way helped them to experience success. Symbiotically, students also experience gains when teachers are effective. When teachers are disconnected and ineffective, both the student and the teacher are robbed of the opportunity to experience self-actualization. This impacts morale at all levels of the educational system and cripples potential outcomes. For this reason studies that look into *what* works for teachers in specific contexts are valuable (Silva, 2011) especially if they can shed light on what teachers with a track record of closing the American Indian achievement gap are doing. Expanding upon these ideas, what we know about what effective teachers are doing also needs to be clearly linked to reasons why they have chosen to do what they do, so that their living educational theories and subsequent teaching philosophies show direct connections to the effectiveness of their

practice. Therefore studies that examine *why* methods, strategies, and ideologies work are essential. Many teacher experiences reveal that there is an abundance of good ideas about the right methods or strategies teachers should employ that simply fail to work because the contextual components of each teaching experience are so variable. For this reason it is essential to look deeper, beyond the *what* to the *why*. This study was designed to investigate the conscientization processes that create fluid, living educational theories that serve as the foundation for individual teaching philosophies. These teaching philosophies are translated into effective classroom practice and are fine-tuned by exposure to diverse teaching contexts. Some educational researchers have examined this process as a form of critical reflection (Brookfield, 2002). According to researchers in critical reflection,

being critically reflective helps teachers make informed decisions in the classroom. It helps them distinguish the dimensions of students' actions and motivations they can affect from those that are beyond their influence. It also helps them develop a rationale for their practice that they can call on to guide them in making difficult decisions in unpredictable situations. (Brookfield, p.32)

The process of critical reflection is an important component of the conscientization process teachers experience when they enter a teaching context, begin to define working theories, and refine these theories into philosophies that mold classroom pedagogy. This conscientization occurs in an ongoing way throughout the course of a teaching career, allowing each teacher to critically assess the foundations of his/her pedagogy. Figure 1 illustrates this process as a cyclical experience of understanding the *why* of teaching which is directly tied to conscientization, which in turn continuously impacts the *what* of teaching.

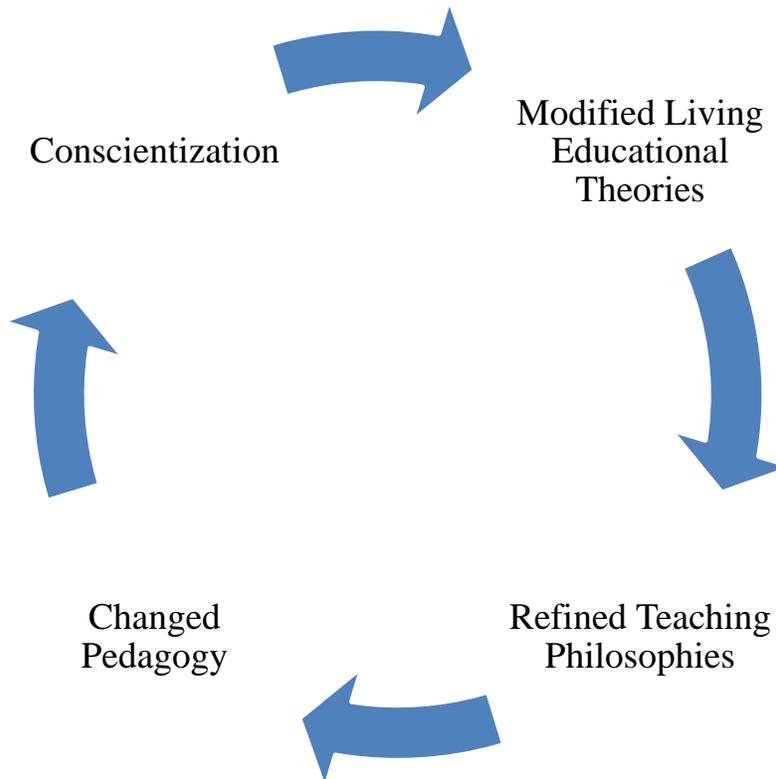


Figure 1: Teacher Conscientization Process in Context.

The study of conscientization in an Indigenous context reveals the teaching philosophies of effective teachers of American Indians and unearths pictures of the way in which these teachers have arrived at their philosophies. This study contributes to those studies that have examined what effective teachers are doing by studying the processes that influence why teachers do what they do and how this contributes to their effectiveness.

Purpose of the Study

This study gives voice and authentication to American Indian student and parent perspectives on effective teaching. Following this preliminary portion of the study, the

research then goes on to examine the living educational theories of six teachers who were nominated by American Indian parents and students as effective teachers of American Indian children. The use of living educational theories acknowledges that teachers have beliefs, perspectives, and values that form their ideologies and that each teacher experiences an ongoing process of working to understand and, when necessary, transform these ideologies through praxis and dialogue. This is part of the aforementioned process known as “conscientization” (Friere, 1970). This study sought to understand how the conscientization process of these teachers has led them to teaching philosophies that promote effective learning for American Indian students.

The analysis of this data then provided a model of the conscientization processes experienced by effective teachers of American Indian students. These processes were influenced by formal education, life experiences, and contributions from the cultural context. The research also provided a platform for considering a model of teaching philosophy formation and reformation impacted by the conscientization process that could be presented to all teachers as a means of improving their effectiveness with American Indian students, in addition to making recommendations to improve hiring and teacher selection practices for schools with high proportions of Native students.

Research Questions

This research is comprised of two phases of data collection. Phase I employs focus groups to collect data from American Indian students and parents regarding their descriptions of effective teachers of American Indian students. Phase II uses guided

interviews to form a collective case study of the conscientization processes of effective teachers nominated as model teachers by the focus group participants.

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do American Indian students and parents describe effective teachers of American Indian students?

For teachers who have been selected by American Indian parents and students as effective teachers:

2. What are their living educational theories?
3. What are the elements of their teaching philosophies?
4. How do Living Educational Theories (LET) and Teaching Philosophy Statements (TPS) influence the content and context of the pedagogy?

Significance of Study

With respect to the effectiveness of teachers of American Indian students it is essential to know about the manner in which teachers experience conscientization and form their philosophies of teaching. It is also important to take this opportunity to examine how much western education models and minority or American Indian beliefs and values may influence the construction of these philosophies. In addition connections made between teachers' teaching philosophies and the achievement of their students helps to illuminate effective strategies and practices. It is known that, "The beliefs of the person who performs the role of teacher, and understanding the cultural contexts in which they teach, are as crucial to instructional effectiveness with diverse students as the

mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical techniques” (Smith, 2009, p. 9).

Therefore, the study of living educational theories, teaching philosophies, and conscientization processes of effective teachers of American Indian students leads to more consistently effective teaching for American Indian students in addition to informing the construction of a model for in-service and pre-service teachers looking for better ways in which to prepare to meet the educational needs of marginalized students.

Definition of Terms

American Indian: The Oxford Dictionary defines American Indians as members of “any of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South American, especially those of North America”. The U.S. Census (2000) counts anyone to be American Indian who declares to be American Indian. In this study, more contemporary usages of “Native” and “Indian” are implemented, as they are in “Indian country” to mean American Indian people as a whole. “Pan-Indian” commonalities are recognized to unite American Indian people as a cultural subgroup. Specific tribal identities such as “Apsaalooke” and “Piegan” will be used whenever possible to define specific tribal affiliations and the English tribal operatives such as the corresponding “Crow” and “Blackfeet” will be avoided.

Indigenous: The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development, Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has defined Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations as,

those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves

distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system (Jan. 2004).

Minority: This term is commonly defined with reference to people groups as, “a part of a population differing from others in some characteristics and often subjected to differential treatment” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2011). For the purposes of this study minority will be used in the general sense to apply to any population differing from the mainstream population of the specified country. However, whenever possible minority groups will be referred to directly by specific names such as American Indian, or even more specifically as Piegan in order to avoid confusion and/or inaccurate generalizations. Whenever minorities are referred to in related research, when it is not possible to use any other term, then “minority” will be used.

Conscientization: Conscientization is a concept from education and social sectors popularized by the Brazilian educational theorist, Paulo Freire (1970). The concept is grounded in critical theory and embodies the ability to analyze, question, and work to effect sociopolitical, economic, and cultural realities that impact one’s life. In order to achieve conscientization, people have to place themselves within the historical context of the world around them because Freire (1970) believes that no individual is ever independent of surrounding social and historical forces. Each person in the world inherits beliefs, perspectives, and values that have created current ideologies and it is essential that each individual work to understand and, when necessary, transform these ideologies through praxis and dialogue. When Freire (1970) says “praxis” he is referring

to the continuous connection between understanding the world theoretically, engaging in social critique, and then entering into committed action that transforms both the individual and the surrounding environment. Freire (1970) points out that if a situation or environment is to be changed it cannot be changed by people who merely possess awareness or good intention. Instead, situations can only be changed by people who have achieved conscientization and are moving continuously between action and reflection and then from reflection on action to reflection on new actions.

In this study, teachers are experiencing conscientization as they develop living educational theories. The creation of these theories then leads to the process of creating a teaching philosophy that is influenced by history, environment, and culture. This philosophy is then put through a reflective process that brings about changes in pedagogy. These changes in turn impact the effectiveness of the teacher. As the teacher continues to remain immersed in his/her teaching context conscientization processes continue to occur further refining living educational theories, teaching philosophies, and pedagogy.

Living Educational Theories: According to Jack Whitehead (2008), a respected researcher in the field of Educational Theory, living educational theories “explain the educational influences of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work” (p.174). The learning that forms these living theories is usually the result of teachers asking, “How do I improve what I am doing?” and engaging in action research. Whitehead (2008) suggests that a living educational theory is “grounded in the lives of professional educators and

their pupils and has the power to integrate within itself the traditional disciplines of education” (p.174). Whitehead believes that living educational theories are generated through self-reflective inquiry undertaken by teachers who want to examine and improve their rationale and justification of their practices, the way in which they understand these practices, and the contexts in which they carry out these practices. In the context of this study, living educational theories are theories about education constructed by participating teachers through processes of conscientization that serve to inform the foundations of their teaching philosophies. It is understood that because these theories are “living” they are continuously under revision and construction as teachers learn from the contexts of their experiences. In this context the word *theory* is not being applied in a formal manner to suggest that teachers are considering and/or endorsing standardized educational theories. Instead it can be defined more informally according to Merriam-Webster’s definition of a theory which is “a belief, policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action” (m-w.com). In this case a theory is a belief about some aspect of education that directs the action of a teacher.

Teaching Philosophy Statement: A comprehensive literature review (Schonwetter, Soken, Friesen, and Taylor, 2002) proposed an operational definition of the teaching philosophy statement (TPS) composed of four concepts. A TPS is: 1. a systematic statement of the composer’s thoughts about teaching and learning; 2. a critical rationale with a distinct set of goals, values, and beliefs that are unique to the teacher and his/her efforts; 3. focused on critical components the composer feels are vital to the teaching and learning process (i.e. methods, content, assessment, etc.); 4. a sensitizing

composition that asks the composer to consider contextual factors that affect the student, the system, the community, and the institution. For the purposes of this research a TPS is a verbal recounting of these four concepts as they are informed by living education theories of each teacher.

Achievement Gap: An achievement gap refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. For the purposes of this study, the achievement gap will refer to the difference in academic performance of specific American Indian populations in comparison to non-minority populations on a variety of published academic measures.

Teaching Effectiveness: Charlotte Danielson and Robert Marzano are two seminal researchers who have provided definitions of effective teaching used by many schools in the United States. Danielson (1996) focuses on planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Marzano's (2007) approach involves asking 10 essential questions during the instructional planning phase dealing with goals, communication, practice, relationships, and assessment. In addition to these guides, there are also resources defining what effective teachers should know and be able to do, provided by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

In this study, however, the primary guide for evaluating effective teaching will be the definitions established by the American Indian parents and students involved in this study. The primary descriptors American Indian parents and students used in this study included that effective teachers were understanding, accepting, involved outside of the classroom, supportive as evidenced by their time commitment, kinesthetic in their

instructional approaches, and open in their relational style. American Indian parents and students did not emphasize grades, test scores, classroom management, or other related assessments as components of effective teaching.

Limitations

The following are limitations of the study:

1. The research is a case study of only six teachers and therefore is limited to the experiences of those teachers, in those schools, influencing those tribes, in those geographic areas.
2. The study will be limited by the fact the individual teachers interviewed were chosen by American Indian parents and students as successful educators of American Indians. Thus, it cannot be predicted which grades, schools, or tribes may be involved in this study.

Delimitations

The following are delimitations of the study:

1. This study is delimited to teachers who are nominated by American Indian parents and students as successful teachers of American Indian students.
2. The study will be delimited to examination of living educational theories, teaching philosophy, conscientization, formal and informal life and event influences, and cultural influences.

3. The results of the study will only be generalizable to the extent that the results lend insight to readers through the illustration of the lives, psychology, and philosophies of other successful teachers.
4. Contact with nominated teachers will be delimited to the contact prescribed by the methodological protocol of the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In an effort to gain a holistic picture of the state of education for marginalized students and American Indian students specifically, this literature review included a broad exploration of educational status for students in the world, and in the United States. While this research deals specifically with American Indian students in Montana, it is conceivable that many of the results may be applied to other minority populations with similar schooling patterns. Additionally, this research recognizes that many people groups across the globe experience educational issues and conflict due to the nature of colonization and other political dynamics that influence the manner in which power is wielded in the educational setting. Upon reviewing the state of global education, this search then narrowed to focus on the status of American Indian students in the United States and in Montana, examining Indian Education laws intended to close achievement gaps, multicultural education strategies aimed at ameliorating marginalization, and preparing teachers for diverse students and communities. It also examines the history of educating American Indians in the United States as well as the social and cultural barriers marginalized students face. All of these topical areas are significant because they provide the backdrop upon which our current systems are painted. Finally, this literature review examines the process of developing a teaching philosophy statement as a formative precursor to teaching perspectives and approaches that have been effective with marginalized and American Indian students. This review strives to include the most

current research on these areas, while also incorporating works of foundational significance that may be older.

Global Education Issues for Marginalized Students

The climate surrounding global education is one of concern primarily for unserved, underserved, and marginalized students and for school systems experiencing increasing, rather than decreasing trends in truancy, attendance, drop-out rates, violence, and abuse (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, 2011). In general the world believes free public schooling is necessary for the advancement of society on both the national and the global levels (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, 2011). However, this assumption is at times misguided because public schools have instead been used to advance the particular political and economic ideologies of dominant groups and while these advances sometimes serve to achieve national or group goals, they fail to improve the condition of the human beings they serve (Ehman, 1980). Spring warns that, “Public and personal benefits depend on the content of instruction. To think critically about education means to think critically about the content of instruction and the potential effect of that content on society” (p.10). While education is touted as an avenue to freedom for all people, many cultures across the globe have in fact experienced education that is biased, partisan, propagandized, racist, assimilationist, and even genocidal, leading to greater oppression and fewer freedoms for individuals and marginalized groups (Spring, 1998). Therefore, much of the work done on behalf of furthering

education across the globe is focused on education as a human and equalizing right that must be executed according to consideration for other basic human rights endorsed by the United Nations such as the rights to dignity, life, liberty, security, recognition, equality, protection under the law, free movement, nationality, property ownership, peaceful assembly, and cultural participation (UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Specifically, the UN has declared that

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

The primary roots of international issues regarding education deal with the enforcement of these international human rights as they relate to equality of access and quality of education in the midst of a pressing global educational crisis. The 2010 edition of the Global Monitoring Report (GMR), entitled *Reaching the Marginalized*, warned that there are currently 72 million children who cannot exercise their right to education because of unemployment, poverty, and/or discrimination. If these children could freely exercise their educational rights the world would need 1.9 million more teachers to meet the 2015 goals for universal primary education. In addition the GMR expects that if no new actions are taken to meet the educational needs of the world, 56 million marginalized children will not attend school in 2015. Because these children are from marginalized

groups, with a history of disproportionate educational failure, the need for effective teachers becomes poignant. This paper assumes that as long as there are failing students there are failures within the educational system and while these failures may occur because of a number of factors, most certainly the effectiveness of teachers teaching marginalized students is one of these factors.

American Educational Issues for Marginalized Students

While the United States does not generally have numbers represented in the more tragic global statistics, it has endorsed the educational goals of the UN and other international agencies and it also experiences its own major disparities in the educational attainment of its citizenry. According to a 2009 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) ranking published by the International Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the decline of American schools is becoming a national embarrassment with American children, who once performed best in the world, now performing behind at least 15 other countries, including lesser developed countries like Estonia. NAEP scores further illustrate that the achievement gap between white students and poor and minority students continues to persist (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). In light of this, policy-makers, educators, administrators, and members of communities are making and will make a number of fundamental choices about how curriculum in schools is developed and monitored and the stakes for these choices are seen as being quite high because America has historically employed a national educational agenda that is viewed as affecting the future economic, political, and social

needs of the country (Spring, 2006). Today curriculum is a frequent topic of national policy debate because it is seen as the determining mechanism for achievement of U.S. national goals and international standards (Elmore & Fuhrman, 1994).

Now the United States faces an apparent obstacle to its ideological practices because while U.S. education has, since the 19th century, been used to protect and ensure American political, economic, and social goals, the current urgency of its global education initiatives push the country to encompass curriculum and practice that may not be wholly self-serving because global education requires the acknowledgement of “the other” as valued and humanely equal. Therefore, Webb, Metha, & Jordan (2010) resolve that,

If U.S. schools are to respond to the realities of a global world, they must break down what many refer to as the egocentrism of the American perspective and develop a better understanding of how the values, traditions, cultures, languages, and current conditions in the community of nations are affected by the dimensions of globalization .(p.415).

Although America is in support of improving the educational plight of the global community, it must acknowledge that it has difficulty, even within its own borders, considering those less dominant as valued and equal. Additionally, America has yet to create effective educational opportunities that provide the global educational securities it has pledged to other world countries for its own marginalized populations (Sadovnik, 2004). Rist has assessed that, “the [American] system of public education in reality perpetuates what it is ideologically committed to eradicating – class barriers which result in inequality in the social and economic life of citizenry” (Rist, 1970, p.411). One of the major movements to alter these trends in America has been the initiative to promote

multicultural education and diversity awareness at all levels of education and across all disciplines. This has afforded an opportunity for national and state policy makers to address the educational disparities faced by American Indian students by lobbying for changes in curriculum and practice designed to improve educational outcomes for marginalized students. At the national level and in Montana, specifically, ideological, social, and educational inequalities are being addressed through national and state legislation in the form of Indian Education Acts. The impact of these acts is part of the history of education that influences how teachers in Montana are currently educating American Indian students.

The National Indian Education Act

The National Indian Education Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-318 as amended) was the primary reason the United States embarked on a discourse about strategies to improve American Indian Education. New ideas were solicited and research was supported to begin to formulate academic priorities for Native schools. These legislations focused on priorities that ensured the development of culturally based curriculum, bolstered numbers of Native teachers and professionals in the educational system, supported the development of Native language and cultural programming, and increased active parental support (Demmert & Towner, 2003). The act also stimulated the construction of model programs as well as increased experimentation with new educational theories and proposals (Demmert, 1996). The 1995 Indian Self-Determination Act also contributed significantly to the movement, requiring the U.S. government to enter into contracts that

turned administration of federally funded programs such as schools over to tribes effectively allowing the management of schools operated by the BIA to be run by tribal governments (Demmert & Towner, 2003). Although the 1995 Act

did not concentrate on issues of culture based education, or the place of language and culture in the school curriculum, [the Act] provided an avenue for that priority to develop if tribal groups were interested in moving in that direction. (Demmert & Towner, 2003)

These events have ultimately lead to a contemporary national interest in Native language and cultural preservation through the nurturing of Native identities and respect for cultural priorities in systems of education (Demmert & Towner, 2003). The White House Conference on Indian Education (1991) and the Indian Nations At Risk Report (1992) site growing support for the theory that the development of cultural identity is essential to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of American Indians students and, in fact, contributes to their academic achievement. Prior to 1972, public attitudes about Native language and culture in schools were indifferent or oppositional and were influenced primarily by non-Native educators although there were a few examples of Native cultural experiments that preceded the period, i.e. the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the Navajo Community College, and two language and culture programs in Alaska (Demmert & Towner, 2003).

Montana's Indian Education For All Act

In 1972, responding to increasing diversity in America and the challenge of cultural competence, the Montana Legislature adopted Article X, Section 1 (2) (Indian Education for All). It reads, "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural

heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity” (Montana Indians, 2004, p.82). This legislation asked that Montana schools and universities integrate cultural education pertaining to Montana’s tribes as a first step to bridging the achievement gap for Indian students and developing a more globally competent and aware body of students. The first goal of Article X was to prepare teachers for Indian studies through training. The second was to teach Montana students about the unique historical and contemporary contributions of American Indians (OPI).

In the twenty years following the adoption of Article X, the legislation’s vague and unenforceable nature led to minimal and under-informed action primarily in the form of scattered integration of Indian studies courses in high school elective curriculum (Pember, 2007). In 1999, due to pressure from educators and educational policy makers, MCA 20-1-501 was adopted by the Montana Legislature, mandating that all educators of teachers provide opportunities for K-12 school personnel to become educated about Montana Indians (Juneau & Smoker Broaddus, 2006). This legislation resulted in a greater emphasis upon professional development for teachers and a greater inferred responsibility for university departments of education; however, the fact that no educational objectives were yet specifically defined within the state curriculum standards created a barrier to the implementation of MCA 20-1-501 and the legislation lost its momentum in the schools once again (Juneau & Smoker Broaddus, 2006).

In order to counter these problems, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and other related groups began the task of drafting specific benchmarks in social

studies curriculum, which defined Indian Education knowledge and skills that must be mastered by students upon completion of grades 4, 8 and 12. In addition to these standards, OPI also released a list of seven essential understandings about Montana Indians to be taught in K-12 classrooms. Following the approval of specific social studies benchmarks, OPI began a process of drafting Indian education benchmarks for each subject to be included in Montana's state educational standards. Beyond this work, committed educators experienced limited advances in the state-wide implementation of Indian Education because the law carried no funding for work in this area. Finally in 2005, in response to a suit resulting in a declaration that the legislature's school funding scheme was unconstitutional, the Montana Legislature allocated funds to support Indian Education for All (OPI).

Currently, the Office of Public Instruction administers a number of annual grants intended to further the work of Indian Education for All utilizing legislative funds. In addition to these grants, designed primarily to support professional and curriculum development, every school district in Montana has been allocated funds to be used specifically to facilitate the implementation of Indian Education for All (OPI). Changes in curriculum and increased awareness of American Indians and their history and beliefs is believed to improve the education American Indian students receive. It is difficult to assess the effect of Indian Education in relation to this study because the contexts in which it is implemented vary so much. Some schools in Montana have no Native students while other schools are almost 100% Native. While participants in this study mentioned IEFA, it was difficult for them to say whether it was the mandate or the

context that spurred their awareness of cultural issues. All of the teachers involved in this study taught in contexts of 50% Native students or more. Thus, the effectiveness of teachers in such widely variant contexts, as are exhibited in the schools across Montana, may be difficult to connect to the impact of Indian Education for All, although the fact that the mandate has had an impact of some sort is undeniable.

The History of Indian Education in America

While Montana has made some important advances in its aim to educate American Indians, a long and preceding history has encumbered these gains. The history of education for American Indians has been consumed by an emphasis on the deficiencies of Native students creating pedagogical foundations that have provided schools with the ‘inherent “right” to “civilize” American Indian students’ (Lomawaima, 2004, p.18). Lomawaima (2004), Spring (2006), Cajete (2005), Wildcat (2005), and Deloria (2006) address the manner in which U.S. education was designed to control and subjugate American Indians and other minorities, by using compulsory education to enforce a normalized white model of citizenry that attempted to standardize the population, but that also intentionally placed people of color at the bottom of static hierarchies of economic and social attainment. These authors have focused attention on the manner in which irregularities in the imposed education systems of America have reinforced and even driven economic and political trends over the last century. Lomawaima (2004) suggests that, “U.S. society and government were not vacillating through swings of a pendulum between tolerance and intolerance” (p.xxii). Instead, within each era, there occurred a

systematic calculation of what Lomawaima calls a “zone of safety” (p.xxii) where cultural differences that were considered dangerous could be controlled, tamed, and neutralized. Benjamin Franklin showed interesting foresight when he told his American constituents, “Our limited perspective, our hopes and fears become our measure of life, and when circumstances don’t fit our ideas, they become our difficulties.” In a short while, boarding schools across the United States would “kill the Indian to save the man” (Pratt, 1892) because “the savages proved to be difficult” (Yu, 2009). Carlisle Indian School was one of hundreds of Indian boarding schools that sprang up across America in the 1800s. Carlisle was founded by William Pratt who convinced American Indian elders that they were losing their land to white people because their people were uneducated. As a result, the first Indian students were sent to boarding schools voluntarily; later they would be taken forcibly from their homes to attend (Yu, 2009). Some schools were driven by mission agendas while others were supported by the government, but all were designed to remove Indian children from the perceived negative influences of their families and cultures and to assimilate them into Christian American society, using limited vocational studies which usually resulted in children being subject to hard labor (Yu, 2009). Children in boarding schools had their hair cut (an action only culturally appropriate for mourning) and they were forbidden to speak their native languages. Large numbers of children died of disease, starvation, and exposure. In the end, most American Indians perceived boarding schools as a “miserable state of cultural dislocation,” that created problems long after the children returned home (Zitkala-Sa, quoted in Yu, 2009). These problems included but were not limited to: poor parenting

because students were raised in a militaristic style rather than by their parents, failure to understand the social boundaries of their culture because they had to relearn their languages and lost cultural context, resentment of authority, inadequate life skills to survive in their home communities which could not support the trades for which they had been trained, and inadequate skills to cope in positive ways with extreme isolation and historical trauma which lead to increased substance abuse (Lynch, 2010). Even after the boarding school period ended, school practices continued to enforce cultural separation by assuming that the norm for all people is that of the dominant white culture (Pewewardy, 2002; Agbo, 2001; Sobol, 1990). Following the boarding school era, “most United States federal and state initiatives focused on changing the Indian without allowing for cultural differences” (Pewewardy, 2002, p. 30). In addition, in comparison to white students, American Indian children were seen by educators as being unable to learn and prosper in the school setting and this reaffirmed their belief that Indian children needed to be more like white children (Agbo, 2001).

Banks explained these difficult years in American Indian educational history by saying that the U.S. quest for a relatively “narrow zone of tolerable cultural difference” dominated the federal response to American Indians who were struggling for basic human rights and social justice, while the U.S. perceived Native languages, cultures, and religions as threats to the national identity (2006, p.xiii). Lomawiamama and McCarty (2006), scholars responsible for the phrase “narrow zone of tolerable cultural difference”, first used the phrase to describe the thinking behind the justified eradication of Native cultures and languages through boarding schools, the denial of American Indian rights to

self-determination, and the insistence that Native people must not “remain Indian” (p.xiii).

Understanding the history of educational policy regarding the education of minorities is important to studies like this one because the politics of education is directly related to the ideologies passed on to teachers through institutions formed by and according to these politics. Undoubtedly, the teachers involved in this study were significantly impacted and molded by the institutions that taught them. While some of the curricular components delivered to pre-service teachers are strictly pedagogical many of them are politically motivated even when students are unaware of this.

Lingering Effects of Early Indian Education

Today’s American Indians have grown up with a heritage tied to the boarding school era and a history of America’s public schooling efforts designed for assimilation of minorities. This history of both positive effects and damaging long-term devastation, has failed to match the values of colonized communities, a fact documented by a number of research studies concerned with decolonizing methodologies (Mihsuah, 2004). Beginning in the 1860s, Thomas McKenney and Richard Pratt, founders of the Indian school movement, both felt that Indian students would prosper most if they were completely removed from the deleterious Indian environment. The Bureau of Indian Affairs concurred, investing most of their educational intention on bringing assimilation ideologies to the American Indians (Giago, 2006). The creation and enforcement of early Indian education through boarding schools and day schools initiated a “great

reformation” of Indian culture, but because of the abusive and ethnocentric foundation of these programs, any national stability that may have been gained in the short-term has been comprehensively undermined by the long-term ill effects of Indian education (Margolis, 2004). Today Indian culture has evaded the “ideological management” (Margolis, 2004) planned for its children, but it has not progressed to its present state without constantly grappling with the crippling effects of the early Indian education movement. The breakdown of the family, the distorted dynamic of power, and the wounds of physical, spiritual, and cultural genocide have left Indian people and their educational systems with many unique difficulties.

The first difficulty arose after entire generations of Indian children were removed from their families and raised by priests and headmasters in the 1880’s, interrupting Indian ways of nurturing and raising children (AJIC, 1991). When these children returned to their homes as adults and attempted to participate in life on the reservation, they had no reference points for navigating family life. Parenting had never been modeled for them and the only models they had had were often brutal and unethical and also enacted in the formal institutional setting. Because of this, subsequent generations of Indian children were raised by grandparents or naïve and inexperienced parents.

Boarding school afforded some Indian parents training in math, reading, and science, but in the economically depressed and rural areas in which they were forced to live if they returned to their families, this knowledge did not translate into adequate skills for subsistence. As a result, the children of these students were often raised in extreme poverty and often by other members of the extended family at various different times

leading to the appearance of an unstable and inconsistent upbringing, by western standards (AJIC, 1991). In addition to this, paramilitary boarding schools known for their implementation of child labor caused reactionary support for the safe-guarding of childhood and the freedom to play relatively free of restraint. Many Native adults became even more reticent to restrict children's freedoms, thus creating a mismatch in expectations for young people educated in white-controlled public schools (Lynch, 2010).

The second educational issue resulting from early Indian education can best be described as a distortion of the dynamic of power within school systems (Fear-Segal, 2007). In the mid-late 1800s, some Indians were strongly influenced by the understanding that acquiescing to western religion and education would afford them power in a time when Indians felt they had little control over the course and fortune of their own lives. In the short term this seemed to be true, but in the long term many Indians felt cheated and degraded when they recognized how they were used to serve the aims of other still more powerful men, primarily politicians and businessmen. Dr. Andrea Smith, Interim coordinator of the Boarding School Healing Project and a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, explained that the oppressive structure of the boarding school was seen as "a way to spend less money. But, it also introduced violence and abuse, and it repressed traditions based on a patriarchal system. It was essentially a mass violation of human rights" (Lynch, p.2, 2010). Boarding schools were designed to serve the aims of the United States under the pretense of aiding Indians by having whites teach students "the basis of true happiness" (Pratt, 1979).



Figure 2: Boarding School Brothers. The above photos of the same three brothers illustrate the use of photography to “prove” the effects of civilization on Indians. In thousands of photos like these the technique of lightening the shade of Indian skin and posing students in “primitive” and “formal” ways were used to show that education was capable of transforming Indian savages into civilized men. Photos property of the Trout Gallery at Dickinson College.

Today, the idea that non-Indians know what is best for Indians is still pervasive (Fear-Segal, 2007), and this has led to a distrust of white authority. In a system of schools where most teachers, principals, and superintendents are white, cultural, ideological, and communicational conflicts with the school board, parents, and community members have the potential to be abundant. NAEP reports that 75% of K-12 teachers teaching Native children are white, while the remaining 25% are teachers of other races, 18% of which are Native (National Indian Education Study, 2005). Furthermore, when American Indian education is integrated into modern classrooms as a requirement of law, these concepts are often presented as minor in importance and

second-rate to Anglo-Saxon methods of teaching and learning (Lomawaima, 2006; Banks, 1991). Indian students learn European and U.S. history and with rare mention of their own past because some feel it is of greater benefit for Native students to learn to get along in the white world where they can make a good living (AJIC, 1991). Herein lays the crux of the power dynamic. In the Indian world it would be better to learn to be a good person than to learn to make a good living. However, a mindset of this type does not yield power in a capitalistic system. Therefore, Indians must either yield power to keep culture or yield culture to gain power (AJIC, 1991).

This yielding leads to the third effect of boarding school education on Indians in today's school systems. In order to avoid physical genocide, Indians had to abandon cultural and spiritual preservation largely through the death of Indian languages. The rate of Indian mortality as a result of colonization far outnumbered the deaths in the Jewish Holocaust, thus the pressure Native people may feel to become anonymous members of the dominating culture is understandable. Boarding schools severely punished Indian students for the use of their languages, as it was the prevalent indicator of their Indianness. Thus, Native languages were forced "underground" during this period and when they resurfaced, Indian children understood that certain Indian words symbolized various elements of their environment, but they no longer understood the cultural connotations associated with these words. For example consider the word, "Bulabushgua" in the Apsaalooke language. This word is used to symbolize the town of Billings. If you ask a young Apsaalooke person what this word means he will say, "Billings." If, however, you ask an older speaker of the language, he or she will tell you

that it means, “The place where you cut wood.” As a result of this change in thinking, Indian students became illiterate in the connotations of their own culture. Prior to this loss of language, cultural connotations provided such thorough boundaries that tribes had no need for institutions to govern human behavior (prisons, mental institutions, homes for the elderly, etc.). Longstaffe (1987) describes the effects this way:

The razing of Indian societies and their traditions is well-documented. Symptoms of this dislocation are evident in high rates of unemployment, suicide, alcoholism, domestic, and other social problems. This loss of tradition has seriously damaged the oral means of preserving cultural norms, and the values which prohibit deviant behaviors have been obscured and often forgotten. Native peoples often appear reluctant to adopt “white” solutions to problems that stem from the latter’s apparent destruction of their societies. (p.8)

Currently, the job of the culture and traditions that give Indian communities stability has become an awesome, but vital task. It is becoming ever more apparent that the devastations brought on by the early Indian education movement are broad and far-reaching. “Intergenerational trauma or historical grief” (Braveheart, 2003) caused by cultural genocide has led to “survivor guilt, depression, low self-esteem, psychic numbing, anger, victim identity, death identity, thoughts of suicide, preoccupation with trauma, and physical symptoms” (Steinman, 2005) contributing to a depressed educational environment in these communities. Thus, the U.S. history of education for American Indians has culminated in a contemporary body of students with complex difficulties trying to successfully navigate a system with its own deep and inherent problems.

Problems such as these make standardization a work that is much more complex and varied than it is often portrayed to be. Similarly, student achievement is also a very

complex measure with many variables influencing the achievement of students from very different backgrounds. American Indian student in America, and in Montana specifically, experience an achievement gap with a variety of interpretations and causes associated with this gap. Lomawaima (2006) argues that over the past century and a half, standardization, under the guise of equality, and used as a tool to achieve this zone of tolerable cultural difference, has effectively brought about the segregation and marginalization of American Indians in the U.S. educational system. The differences between students and the quality of their educations based on their races, ethnicities, and cultural affiliations have been perpetuated across U.S. policy eras and have produced an achievement gap in America that is arguably the most persistent and difficult issue in United States educational debate and policy (Evans, 2005; Everson, 2007). Therefore one of the most pressing needs in American education today is closing the achievement gap which is “seen by both educators and policy makers as important not just for our educational system and reducing racial inequality, but ultimately for our economy and our moral health as a nation” (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2010, p.202). This study proposes a new perspective on the achievement gap and its contributing factors.

The American Indian Achievement Gap

There are a number of reasons American Indians students have been shown to experience lower levels of educational achievement and attainment than their white counterparts. The U.S. Department of Education sites American Indian truancy as the highest rate of absenteeism of any racial or ethnic group (2005). American Indians are

also listed as having the second highest rate of expulsions and/or suspensions leading to a much higher risk for dropping out of high school. American Indians experience a dropout rate more than double that of the white population and have the second highest dropout rate of any minority (U. S. Dept. of Education, 2005). In addition, many American Indian children come from low socioeconomic status homes and approximately 27% of American Indian and Alaska Native families are classified as living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Because many American Indian parents have limited English proficiency (due to historical trauma and crises within their own cultures and languages) and are also dealing with English-only instruction in schools, the obstacles American Indian students face are compounded and parental involvement in the educational process is obstructed (Southwest Comprehension Center, 2011). In addition, American Indian students and their families perceive the mainstream curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment strategies as deaf to their needs, irrelevant to their experience, and detrimental to American Indian culture, traditional approaches to education, and world views (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). In fact, Darrell Kipp of the Piegan Institute suggests that American Indian parents are justly concerned because U.S. public school testing and standards requirements are akin to an “assimilation policy” very similar to the ones carried out by the federal government between the 1880s and the 1920s that were intended to “civilize” American Indian children and conform them to White expectations (2004).

One American Indian achievement gap explanation that has gained wide notoriety among academics, researchers, and theorists, is the Cultural Discontinuity Theory

(Powers et al. 2003).¹ According to the Cultural Discontinuity Theory, discontinuities between the cultures and languages of American Indian communities and that of mainstream schools and societies have caused low academic achievement and attainment as well as apathy in American Indian students (Powers' et al., 2003). This theory espouses that "cultural discontinuity is based on the axiom that behavioral, communication, instructional, and curricular expectations of the school contradict and undermine those of Native youths' families and communities" (p.24) meaning that learning is interrupted when there are significant differences between students' traditions, values, and home lives and the school environment (Powers' et al., 2003).

Because the backgrounds of many American Indian students provide them a different set of linguistic skills, interaction patterns, and learning preferences, the traditional American school fails to support or reward their learning processes, and thus many American Indian students experience a cultural identity crisis in the educational environment (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003). They also face discontinuity between the English they speak and the English spoken by the people who surround them, teach them, and test them (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003). Kipp (2004) states that American Indian children are "every bit as 'smart' as their 'standard' peers, but they don't share the same knowledge base. They speak English, but it's not the same as that of a standardized test writer..." (pg.3). To illustrate, Kipp recounts how all of his 8th grade students missed the word "awning" on a standardized test of vocabulary.

¹ The Cultural Discontinuity Theory was born out of a number of preceding theories regarding the role of culture in education including the Genetic Deficit Theory of the 1900s, the Cultural Deficit Theory of the 1960s, the Cultural Difference Theory of 1976, and the Cultural Ecological Theory of 1986 (Bolima, 2011).

Coming as no surprise to the teacher from Browning, MT a place known for extreme winds, Kipp explained, “If there ever had been an awning,...it was flapping its way toward Iowa”(2004, p.3). For American Indian students discontinuities like these create continual and systematic communication gaps in the learning environment, and these gaps are compounded by educational systems that fail to recognize and build on the knowledge and skills that American Indian students can contribute in the academic setting (St. Charles & Constantino, 2000). Another result of these gaps is the isolation and relational distance experienced by American Indian students attempting to interact with teachers and other students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003). Other factors that have been noted in the literature that help explain the underachievement and lower attainment of American Indian students include geographic, economic, and social disadvantages. According to a report by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights (2003), American Indian students do not have access to educational opportunities that are equal to what other American students receive. They frequently attend school in deteriorating facilities, where teachers are underpaid, curricula are weak, their treatment is often discriminatory, and their learning tools are outdated (p.xi). Other factors mentioned in the literature include: The lack of well-trained teachers and administrators, low student and/or parent motivation, inadequate funding of the schools attended by American Indians (many of which are small, rural schools or schools on reservations), test bias, inadequate preparation for testing, and test anxiety, high student and staff mobility in their schools, and higher rates of violence and substance abuse (Beaulieu, 2000; Gilbert, 2000).

In direct opposition to the above literature, however, a substantial argument has been raised that in cases where interracial comparisons are made between white and non-white students an achievement gap does *not* exist. Instead investigation into the way educational success is measured in Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts reveals an epistemological mismatch (Coolangatta, 1.3.1). Illustrations of this mismatch include research by Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Bridglall (2007) showing that intelligence is measured differently within and among cultural groups, and that teachers reward students who through socialization have come to fit their own definitions of intelligence.

Historically, Indigenous people have insisted upon the right of access to education.

Invariably the nature, and consequently the outcome, of this education has been constructed through and measured by non-Indigenous standards, values and philosophies. Ultimately the purpose of this education has been to assimilate Indigenous people into non-Indigenous cultures and societies. Volumes of studies, research and reports dealing with Indigenous people in non-Indigenous education systems paint a familiar picture of failure and despair. When measured in non-Indigenous terms, the educational outcomes of Indigenous people are still far below that of non-Indigenous people. This fact exists not because Indigenous people are less intelligent, but because educational theories and practices have been developed and controlled by non-Indigenous people. Thus, in more recent times, due to the involvement of Indigenous people, research shows that failure is indeed present, but that this failure is that of the system, not of Indigenous people. In this context the so-called drop-out rates and failures of Indigenous people within non-Indigenous education systems should be viewed for what they really are - rejection rates. (Coolangata, 1.3.1 – The Declaration of the Educational Rights of Indigenous Peoples)

Ladson-Billings sites a similar view of African American educational initiatives that fail to recognize or capitalize on the cultural strengths of students. In the 1960s and 70s much literature was amassed regarding “culturally deprived” and “disadvantaged

students”, categories used to label both African American and American Indian students. Ladson explains that in spite of the desire to improve education and teacher effectiveness for these groups, using these labels contributed substantially to the perception that these students were “deprived, deficient, and deviant” (p. 8). This perception resulted in reform efforts aimed at removing students from their “damaging” homes, communities, and cultures and providing “compensatory education” to compensate for the deprivation of these children who were seen as deficient white children (p.8). Cuban (1989) agrees with Ladson-Billings stating that in the 1980s even though the lingo changed, the deprivation of “at risk” children still carries the same negative connotations it has for the past 200 years. He concluded that “the two most popular explanations for low academic achievement of at risk children locate the problem in the children themselves or in their families.” Bryde (1970), Dumont (1972), and Philips (1972) also provide supportive studies showing that the “myth” of students rather than schools being the source of a “problem” has created useful untruths (such as the silent Indian learner) that have been convenient for colonial education. Ladson-Billings believes this is because the American education system recognizes racial groups, but fails to understand the distinct cultural characteristics of these groups or the impact of systematic racism, leading them to see diverse students as identical to white students, but with more needs due solely to poverty and lack of opportunity (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Ladson-Billings further discusses how this perception limits many reform movements because those involved fail to see that these groups of marginalized students have “distinctly valuable attributes” and that their differences are important assets rather than “odds” that they must overcome (pg. 10).

Cummins (1986), Au (1981), and Jordan (1981) combat these issues by investing in schools that allow students to embrace their own cultural values and they have found students are more successful in these environments because they have a positive view of their own identities and of the majority culture. This approach helps to minimize the idea that strong school performance is somehow equivalent to abandonment of a cultural identity. Students in school environments that see racial categories as “deficient” often view academic achievement as “acting white” and have coined such slang terms as “oreo” and “apple” to define people who no longer fit their cultural groups because while they appear to be members of their own race on the outside (African American and American Indian, respectively), becoming educated has necessitated that they “sell out” to the white culture, making them white inside (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Grande 2006). Once perceptions like these are internalized by systems and students, reformers are no longer working with curriculum needs alone when attempting to ameliorate achievement gaps. Indeed, this study shows that reform is multifaceted and needs to consider strategies that are socially intelligent.

Social/Cultural Barriers to Equal Education

In his book *American Education*, Spring discusses at length the way in which inequalities in today’s schools have turned the school experience against minority students. Two of the elements with the strongest influence on equality are “institutional racism” and “funding disparities based on race” (p.76). While many in America feel racism and racially motivated bias are rapidly becoming phenomena of the past, Spring

provides strong and consistent examples of the manner in which minority students' achievement is currently being adversely affected by these elements. The Advisory Board for the President's Initiative on Race in *One America in the 21st Century: Forging a New Future* also recognized that the problem of equal educational opportunity involves the intersection of social class and race, explaining that a primary concern of the board was the fact that those students who live disproportionately in areas of concentrated poverty are receiving restricted educational opportunities and public services. Daryl Kipp (2004), on the other hand, questions whether providing exactly the same opportunities and services for all students will in fact improve levels of student success. (In pondering this question it is important to consider what definition is given to "success" and according to whose measurements it will be assessed because, as discussed above, these definitions and measures are molded and influenced by cultural values.)

Kipp (2004) argues that,

'Equality' by itself is a very strong and beautiful word, but it has been changed to mean 'sameness,' or 'uniformity.' It's about control. The more uniform a thing is, the easier it is to control...Sameness produces dullness. Diversity produces vibrancy and life. That's why we need true equality – education that is equal, but different. (pg.3)

In a similar vein, it has been argued that in fact one of the reasons No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is tragically flawed is because it tries to create and enforce a standardized education that is the same for every child in the United States. Montana Superintendent of Schools, Denise Juneau, and Governor Brian Schweitzer argued that a one-size-fits-all approach has not and will not create more successful students (Bozeman Chronicle, March 24, 2010). Ironically, *Brown vs. The Board of Education* established the principle

that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Warren Court, 1954) and that students should not receive *different* but "equal" education because this "different" leads to "inherently unequal" education that discriminates based on race and social class. Additionally, Banks (1995) defines the aim of multicultural education as an effort to create "equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups" (p. xi). Kipp (2004), however, argues that perhaps different is *more* just, especially for students from minority cultures in today's contemporary public schools. Lomawaima (2006) also observed, "Often masquerading as a tool for equal opportunity, standardization has segregated and marginalized Native peoples and others as it has circumscribed a narrow zone of tolerable cultural" (p.5). Similarly, Ladson-Billings begins her book on successful teachers of African American children with a question originally framed by W.E.B DuBois in 1935, "Does the Negro need separate schools?" In response to this question, Ladson-Billings discusses the current state of education for African American children, noting no significant change in achievement gap after two full educational reform movements. In summary she states, "African American children already have separate schools. The African American immersion school movement is about *taking control* of those separate schools" (p. 3).

Different/Separate Education for American Indians

The first example of an American Indian school that took control by initiating original Navajo educational patterns was the Arizona Rough Rock bilingual education program. The school was 'a major tool for rupturing the federal "safety zone"' allowing

the Navajo to actualize sovereign tribal goals through community control (Lomawaima, 2004, p.xviii.). Since the origination of this school, many others have sprung up and their successes have been documented by scholars such as Dalton & Youpa (1998), Dupuis & Walker (1989), Lipka (2002), and McCarty (2002). The idea of allowing American Indians to determine their own educational goals is not new and was reflected in the 1928 Merriam Report on the status of Indian education.

The position taken, therefore, is that the work with and for the Indians must give consideration to the desires of the individual Indians. He who wishes to merge into the social and economic life of the prevailing civilization of this country should be given all practicable aid and advice in making the necessary adjustments. He who wants to remain an Indian and live according to his old culture should be aided in doing so. (p.86)

In spite of the fact that the Merriam Report writers mistakenly referred to American Indian cultures as “old” or backward, they correctly understood that educational choice and the ability “to remain an Indian” were essential human rights (Lomawaima, 2004, p.xxii). Today American Indians are standing up to pressures to become “standardized” by developing their own sets of “counterstandards”, like the ones employed in culturally responsive schools, schools founded on culturally-derived principles of teaching and learning (Lomawaima, 2004, p.xxiv). The likelihood that these schools patterned after traditional Native ways of teaching, learning, and knowing will fit snugly within NCLB is slim, in spite of the fact that these methods may well fit within what prominent educators recognize as good pedagogy (see Appendix C for a comparison of Wiggins and McTighe’s model and Indigenous models), yet Indigenous people argue that they have an inalienable right to choose the education they want for their children. Here Lomawaima and McCarty caution,

Our use of the word *choice* should not be misunderstood as an endorsement of current political arguments that tout educational “choice” while stripping away all historical and social context and, most importantly, while they mask the operations of race, social class, language, and power that determine who has “choice” and who does not. Especially in Native America, choice operates in linked domains of individual choice and community self-determination that are rooted in the inherent sovereignty of Native nations. Perceptions of and real opportunities for choice are deeply conditioned by generations of poverty, discrimination, federal control, oppressive schooling practices, and economic and infrastructural underdevelopment. (2006, p.9)

In the past even when the U.S. government recognized American Indian rights to education established through treaties and other instruments, the Indian’s right to education has been misconstrued to assume that Indigenous people want access solely to non-Indigenous forms of education (Coolangatta, 1.3.2). “Presumably it has been considered that the core of Indigenous cultural values, standards and wisdom have been abandoned or are withering in the wilderness of Indigenous societies” (Coolangatta, 1.3.2).

In spite of these oppressive assumptions, Indigenous people across the world are demanding, and are in fact achieving, the establishment of systems of education which reflect, respect and embrace Indigenous cultural values, philosophies and ideologies; the same values, philosophies and ideologies which have shaped, nurtured and sustained Indigenous people for tens of thousands of years (Coolangata, 1.3.2). Born out of these demands are a rising number of tribes who have asserted their sovereignty and are beginning to mold new, more culturally attuned, educational environments for American Indian children. Many of these schools are similar to the Piegan Institute in Browning, Montana and the White Clay Immersion School in Ft. Belknap, Montana, both places

where Native students learn according to their traditional values, beliefs, and wisdom and in their own languages. In academia, schools like these fall under the classification of “ethnocentric education”.

Ethnocentric education refers to a specific type of multicultural education where the curriculum is designed around the cultural framework of the group (i.e. African American, Native American, Hispanic, etc.) and subjects are taught according to the perspective of a specific culture. In contemporary American society, it has become a means by which minority populations may resist standardizing and normalizing agendas they see as detrimental to their students. Ethnocentric education is different from other types of multicultural education such as bilingual education, empowerment education, and bicultural education because ethnocentric education is based on the idea that there are shortcomings in European American culture that necessitate the preservation of dominated cultures (Spring, 2006). Therefore, ethnocentric education is aimed specifically at giving equal value to different cultural traditions and it means “purging a Eurocentric view of the world from Native American, Hispanic, and African American children’s minds and replacing it with a different cultural frame of reference” (Spring, p.140). This perspective on teaching is believed to facilitate empowerment of minority students proving to them that one does not have to be white to attain social and economic gains, but that a student’s own cultural traditions can support and facilitate success (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to these educational systems minority children have a “relevant personality” related to their race that can allow them to choose academic excellence while maintaining an ability to identify actively with their heritage from

within their cultures (King, 1991). Supporters of ethnocentric education believe that this emancipated education is an “anti-colonial educational agenda” that embraces Indigenous rights to “self-determination, cultural aspiration, culturally preferred pedagogy, socioeconomic mediation, extended family structure, and collective philosophy” (Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002, p.30). Likewise, The Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Peoples Rights to Education includes definitive language intended to encourage Indigenous people to evaluate the education their children are receiving and weigh whether or not their rights to education are being maintained within their respective educational systems; if they are not, Indigenous people are urged to create their own educational programs consistent with these rights:

2.2.4 Self-determination in Indigenous education embodies the right of Indigenous people to: 1.) Control/govern Indigenous education systems; 2.) Establish schools and other learning facilities that recognize, respect and promote Indigenous values, philosophies and ideologies; 3.) Develop and implement culturally inclusive curricula; 4.) Utilize the essential wisdom of Indigenous elders in the education process; 5.) Establish the criterion for educational evaluation and assessment; 6.) Define and identify standards for the gifted and talented; 7.) Promote the use of Indigenous languages in education; 8.) Establish the parameters and ethics within which Indigenous education research should be conducted; 9.) Design and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive teacher training programs; 10.) Participate in teacher certification and selection; 11.) Develop criterion for the registration and operation of schools and other learning facilities; 12.) and Choose the nature and scope of education without prejudice (Coolangatta, 2.2.4).

Lomawaima advocates that the practice of allowing American Indians to exercise their rights to their own forms of education and measures of success will improve educational justice all across America and even in other nations. She says, “When a nation denies rights to a group such as Native Americans, the rights of all groups – including

mainstream powerful groups – are seriously jeopardized.” As Martin Luther King (1963) stated, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (Lomawaima, 2004, p.xiv). In addition to preserving social justice, research shows that culturally rooted pedagogy with its distinct learning and teaching orientations works (McCarty et al, 1991). Luther Standing Bear (1933, 1978), in support of culturally grounded education adds, “America can be revived, rejuvenated, by recognizing a native school of thought. The Indian can save America.”

While ethnocentric education, on the surface, seems a possibly dangerous return to earlier segregation ills, immersion schools and culturally responsive schools, have become some of the ways in which minority groups have attempted to ameliorate problems such as the achievement gap, educational discontinuities, and poor engagement, bringing their own forms of education to their own students. Within mainstream education a number of other multicultural solutions have also been attempted.

Forms of Multicultural Education

Educators in mainstream public schools have come to understand diversity is a fact of the American demographic and all students must be educated. “For American teachers, *multicultural* cannot be just a lesson, a curriculum, a teaching style, or a philosophy. In the 21st century, non-White and immigrant voices and languages will be heard or ignored, honored or derided, but they will not be silenced or assimilated out of existence” (Oakes & Liptin, 2004, p.vii). With increasing frequency and greater social and political pressure, multicultural education is being integrated more consistently

across systems and curricula. Because a number of different theories and models have been developed, however, multicultural education may happen in a number of ways with varying levels of success.

James Banks, Christine Sleeter, Carl Grant, and Sonia Nieto are considered leaders in the multicultural education movement acting as advocates for prejudice reduction, the elimination of sexism, and the equalization of educational opportunity through research, publication, and practice. Their works focus on the integration of oppressed histories and cultures into curricula and textbooks in public schools as a way to empower dominated groups (Spring, 2006). James Banks, in his *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (Banks & Banks, 2004), defines multicultural education as,

a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women's studies" (p. xiii).

Banks and Banks list 5 dimensions of multicultural education that should guide any attempts at multicultural education: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school and social structure (2004, p.3-29). Sleeter and Grant (2007) evaluated multicultural approaches to education and created a five-part typology that describes the most commonly implemented methodologies. These include: 1.) the human relations approach utilizing tolerance and peace studies curriculum, 2.) the single group studies approach utilizing ethnic and women's studies curriculum, 3.) the teaching the exceptional and culturally different approach utilizing norms and values of dominant society curriculum, 4.) the inclusive multicultural approach utilizing cultural pluralism curriculum, and 5.) the

educational multicultural and social reconstruction approach utilizing social justice curriculum. Sonia Nieto (1992) believed, “Our society must move beyond causing and exploiting students’ shame to using their cultural and linguistic differences to struggle for an education that is more in tune with society’s rhetoric of equal and high-quality education for all students.” In support of this she created a list of 7 characteristics of multiculturalism for social empowerment that promote social justice and social action values in schools. These 7 characteristics that define how, when, and where culture, race, and difference should be addressed in schools define a critical pedagogy aimed at preparing students to work for social justice in the world at large (Nieto, 1992). In general these approaches to multicultural education are meant to be applied in a broad manner across systems and curricula; however, this is not always how they are implemented.

Some multicultural education approaches are implemented in the teaching methodology, either alone or in combination with other systemic approaches. One example of this is called culturally responsive teaching. Pang (2005) says,

While it is not possible to create an environment that is culturally congruent for all students all the time, it is possible to create an affirming environment that values and respects the culture of the student and integrates information about various cultures into the curriculum. (p. 337)

Research suggests that this can be accomplished through teaching that is both culturally relevant and responsive. *Culturally responsive teaching* is defined as “an approach to instruction that responds to the sociocultural context and seeks to integrate the cultural content of the learner in shaping an effective learning environment” (Pang, 2005, p.337). *Cultural content* “includes aspects such as experiences, knowledge, events, values, role

models, perspectives, and issues that arise from the community” (p.337). And *cultural context* “refers to the behaviors, interactional patterns, historical experiences, and underlying expectations and values of students” (p.337). This approach is seen as an effective way in which to allow students to see themselves and their cultures within the curriculum and to build bridges between what they already know and what they need to know (Villegas & Lucas, 2007) that has resulted in students who are more engaged in learning, see school as relevant to their daily lives, and achieve more academically (Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2008).

While many of these approaches have been greeted with seemingly positive results, some criticism has also occurred as each has been placed under analytical scrutiny especially in the cultural setting. One example of such an analysis is provided by Hollins, cited by Ladson-Billings (1994, p.10). Upon examining multicultural programs that have claimed effectiveness with minority students, Hollins found that each falls into one of three categories. The first category is “those designed to remediate or accelerate without attending to the students’ social or cultural needs”, the second is “those designed to resocialize [minority] students to mainstream behaviors, values, and attitudes at the same time that they teach basic skills, and the third is “those designed to facilitate student learning by capitalizing on the students’ own social and cultural backgrounds” (1994, p.10). While a program that fits into one of the first two categories is not necessarily “bad”, it is inferred that the third category is less closely tied to an oppressive colonial past and more emancipatory. In addition, in spite of national emphasis on multicultural education, the level and extent to which multicultural

education approaches are implemented may vary significantly leading to criticism of its results. In 2008 the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators compiled a report on the status of multicultural education in U.S. mainstream public education as it pertained to American Indian students. In schools classified as low-density schools with few Native students, only 8% of teachers reported daily use of Native American perspectives in instruction. In high density schools with more than 25% Native students, only 33% of teachers reported that they integrated Native perspectives in daily instruction (p.17). This illustrates that, in spite of supportive research, multicultural education approaches are not consistently implemented by teachers in schools.

Effective Teachers of Minority Students

As we speak, schools and policy makers all over the world are striving to create lists of competencies that best describe the qualities of exemplary teachers (Becker, Kennedy, & Hundersmarck, 2003). Research regarding teacher effectiveness primarily focuses on practices rather than cognitions leading to lists describing specific behaviors of “exemplary teachers” (Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, & Pressley, 2008). Studies in the general population have found that teachers with high achieving students place most of their emphasis on academic instruction, high expectations, short transition times, matching instruction with the needs of individual students, making relevant links between curriculum and students’ lives, delivering clear and enthusiastic instruction, and using wait time effectively (Brophy & Good, 1986; Allington & Johnson, 2002; Morrow, Tracey, Woo & Pressley, 1999; Pressley, Allington, et al., 2001; Wharton-McDonald,

Pressley, & Hampston, 1998). Wharton-McDonald and Pressley (2001) found that exemplary teachers teach a large number and broad range of skills using cross curricular connections to students who are carefully monitored, provided with supportive scaffolding, and encouraged to be self-regulated. Such teachers also motivate students well by establishing environments that are stimulating, comfortable, cooperative, and effort-driven places where authentic activities spur student work and create platforms for providing strategies and supports for students (Bogner, Raphael, & Pressley, 2002; Dolezal, Welsh, Pressley, & Vincent, 2003). The attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of teachers impact their behaviors, and these behaviors in turn impact students' engagement and learning (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). In concert with these studies, doubts have begun to surface about how valid, reliable, and practical lists of competencies such as those above are in actually describing what may be an impossible endeavor to define the ideal teacher (Korthagan, 2004). Some of the primary arguments against the reliability of such lists site the impact of context variability on teacher behavior, experience and veteran status impacts, as well as pedagogical differences (Lowyck, 1978; Combs, Blume, Newman, & Wass, 1974; Hyland, 1994).

In spite of the fact that there exists no standardized definition of a quality teacher, "quality teachers" are continually referred to as the single most important factor in student achievement (Carey, 2004). A 2010 Newsweek article entitled "Why can't we get rid of failing teachers?" questioned why U.S. schools continue to hire and give tenure to teachers who are not considered "quality teachers" and stated that, "what matters more than the class size or the textbook, the teaching method or the technology, or even the

curriculum, is the quality of the teacher.” The article further noted that “it is also true and unfortunate that often the weakest teachers are relegated to teaching the neediest students.” Kati Haycock of the Education Trust and coauthor of the 2006 study “Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality” further reinforces this idea by saying, “The research shows that kids who have two, three, four strong teachers in a row will eventually excel, no matter what their background, while kids who have even two weak teachers in a row will never recover.” This begs the questions, Who are the strong teachers? and Does this evaluation vary according to cultural perspective? In 2009, Arnon & Reichel found that the perception of the qualities of a good teacher is culturally dependent. With this in mind, it becomes important to look at specific cultures to see what level of congruence exists between what the colonizing or dominant culture values in a teacher and what each culture values.

In Native and other minority cultures, teachers who have the ability and the knowledge to make their teaching goals run parallel with the objectives of the community are greatly appreciated, and ideally they are supported by “transformations in the larger school ideology” that also share this perspective (Kana’iaupuni & Kawai’ae’a, 2008). Ladonson-Billings’ research contained a concurring quote regarding exemplary teachers that explained, “Most importantly, the teachers knew our families and had a sense of their dreams and aspirations for us” (pg. 7). Kana’iaupuni reviewed the literature and created a matrix of common characteristics of effective teachers of Indigenous students that included components such as a focus on group-centered instruction, clear links between learning and culture, a teaching perspective that sees the teacher as facilitator, integration

of high expectations, implementation of culturally mediated instructional patterns, promotion of cultural protocol and values, inclusion of native languages in curriculum, implementation of a strengths-based perspective of culture, utilization of traditional teaching strategies and culturally appropriate assessment, and demonstration of great respect for parents, family, and community (Kana'iaupuni & Kawai'ae'a, 2008). This is further backed by the Coolengata delgations' collaborative assertions that, a successful teacher of Indigenous students recognizes that the teacher and the students are unified in the same educational enterprise and must promote and reward cooperation in learning to support a pedagogy that is "holistic, connected, valid, culturally and value-based, thematic and experiential" (Coolangata 2.4.1). In addition the successful teacher recognizes the centrality of non-verbal communication, the inseparable medium of spirituality in education and its importance to a student's sense of wellbeing, the role of a teacher as facilitator and promoter of achievement, the value of the cultural environment in reaffirming the important place each student has in the world, and the essential need for community involvement in pedagogical processes (Coolangata 2.4.2-4). Luther Standing Bear reflected on his experiences as a child with traditional Native teaching and described true Indian education in this way:

Each and every parent was a teacher and...all elders were instructors of those younger than themselves...We learned by watching and imitating examples placed before us. Slowly and naturally the faculties of observation and memory became highly trained...The training was largely of character...and continued through life. True Indian education was based on the development of individual qualities and recognition of rights. Luther Standing Bear (1933/1978)

Teachers able to conceptualize this form of non-western education and to emulate it at least to a degree have gained some measure of what is known as “cultural literacy” (Spring, 2006). According to Pang, when teachers become culturally literate they begin to cultivate an insider perspective of the community and are able to understand what is happening culturally so they are able to respond as their students do. “Culturally knowledgeable teachers are keen observers, understand the importance of context and can read nonverbal communication cues such as facial expressions or the hand gesture of students” (Pang, 2005, p.337).

Many of the skills, abilities, and dispositions outlined by the above researchers are subtle and complexly interrelated; therefore it is challenging to consider how to pass these assets on to those preparing to become teachers. The majority of teachers in schools with large numbers of Native students are White and to the detriment of their students, have not had adequate training to be able to incorporate Native culture into their curriculum in effective ways (Agbo, 2001; Hjelmseth 1972; Garmon, 2005). Researchers agree an essential understanding of cultural and value differences is vital to a successful education program (Agbo, 2001; Jeffries & Singer, 2003) as is an understanding of the importance of culture in a student’s ability to “make meaning” of instructional material (Agbo, 2001). If teachers have a weak understanding of history and best practices related to teaching Indigenous students, they are often intimidated by the idea of integrating lessons that address culturally relevant standards (Juneau). Indeed, Ladson-Billings (1994) discusses the lack of reliable literature examining how to prepare pre-service teachers for diversity in their classrooms and states that “almost nothing exists on teacher

preparation specifically for [minority] students” (p.7). In 2007, Arnon & Reichel, found that pre-service teachers did not see the importance of teachers acting as socializing agents, placing most of their study emphasis on knowledge acquisition. Thus, they concluded “The clear preference for disciplinary education... in the field of teacher education is contradictory to the need for personal development of future teachers and their pedagogical education” (p.441). In light of this, Joyce King advocates for “the need to make social reconstructionist liberatory teaching an option for teacher education students...who often begin their professional preparation without having ever considered the need for fundamental social change” (1991, p.134) (see also Ginsburg, 1988; and Ginsburg & Newman, 1985). Furthermore, she among others (Giroux & McLaren, 1988) say that “teacher educators need forms of pedagogy and counter-knowledge that challenge students' internalized ideologies and subjective identities” with respect to educating diverse students (1991, p.134). Additionally, in order to train the best possible teachers for minority students, Arbon (2008) argues that institutions of teacher education may need to “go so far as to begin looking at the process of decolonizing tertiary education.” Arbon cites problems stemming from the hegemonic ideologies of “benevolent control” from racist (conscious or dysconscious) “experts” that may possibly be remedied by changes in curriculum, increases in Indigenous faculty, a shifting of Indigenous knowledge to the core rather than the outskirts of practice and content, and a respect for Indigenous authority that invites institutional responsibility for a long-term vision of improved education for Indigenous people (Arbon, 2008). In order for change of this type to occur, the institution of teacher education itself might need to undergo the

type of change process Garmon theorized in his 2005 research documenting the stages experienced as pre-service teachers change their attitudes and dispositions toward diversity such that they are subsequently able to change the cultures of their classrooms.

Educational Psychology and Teaching
Philosophy Development:

An ERIC search for articles in November of 2011 regarding research on the development of the teaching philosophy statement found only 12 articles that dealt specifically with teaching philosophies. Of these articles, five were how-to articles describing how teachers and university faculty should go about writing a statement of teaching philosophy. Seven were geared toward post-secondary contexts. Of the studies that conducted research regarding specific aspects of the teaching philosophy and its development, one reported on the results of an exercise that allowed teachers to reflect on how their philosophies fit into traditional western theories of education (Beatty, 2009), one measured the correlation between science teachers' teaching philosophies and their use of inquiry based teaching strategies (Gilbert, 2009), one looked at the false assumptions related to the use of teaching philosophy statements in the post-secondary hiring and tenure processes (Pratt, 2005), one discussed the connections between college-level teachers' moral values as defined in their statements of teaching philosophy and their teaching practice (Fitzmaurice, 2008), and one looked at how ESL teachers changed their teaching philosophies as they gained teaching experience (Byrd, 2010). In 36 other articles, the teaching philosophy statement was only referred to in passing as one of

several components of a teaching portfolio or hiring package; the purpose and contents of the teaching philosophy statement were assumed to be understood.

In 1947, Van Petten Henderson advised in her introductory book on educational philosophy that,

The connection between philosophy, philosophy of education, and the work of a teacher has not always been recognized. One of the most hopeful signs, however, in the field of education today, is the growing conviction that every teacher needs a carefully formulated and intelligently criticized philosophy of education and that this philosophy of education must be rooted in philosophy itself. (p. vii)

Today a teaching philosophy is commonly seen as a description in narrative form that voices a teachers' conceptualization of teaching and learning, the methods related to these concepts and the views of the teaching process from a holistic perspective, including teacher and student roles, educational values, and instructional goals (Chism, 1997-1998; Goodyear & Allchin, 1998). There is rarely a connection made to true philosophical roots and in fact one study by Gay Maddin (2002) found after reviewing a large number of institutional guidelines for the construction of teaching philosophy statements that there appears to be a consensus as to basic form and content that is shared widely across institutions in the United States, Canada, and Europe, but this form does not require an explicit connection to or understanding of educational philosophy. In general, teachers are asked to define their perspectives on the nature of teaching and learning, the aims of education, and the methods used to achieve these aims. Few asked for a discussion of the nature of knowledge or the underlying values and beliefs used to justify aims and means. Only one school in the study (Nottingham) advised teachers to reflect on the foundational questions regarding their values and beliefs and *why* they

teach as they do (Maddin, 2002). Therefore, as Pratt (2005) concludes, even though a “philosophy” statement is requested, most teachers produce a document that is a description rather than a philosophical analysis of their teaching. According to Pratt, this fact is critical when one considers that philosophical “norms” are not the same for all teachers or all cultures (2005). Pratt also believes that “A philosophy of teaching statement should reveal the deeper structures and values that give meaning and justification to an approach to teaching” (2005, p. 32). Beatty, Leigh, and Dean explain that understanding educational philosophies is central a teacher’s ability to gain context and perspective on teaching within the community at large because so much of daily classroom practice is rooted in a teacher’s philosophical beliefs. Therefore it is essential for teachers to name in an explicit way all of the ideas and concepts that contribute to their teaching philosophy and their links to educational philosophy so that they can see perspectives and differences they may have taken for granted (2009a). Ramsey and Fitzgibbons concur, saying,

Who we are, what we believe, and what assumptions we hold about students, the material, and the world significantly affect what we do in the classroom, no matter the course content or teaching style. This recognition provides the major impetus continually to question and rethink who we are in the world and what we want our relationship with students and the subject matter to be. (2005, p. 345)

Many finely-honed concepts exist in the field of Western philosophy for engaging in critical analysis of one’s teaching beliefs. Metaphysics, epistemology and axiology are three of the most prominent concepts. *Metaphysics* examines the nature of that which is considered real. It examines the causes of universal events, basic human nature, the nature of god, and why we exist. These fields within metaphysics are known as

cosmology, anthropology, theology, and ontology (McKenna, 1995). *Epistemology* is the philosophical concept dealing with how we acquire, structure, evaluate, and explain knowledge (McKenna, 1995). *Axiology* covers the philosophical concepts of ethics and aesthetics and deals with how we evaluate our choices or make “worthy” choices (the word in Greek from which axiology takes its derivation) (Beatty, Leigh, and Dean, 2009a). What many teachers may not realize and what the literature overlooks (according to Beatty) is the fact that the building blocks for what are considered “eminently personal” reflections on teaching identity are in fact “drawn from the lexicon of basic educational philosophies” which are commonly shared among those in a teaching community (Beatty, et al., 2009a). However, it is also important to understand that even when shared values exist, there is still a wide variety of meanings for these values among individual teachers (Beatty, et al., 2009a). Additionally, Cajete (2000), Peat (2005), Mihesua (2004), and Deloria (2006) caution that Native philosophies may differ significantly from those of Western constructs. Cajete explains: “...philosophies are culturally relative, founded on the worldview of the culture from which they come and which they were created to serve” (2000, p.64).

Even though teaching philosophies often fail to recognize their philosophical roots, thematic analysis of the philosophy statement does show that these instruments are usually strongly rooted in moral values and commonly reinforce the importance of honesty, respect, responsibility, care, and compassion in good teaching (Fitzmaurice, 2008). They also show that while teachers often emphasize the value of teaching strategies and technical knowledge, they are also very in tune with the moral purpose of

their profession (Fitzmaurice, 2008). In specific cultures, teachers may also place emphasis on unique cultural values that are important within the community (Cajete, 2000). Because crafting teaching philosophies asks teachers to reflect on these important building blocks for teaching, they act as essential tools for self-development (Beatty, et al., 2009b). As Brookfield (1995) and Ramsey & Fitzgibbons (2005) report, the reflective process necessary to create and/or revise a teaching philosophy may actually be the most important element of the document generation because it engenders such a boost in self-awareness. In critical contexts, Freire calls this type of reflection a component of the conscientization process which must then be followed by action. As Palmer (1997) notes, the ability of a teacher to enact and inspire identity and integrity in the classroom comes from the ability of the teacher to identify these attributes within his or her own beliefs. Thus the articulation of a teaching philosophy becomes somewhat of an “autobiographical project” (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p.14). This process of knowing one’s self is tantamount to being able to teach others, however, over time, the teaching process may become habitual for teachers and “When our teaching is not consciously reassessed from time to time, our strengths and weaknesses in teaching remain unexamined” (Grasha, 1996). Therefore, Beatty (2009b) argues that teachers must frequently engage in “values clarification” (a theory popular in the late 1960s -1970s) (Raths, Harriman,& Simon, 1978) so that they can uncover “their own values through the process of honest self-examination and open-minded search for truths about life” (Kinnier, 1995, p.19). Following such an exercise, “the power and purpose of a personal philosophy statement lies not in its eloquence or its fit with some current discourse of

teaching, but in its ability to reveal what is hidden, yet essential, to understanding someone's teaching” (Pratt, 2005). It is for this reason that this dissertation study will embark on a journey to examine the roots of teaching philosophies of teachers who are viewed by parents and students as successful educators of American Indian children.

Methodological Influences

Gloria Ladson-Billings published a 1994 book entitled *The Dreamkeepers*, in which she discusses the results of a case study she performed involving a number of “Successful teachers of African American children”. In this study Ladson-Billings took a thorough look at teachers and their methods from a within-the-community perspective in order to document how cultural context influenced teachers and teaching outcomes for African American students who experienced achievement gaps and other academic, social, and economic barriers similar to those of many American Indian students. Ladson evaluated data gathered through personal interviews, classroom observation, and teacher group reflection on classroom videos and drew conclusions about teachers and their methods and philosophies based on their own histories and practice. Ladson’s study achieves many of the same goals proposed for this research and is a valuable model of case study research from which to draw.

Patterned after Ladson-Billings’ study of exemplary African American teachers, this study will seek to incorporate analysis done by participating teachers as a way to represent “a new scholarly tradition” (p.146) “consistent with the ways in which people of [American Indian] descent see and experience the world”(p.235-36). Furthermore, on

the recommendation of Ladson-Billings, the researcher will engage in a discussion with participating teachers about the purpose of the study and the importance of seeing American Indian students as subjects of the research rather than objects, not making comparisons between American Indian and white students, working under the assumption that American Indian students and parents exhibit “normative behavior”, and avoiding the urge to utilize the “language of pathology” when discussing American Indian students and parents (p.146). This approach means that the primary focus of the study will be on authenticity and reality as perceived by American Indian parents/students and their recommended teachers, rather than on absolute objectivity. Thus my role as the researcher, similar to Ladson-Billings’, will be to represent the voices of the focus group and teacher interviews as accurately as possible understanding that, “no inquiry is ever without initial values, beliefs, conceptions, and driving assumptions regarding the matter under investigation” (Sirotnik, 1991, p.241).

In recent years the volume of research on different aspects of culture and its role in education has increased and become more widespread. In general, it is agreed that there is a difference in expectations, characteristics, behaviors, and values among cultures and these differences can have significant effects, both positive and negative, on teachers, students, and educational outcomes. Studies on these effects underscore the importance of understanding education in diverse contexts (Banks, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2003). The subtle nature of culture and its complexities also supports the value of the use of qualitative methods to develop understanding of various components of education in diverse contexts because qualitative structures allow us to study in depth the

phenomena that is contemporary American education. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define research that is qualitative as:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.3)

This focus group process relies upon community member evaluation and community nomination. The process of “community nomination” was coined by Foster (1991), and implies that researchers are relying upon relevant community members to make authentic evaluations of people, places, or things within their own contextual setting. The decision to rely upon community member evaluation of teaching effectiveness was made because it has been documented that systems, like public schools, put in place by dominant cultures in colonized communities bias those involved in them to the point that they are unable to make evaluations free of the Western language and epistemic frameworks of the system (Grande, 2004). Asking teachers and administrators to perform these evaluations can produce useful information, but this information may be overtly biased by dominant culture and its ideas of educational norms. Therefore, in this study it is essential that the research be conducted from the platform of the culture, in order to ensure authenticity and correct values mismatches that can sometimes occur in cross-cultural research. Because cross-cultural research must pay special attention to humanizing methods, it is important to record the voices of those most intimately affected

by the methods and outcomes of education within their communities. Even though these parents and students may not have formal instruction in the evaluation of teacher qualities, Bendig (1953) has shown that students can reliably discriminate differences in teacher competency and the relationship between teacher competency and student achievement. These findings support the idea that American Indian students and parents will be able to provide competent evaluation of teacher effectiveness for this study and will nominate model teachers who are effective according to the values of the community.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter 3 will outline the research context in the state of Montana and at Montana State University. This will be followed by a description of the design of the study including the selection and function of a focus group for the nomination of effective teachers of American Indian students. It will also delineate the semi-structured interview format for the case study analysis of the conscientization processes of these teachers. Readers will also find a description of the focus group and effective teacher participants as well as a statement of the researcher's positionality. Procedures for data collection are defined with detailed protocol for both the focus group and case study interviews included in the appendix. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the manner in which the data will be prepared for analysis.

In Montana, American Indian communities known for their oral traditions, the role of story is central to teaching and learning and pivotal to navigating life in a good way. In these cultures story is not merely a collection of sentimental reminiscing with spotty connections to everyday life. Instead story, the oral narrative, is the single most important vehicle in the transmission of moral, ethical, and behavioral expectations (Two Leggins, 2011). As such most tribes have names for the different types of story from which one can construct meaning and guidance.

In Apsaalooke culture, there are three types of stories: baaéetchiichiwaa, "ones that are retold", baaéetchiwataale, "true narratives" and baleiichiweé, "one's story".

Baaéetchiichiwaa are considered origin stories, baaéetchiwataale are oral histories and baleiichiweé are stories “about contemporary events witnessed by the storyteller or the accomplishments of living people” (Little Big Horn Living Histories Project, 2011).

The qualitative case study methods of this research are designed to respect the manner in which each teacher’s oral narrative, their baleiichiweé, serves to convey ethics, values, and beliefs related to their classroom pedagogy. Utilization of the life history timeline allows effective teachers to tell the story of how they have come to know the theories they base their teaching upon. Additionally, semi-structured interviews gather a rich illustration of the events and experiences that have become the catalysts of conscientization as teachers continually work to improve their effectiveness in teaching American Indian students. As these case studies collect oral narratives, they contribute to a tradition of coming to understand through the powerful socializing tool of the spoken word.

Research Context

The National Education Association reports that over 93% of American Indian/Alaska Native students attend public schools. According to the Montana Office of Public Instruction 2011-12 Directory of Schools, 141, 693 students attend public schools in the state. 16,724 students in Montana public schools are American Indian, comprising 11.8% of Montana students. (6.2% of the Montana state population is American Indian.) OPI also reports that 40 school districts report 50-100 percent American Indian students within their school population; 13 districts report 30-50 percent American Indian students

within their school population; 29 districts report 10-30 percent American Indian students within their school population. In summary, there are a total of 419 districts in Montana, 82 of which report at least 10% of the student population is American Indian. (Fall 2010 American Indian Student Achievement Report, OPI).

There are currently 10,578 teachers teaching in the state, and 285 (2.79%) of these are American Indian. There are also 659 public school administrators and of these 27 (4.15%) are American Indian. These numbers, reported by the Office of Public Instruction, represent full time, certified teachers and do not reflect uncertified teachers, teacher aids or paraprofessionals. In order to meet the state and national requirements for “highly qualified teachers”, teachers of core subject areas must have a bachelor’s degree and a Montana teaching license in their respective subject area.

There are 825 accredited public schools in Montana and of these, 77 are on American Indian reservations. There are 14 non-public, state-accredited schools in Montana. Of these 5 are located in American Indian communities. There are 119 non-public, non-accredited schools in Montana. Of these, 21 are located in American Indian communities. There are 2 tribally controlled schools in Montana (Montana Office of Public Instruction 2011-12 Directory of Schools). There is also a contingency of students who are homeschooled in the state. The exact number of American Indian students in non-public schools is unknown, as are the number of American Indian students who may be homeschooled, although OPI states the number as a general estimate is “very small” (Broaddus, personal communication, 1/15/2011). Of these American Indian students,

48.6% will graduate from high school (EPE Research Center, 2010 Quality Counts Report) and 21% will graduate from college (OPI).

Montana State University is home to just over 500 American Indian students. A larger portion of these students are non-traditional and/or have children than the mainstream student population at the university. These students hail from tribes across the United States, but roughly two-thirds of the students consider themselves members of tribes originating in Montana (MSU Native American Studies Department). The other one-third is from other North American tribes. A 2011 report by the MSU Office of Planning and Analysis (OPA) states there are 545 American Indian students attending MSU, 495 of whom have not identified a specific tribal affiliation, and 48 of whom have reported affiliations with at least one of Montana's 13 tribes. According to OPA, students may identify as more than one race or ethnicity and for the 2011 report, students who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native are included whether or not they identify with another race or ethnicity as well.

Design

Grounded in critical pedagogy and case study, the methodology of this research involved a focus group of American Indian parents and students (Phase 1) and a small group of teachers nominated by this focus group (Phase 2). The nominations from Phase 1 provided the instrumental cases representing the collective case study. Focus group research included a guided discussion of characteristics of effective teachers and nomination of effective teachers to be studied. This approach, linked to critical

pedagogy, focuses on new knowledge, grounded in the experiences of community members and teachers, produced through meaningful dialogue and collective reflection allowing the “culture circle” to turn collected observations and statements into critical epistemic knowledge (Critical Pedagogy on the Web, 2011). The precipitating case studies provide a general understanding of the phenomenon in addition to allowing for analytical generalizations through detailed description of each case and thematic analysis across cases (Stake, 1994, 1995).

Phase 1 of the research into effective teachers employed an inquiry framework structured as: (a) a semi-structured narrative interview process to collect participants’ unique voices regarding the formulation of living educational theories within specific contexts that have led to current teaching philosophies, and (b) creation of and reflection upon a biographical timeline of critical moments and experiences deemed strategic to the formation of these theories and subsequent philosophy. The value of inquiry-based research such as this, is that it “elicits teacher’s voice through narrative interviews [and] is based on the notion that teachers are story tellers who come to know themselves in relation to others through shared stories” (Nevin, Bradshaw, Cardelle-Elawar, & Greenburg, 2009, p.7). In addition, case studies of teachers by Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1991), Berman (1991), and Dollase (1992) show that teachers teach in response to how they learned. Thus, Brookfield (2002) notes, “Clearly, then, studying autobiographical experiences of learning can help explain to teachers why they gravitate to certain ways of working and instinctively turn away from others” (p33).

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview method of data collection best served the goals of this research because it allowed for open communication in authentic terms, using cultural language and context. Quantitative methods that employ fixed-responses require the respondents to “fit their experiences and feelings into the researcher’s categories...[and] can distort what respondents really mean or experienced by so completely limiting their response choices” (Patton, p.349). Because of the cross-cultural nature of this study, there was already substantial danger of distortion and therefore this research employed the strengths of qualitative methods to protect the authenticity of the data. This study was not research presented to a vague or passive audience because parents, students, and teachers all had a vested interest in voicing what works for students and American Indian people had a substantially invested stance because of the history and current status of education for American Indians students. Therefore, the semi-structured interview methods of the research honored narrative influences and contextual definitions of relevant terms as essential to the preservation of participant voice. In addition, attention to a humanistic perspective on evaluation allowed this qualitative inquiry to respect the fact that each person and community is unique and each deserves respect (Patton, 2002). In addition, humanistic approaches communicated respect by allowing the participants’ own words and opinions to be the source of the data that was analyzed (Patton, 2002). These methods were also used in an attempt to “avoid some of the pitfalls of researcher bias and distortion of cultural phenomena” (Ladson-Billings, 1991).

This research focused on how the study could empower American Indians and their teachers rather than be controlled or judged by the research (Patton, 2002). A humanistic focus also engaged the idea that people and communities should be understood holistically requiring in-depth research that encompassed the larger picture for participants (Patton, 2002).

A semi structured interview protocol was used to ensure that relatively the same line of questioning was used for each participant (Patton, 2002). (See Table 1.) It was important that the interview design allow the researcher to establish a conversational style with participants that followed established patterns of communication in American Indian communities (Primarily by beginning conversations informally and inquiring about family). The interview guide also allowed flexibility so that the researcher could state questions in multiple ways in order to increase understanding. This responsiveness is particularly important in cross-cultural studies and was necessary because it was believed that the researcher's immersion in the educational field might cause the use of some phrases that are the jargon of the profession or of the mainstream culture. Objectivity in the interview and analysis stages was improved by performing pilot studies and by recording each interview and taking careful field notes immediately following each interview, in addition to utilizing member checking functions in all phases of the data collection. Figure 3 diagrams the alignment of research questions with focus group and case study interview questions. The solid blue blocks represent the research questions of this study. The light pink questions were framed to focus group participants in Phase 1 and the light aqua questions were framed to collective case study participants (the

teachers nominated by the focus group) in Phase 2. See Appendix A for complete protocols for the focus group and case study interviews.

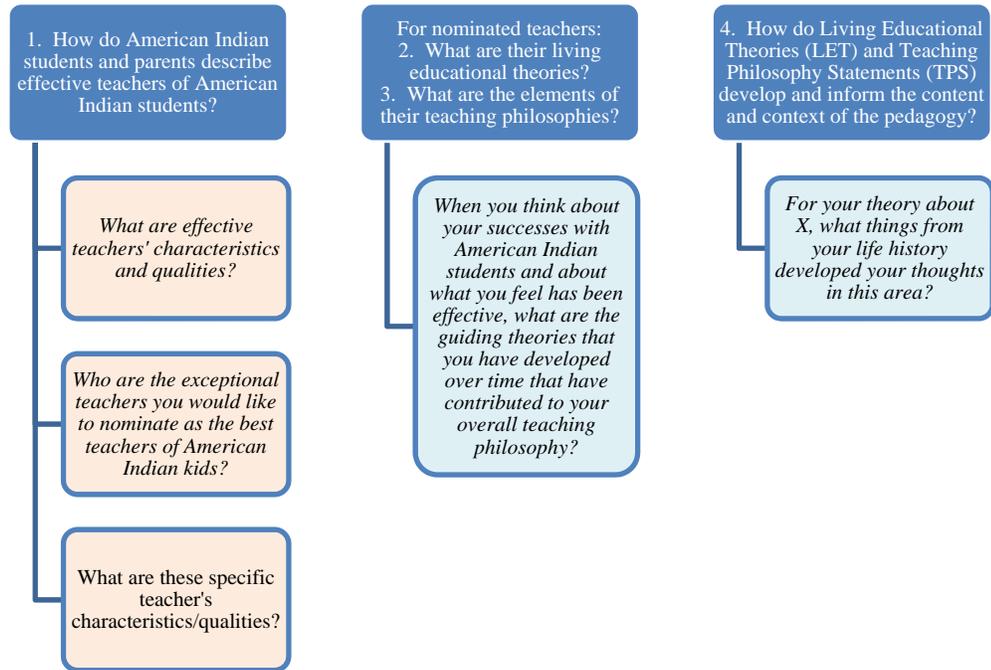


Figure 3: Alignment of Research and Interview Questions.

As explained in Figures 3 and 4, this study involved two phases of interviews. Broad criteria were used in the selection of the focus group participants in Phase 1, while very specific criteria were used to enroll participants in the Phase 2 case studies. Figure 4 is a diagram of the enrollment criteria for each group. It is important to note that focus group participants could meet any OR all of the listed criteria, but case study teacher participants had to meet ALL listed criteria.

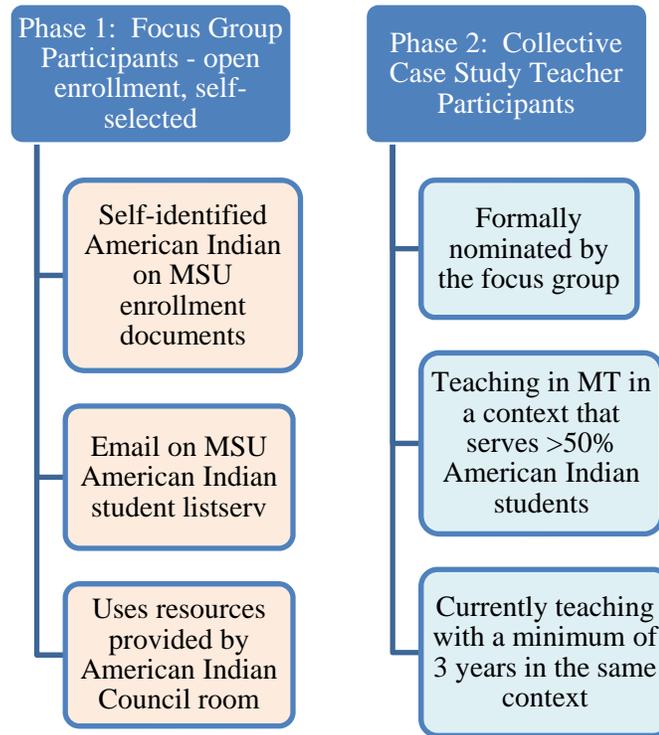


Figure 4: Criteria for Enrollment of Participants.

Participant Characteristics

The American Indian parent/student focus group members who participated in Phase 1 of the researcher were members of the Montana State University American Indian student community population. They were allowed to be either undergraduate or graduate students, but they had to be enrolled in the university (either part time or full time) and had to be self-identified as American Indian on MSU enrollment forms or they had to be the spouse or adult relative of an MSU student who met the above criteria. Participants could have children, however, this was not a requirement for participation; it simply provided some participants with an additional perspective to contribute to the discussion. Participants in the focus group were self-selected from the total MSU

American Indian population (and the related community) as a result of a personal decision respond to the open invitation for American Indian participants that was distributed by email and poster.

The size of the focus group for this study was dependent upon the number of invitation respondents. Even though there are more than 500 American Indian students at MSU, recent trends in participation in events open to all American Indian students had indicated that about 50 students was a likely maximum (MSU Native American Studies Department). One reason for this was because while students may designate their formal ethnicity as American Indian, many choose to maintain an assimilated identity in the university setting and do not affiliate with Native specific groups or activities. This is illustrated by the fact that only 48 of the 545 American Indian students at MSU have divulged a specific tribal affiliation (MSU OPA). Because the potential to recruit a large number of participants for the focus groups existed, the researcher was prepared to break focus group participants into small groups of 8-10 people in order to facilitate open discussion and ensure equitable participation.

The nominated teacher participants in Phase 2 of this study were teachers who were formally nominated by name and last known location during the focus group interview. Focus group members also provided a rationale for nomination of each teacher. In order to meet the criteria for inclusion in the study, each teacher had to be involved in full-time K-12 education. They could hail from public, private, or tribal schools and had to have direct experience teaching American Indian students in a Montana school that served 50% or more American Indian students. They also had to

have taught in the classroom setting for a minimum of 3 years in one qualifying context. The classroom setting, however, could vary if necessary according to each educational system's conceptualization of the learning environment. Teachers could teach anywhere along the continuum from mainstream methods and standardized curricula to indigenous methods and ethnocentric curricula. Most importantly, teachers had to be among those nominated by the American Indian parent/student focus group.

Positionality

The researcher has been a licensed teacher for 12 years. I have lived in the state of Montana my entire life, except for 2 years during childhood when my father was attending a Minnesota university. During this time I have taught elementary, middle, high school, and college level students in both formal and informal settings. These students have come from many backgrounds, but a large portion of them have been American Indian, primarily representing Montana tribes. I have worked with American Indian student support programs for the past 10 years and have also been employed by and collaborated with the Montana Office of Public Instruction on Indian Education For All model curriculum and professional development for teachers. I have been a teacher and presenter for Native Nexus, an American Indian Education consulting business, since 2006. My husband of 12 years is Apsaalooke and together we have three children who are all enrolled members of the federally-recognized tribe. I was adopted (in the traditional Apsaalooke way) by an Apsaalooke matriarch early in my teaching career and have been guided and mentored in Apsaalooke culture by her and my other Apsaalooke

relatives. I am intrinsically interested in the subject of this research because I love my students, my own children, and my husband's home community and the struggles we face daily on a number of levels are intimately tied to education and its success or failure. While it is my goal to conduct objective research, I also know that every caring teacher and parent is compelled to look for and find the good that in some way offers a hope and a promise for the future physical, spiritual, social, and emotional wellness of those for whom we care. It is my belief that education is an integral part of happiness and good quality of life.

Procedures

The procedures involved in this research required a two part study. Phase 1 utilized a focus group format to collect community-centered views on effective teaching and to solicit nominations of effective teachers to be interviewed in Phase 2 of the research. Phase 2 consisted of semi-structured interviews and timeline representations gathered from a collective group of teachers forming the case studies. Phase 1 and Phase 2 each also employed a pilot of the protocols to increase the clarity of the studies and avoid unexpected outcomes.

Pilot Studies

A pilot of the focus group protocol for Phase 1 occurred prior to the planned focus group meeting in order to test the structure of the discussion, the clarity of discussion cues, and the flow of the processes. It was carried out with members of the relevant

American Indian population. Those involved in the pilot were not members of the focus group. There was concern that if the pilot group became a part of the focus group this might influence the behavior of the research participants because of their pre-exposure to the study (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). The pilot study also allowed the researcher to make adjustments to the protocol prior to the formal study, thereby helping to ensure the validity and cultural relevance of the focus group process. Pilot study outcomes are reported in Chapter 4.

A pilot of the case study interview for Phase 2 was also undertaken prior to beginning the formal case study research. A person whose characteristics were similar to the teachers who were interviewed was asked to participate in the pilot study. This pilot was used to test the design of the case study portion of the research, again to ensure validity and cultural relevance and to improve clarity. This pilot study provided valuable insight allowing for amendments or additions to the protocol improved the chances of a clear outcome for the research.

American Indian Parent/Student
Focus Group, Phase 1

Focus group participants for Phase 1 were collected through an open invitation by email and public poster. The Montana State University listserv of Native students was used to disseminate the email, therefore all students who were self-identified as American Indian on MSU enrollment forms received the communication. The notices invited members of the MSU American Indian community to participate in a small-group discussion of K-12 teachers who are effective in teaching American Indian students,

listing characteristics, strengths, assets, talents, expertise, abilities, etc. Participants were also invited to nominate teachers they viewed as model effective teachers of American Indian students. The researcher conducted the Phase 1 focus group according to the focus group protocol listed in Appendix A. Each participant was given a consent form detailing the aims of the study, the volunteer nature of their participation, and a guarantee of their protected rights as participants such as the right to withdraw from the study at any time. (See Appendix B for a copy of this consent form.) Only discussion responses from consenting participants were utilized in the study. During the discussion, the researcher will record all of the qualities mentioned by the focus group members. When the discussion of effective teachers reached a point of saturation, the researcher asked each small group (8-10 people) to consider teachers who exemplified these characteristics/qualities. The nomination of model teachers followed the discussion of effective teacher qualities and nominators were asked to talk about and give specific examples that demonstrated the qualities of the teacher being nominated.

The full discussions were tape recorded and transcribed. Following transcription, 5 focus group participants were asked to review the transcript for accuracy. The researcher then conducted a content analysis of the transcription. Analysis generated a community-centered list of characteristics/qualities and nominations of effective teachers of American Indian students. This list was used as the reference for selecting and enrolling teachers as members of a purposive sample for the case study portion of the research. Eight teachers meeting the above named criteria were asked to enroll in the study. Six consented and were interviewed.

Effective Teachers Case Studies, Phase 2

Prior to conducting the case study interviews, the researcher prepared for the experiences by reflecting on personal moments of conscientization and life history. This helped sensitize the researcher to the manner in which conscientization may occur and how best to facilitate a discussion regarding conscientization. Additionally the researcher noted that personal exchange of stories helped to awaken memories of experiences that were not understood as conscientization at the time they occurred. However, retrospective sharing with the acquired understanding of conscientization clarified these experiences as moments of conscientization that had in fact impacted pedagogy. With this awareness in mind, the researched moved into Phase 2 of the research.

The participants involved in the collective case study were nominated by the focus group of American Indian parents and students as model effective teachers of American Indian students. In this study each teacher was nominated by focus group members because of his/her teaching effectiveness (as measured through the cultural and community lens of “non-experts”) within a specific context. The teachers were representative of specific culture groups and taught in contexts specifically involving American Indian students. Teachers represented on the compiled list of nominations from the focus group transcript were contacted about their interest in participating in this case study about their living educational theories and teaching philosophies and about their eligibility based on the criteria listed under participant characteristics (a minimum of 3 years teaching experience in one Montana system with at least 50% American Indian students). Each consenting teacher was asked to participate in one 2-hour interview (see

Appendix B for consent forms and Appendix A for the Case Study Semi-Structured Interview Protocol).

In the semi structured case study interviews of Phase 2, teachers were interviewed at a time and location each had selected. The researcher followed cultural conversation patterns by beginning each interview with a period of “informal” conversation. Being sensitive to situational factors the researcher requested permission to begin the interview and to audio record it. When the participant consented to proceeding, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the importance of seeing American Indian students as subjects of the research rather than objects. The researcher noted that the teacher was not being asked to make comparisons between American Indian and white students, and was working under the assumption that American Indian students and parents exhibit “normative behavior”. The research explained her commitment to avoiding the urge to utilize the “language of pathology” when discussing American Indian students and parents (Ladson-Billings, 2004). The researcher also explained in basic terms that the interview would involve a discussion of the living educational theories of effective teachers. The researcher explained that an educational theory is a belief that directs what a teacher does. The researcher provided examples of theories and how they may be related to a practice when needed. The researcher also explained conscientization in simple terms and gave an example of a personal conscientizing experience. This was done to set the stage for an exchange of stories related to finding one’s way as an effective teacher and to initiate recognition of moments of conscientization as none of the participants were familiar with the term. After this

explanation, the participant was asked for basic demographic information (ethnicity, teaching subject, school type and location, years teaching, previous teaching posts) followed by the interview questions listed in the protocol (see Appendix A). After this discussion of living educational theories, the researcher worked with each teacher to document on a timeline critical moments that contributed to the development of each theory discussed by the teacher. Stories of mutual experiences were shared between the researcher and the participant to encourage further reflection and deeper uncovering of conscientization spurred by the ability to see one's major life events mapped out graphically. Having the opportunity to move through reflection on their teaching paired with a visual of their life histories allowed teachers to see the bigger picture of their teaching influences as none of them had done prior. The researcher concluded the interview by asking the teacher to reflect on his/her teaching philosophy to see if there were any elements of the philosophy that were not represented in the theories and critical moments that were discussed. The participant was invited to elaborate if necessary. Following each interview, the researcher immediately took time to record observations in the form of field notes.

Each interview recording from Phase 2 was transcribed and the transcript was sent to each participant with a request for feedback by phone or email about the accuracy of the transcription. Each participant was invited to clarify any concepts deemed unclear or misleading in the transcript. The researcher then made any necessary additions or corrections to the transcript.

Following the interview and transcript approval processes, the researcher analyzed the data and created a final report of the results which was given to each of the teacher participants. A final report was also be emailed to all MSU American Indian students. It is important that research involving indigenous communities be responsive to these communities by ensuring that communities receive the results of research involving them, allowing them to utilize and benefit from any information collected (Mihesua, 1998). Many indigenous communities resent research that seemingly “uses” minority people as subjects without concern for responsive and/or collaborative relationships that may develop as a result of research processes (Mihesua, 1998). For this reason the researcher also made every effort to ensure that all participants were thanked in a manner appropriate to the culture.

Case Study Size and Precision

Because Phase 2 of this study was a case study, in-depth exploration of the life histories and teaching philosophies of nominated teachers was best achieved by limiting the study to a small number of cases that became the source of thick, rich qualitative data. Therefore a purposive sample of 8 teachers was sought to participate in this study. Six of the eight eligible teachers consented to be interviewed.

Preparing Data for Analysis

The most formidable challenge to the validity of this research resulted from the use of cross-cultural methods. Larimore & McClellan (2005) warn that “Non-Native

researchers must first recognize that they, like all other people, have their own biases and should seek out ways to conduct research that is culturally sensitive and Native-centered” (p.5). Likewise, Patton (2002) notes that a good way to begin analysis is to list and define words or phrases and practices that are specific to the participants. Therefore, understanding the results of this study began by analyzing the perspective of the participants within the indigenous context and according to their language and world view. Thus, the researcher applied a definition of terms from an indigenous perspective to the analysis of results to privilege the authentic context of the participants over that of the researcher. This process was vital to the validity of the cross-cultural research.

The quality and validity of this study were further supported by respecting the non-dominant perspectives of participants and using participants’ words to substantiate the results. The researcher worked to ensure competency as an interviewer and remained committed to the responsibility to be responsive and accountable to the people interviewed. During data collection, participant voices were recorded and transcribed verbatim and participants were encouraged to review transcripts and make additions or corrections to ensure the preservation of intent and avoid misinterpretation. Further measures in data analysis were taken, such as detailed coding processes and colleague review, to ensure objectivity and openness to new and alternative perspectives. The researcher also provided a detailed description of positionality within the study because in qualitative study the researcher, herself, is the instrument that must be validated (Patton, 2002).

The data from this study was analyzed inductively to preserve the accuracy of participant perspectives and to create general principles based on a body of specific instances. Each phase of analysis involved multiple readings of the transcribed semi-structured interviews. In each reading of the transcribed responses, notes regarding key points, common aspects, and unique or divergent statements were collected in the page margins. More specific coding followed these initial readings according to the descriptions of analysis below. The diagram provided in Figure 5 from *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Creswell, 2007) provides a basic visual of the process used.

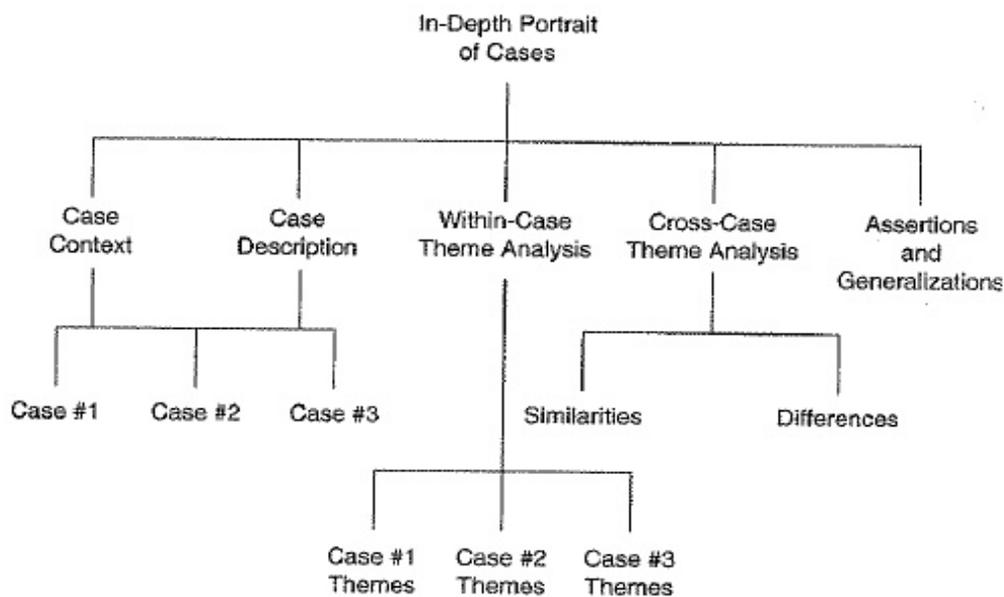


Figure 5: Template for Coding a Case Study Using the Collective Case Approach.

For Phase 1, the focus group data was analyzed for within case themes. Then cross-case theme analysis was used to compare characteristics/qualities identified by the

focus group with themes identified in other significant research as well as case study teachers' themes regarding philosophies/theories.

For Phase 2, discussion regarding the Living Educational Theories and life history timelines was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Life history diagrams were preserved both on paper and scanned as electronic documents. Following transcription, teachers reviewed the transcripts and made changes or additions to better ensure clarity and verity. The researcher then reviewed each transcript and isolated each Living Educational Theory Statement (LETS) as the unit of analysis. For this research a LETS is considered one belief about some aspect of education that directs the action of a teacher. Each LETS was meaningful enough to stand alone and be distinctly different from preceding and following ideas. Each LETS divided out by the researcher was evaluated by a colleague to ensure the LETS meets the above criteria. All discrepancies were discussed and resolved by the colleague and researcher. Each event or experience listed on the timeline or in the interview text was attached to a corresponding LETS. All LETS were cross-referenced and compared in order to evaluate common and divergent theory among participants. Experiences and events were also cross-referenced and compared to identify common and divergent experiences and events among participants. Field notes were reviewed and used to enhance the data. In reporting on this data the researcher worked to create a richly descriptive report based on the careful analysis of each case study.

The interview techniques used in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 led to saturation points in data collection, creating a significant body of data from which to view emergent patterns. Negative and/or extreme statements which seemed to present perspectives that

were significantly different from the majority of perspectives represented were carefully examined and after carefully transcribing and coding all recorded data, the researcher looked for alternative ways in which to categorize or conceptualize the data.

The analysis of the data from Phases 1 and 2 was intended to provide an illustration of the manner in which the successful teachers nominated for the case study formed their personal philosophies and experienced conscientization influenced by formal education, life experiences, and contributions from the cultural context and how these philosophies and conscientization experiences helped them to exhibit the characteristics/qualities valued by the focus group. The study also provided a list of the elements that are common across these teaching philosophies as a platform for examining an inductive model of the conscientization process and of teaching philosophy formation that could be presented to all teachers as a means of improving education for American Indian students.

Summary

Exploration into the depths of these teachers' conscientization processes provided valuable documentation of effective theories, teaching philosophies, and pedagogy. Detailed and explicit profiles of this type provide especially valuable illustrations that build our knowledge base about the foundational experiences, theories and teaching philosophies of effective teachers teaching this population and provide valuable insight to the influences that mold effective teachers in these contexts.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Focus Group Pilot

A pilot study of the focus group protocol was conducted. The pilot study found that parent/student participants were able to list qualities and characteristics of effective teachers of American Indian students. They mentioned that effective teachers were supportive, patient, resilient, persistent, hopeful, good listeners, helped to establish a belief in one's self, used activity-based instructional methods, and invested time in one-on-one interactions with individual students. However, some participants expressed some frustration with being able to come up with the right way to describe the essence of a teaching quality or characteristic. It seemed that this was somewhat related to times when the participants were trying to summarize affective traits. Often they ended up creating a description by saying what was not a characteristic. For example, one participant said, "I liked [Teacher X] because a lot of teachers at the school seemed really strict and she seemed, well, I guess she made school comfortable because she was more laid back." Another participant said, "Some teachers were not understanding, it was like they didn't really get that Indians had other stuff, situations, outside of school. [Mr. X], it seemed like he got along with all the Indian students." Through further questioning, the participant came to the conclusion that the teacher had a peaceful demeanor and an open and accepting disposition.

Participants were eager to suggest the names of teachers they felt were model examples of effective teachers of American Indian students. They all showed passion and thankfulness when talking about their experiences with their nominees and felt that their current success as a college student was at least in part due to the nominee. Participants seemed to have a sense of where their nominees were currently residing and how their careers had progressed since the students had last had contact with them. The participants offered the best places to look for the nominees and also had suggestions about family members and other acquaintances who they believed had continued contact with the nominees. This shows that the nominees are fairly well-known in their respective communities and that the nominees will be traceable for case study follow-up.

Following the pilot focus group, participants were asked about the merits of the methodology. On the whole they felt that it was well structured and would allow participants to provide thorough feedback. They expressed concern about how large or small the focus group would be, fearing that students might not be interested in attending the focus group or that there might be too many people attending making the group unwieldy. They were reassured by the fact that not more than 10 people would be participating at any one table. They did not have any ideas for improving participation other than administering a survey to classes in the Native American Studies field. The pilot focus group participants also considered the students they expected might attend and thought that there would probably be some very vocal students and some students whose voices might possibly be repressed. As a way to ensure that everyone attending had a voice, they suggested letting participants know that they could submit

characteristics/qualities and teacher nominations on paper or talk one-on-one with me after the initial meeting if they did not feel comfortable speaking up during the focus group discussion.

Based on pilot study feedback, the focus group protocol was amended to include the option to submit qualities and characteristics and nominations on a form made available during the focus group.

Focus Group Results

The American Indian Council Room (AIC) bears the auspicious title of Room #1 Willson Hall. It is the only room on the first floor of the Hall whose second and third floors house the Native American Studies department in addition to the disciplines of psychology, math, history, English, and anthropology among others. The room has been the base for Native student support services for more than 35 years. Every free space of wall has been decorated with paintings and artwork depicting traditional Native American life. Some of the paintings even spill out onto the wall outside the room. Computers line the perimeter walls and all in use by American Indian students attending Montana State University. There is a tall stack of plastic drawers filled with crayons and coloring books for the children who accompany their student parents. Two small offices hug the corners of the room: one for the student advisor and a second for the director of Native programs. As I arrive to do my scheduled focus group, a large crowd of students have come to enjoy a lavish lunch from Famous Dave's (who happens to be an American Indian businessman) that signals the departure of the man who has been the director of

their program for 21 years. If I were to ask these students to nominate a college professor who has been particularly effective with Native students, they would likely all nominate him.

I originally thought this would be a great day to catch a lot of students who might want to participate in my study. I carefully planned the event, taking into account the social lubricant of food, to correspond with the Wednesday talking circle, an established time when a number of students were in the habit of being present at the AIC. I also invited each Native student to participate in the focus group through an email sent out to the Native student listserv. The idealness of this timing, however, was somewhat interrupted because the day I selected also happened to be the last day for their former, and well-esteemed advisor. This day the good-byes are long and loud and it would certainly be inappropriate to interrupt them, so I wait until three students indicate they are here specifically to talk to me about their perspectives on good teachers for Native students. I quickly notify everyone that I am conducting a focus group and that everyone is welcome to participate. There are several tables with clusters of students ready to talk, but the good-byes are somewhat disruptive. In spite of this, we sit down to have a focus group discussion. After a brief introduction to the study, it quickly becomes clear that each student has a story to tell and each waits patiently for the other to finish before beginning thoughts of their own. This process creates mini interviews that have some impact on the others, but there is not a lot of outward interaction within the discussion between participants. The first half of each mini interview addresses qualities and characteristics of teachers who are effective with American Indian students. Students

explain what they think this is or is not by relating this question to their own experiences or to the experiences of their children. During the second half of each mini interview, students talk about specific teachers they would nominate and why they admired these individuals.

As this small focus group convenes, I move to another table of students. A group of 11 sits down with me and again they fall into the pattern of each telling his/her story while the others listen and await a turn. Initially I wonder why this pattern did not occur during the pilot study, however, as I reflect I think that one of the contributing factors to this pattern is that my interviews directly follow a talking-circle. The talking-circle is a well-established event and Native students know that every Wednesday afternoon they can come to the AIC and participate in the group aimed at helping students cope with school stress and also engage in healthy healing activities. One of the important rules of the talking circle is that every person has the right to speak uninterrupted, in order to voice a complete thought or feeling. It seems that these rules have been brought into the processes I have initiated. This may be partially due to the fact that I have informed them that their answers will be anonymous and confidential, however, because they are participating in a group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. This disclaimer is similar to the request for confidentiality among group members used in the talking circle.

Following the focus group of 11, I continue to interview students in small groups, another five, then four, and then six. At the end of the day I have interviewed 29 enthusiastic students representing tribes including: Apsaalooke, Aleut, Piegan, Yakama, Atsina, Anishinaabe, Tsitsistas, Lakota, and Dine or in English, Crow, Aleut, Blackfeet,

Yakima, Gros Ventre, Chippewa Cree, Northern Cheyenne, Sioux, and Navajo. The students are a blend of undergraduate and graduate students and student/parents. Of the 17 students who complete an optional data form, eight are student/parents and nine are students. 14 are undergraduate students and three are graduate students. The students recommended 34 people as models of effective teachers of American Indian students.

Following the focus group interviews, the researcher completed an initial reading of the focus group transcripts. A second reading was done highlighting positive and negative teacher traits mentioned in the focus groups. During a third reading the researcher circled all of the key words in each sentence. Following these readings the researcher analyzed both the positive and negative traits as well as the most frequently used words and the context in which they were used. The research then reviewed Gilliland (1999) and Cleary and Peacock's (1998) research about effectively educating American Indian students. The researcher reviewed Gilliland's suggestions for effective teachers of American Indian students and noticed how they mirrored many focus group comments. Both Gilliland's comments and the focus group voices seemed to focus on affective and interpersonal traits rather than on specific pedagogy. The researcher also saw a connection between these and Goleman's (2006) categories of social intelligence. As a method of analysis the researcher applied Goleman's categories to Gilliland's suggestions and then to the focus group comments. See Table 1 below followed by an explanation of this comparison.

Analysis of Key Words

Review of the transcript showed the prevalence of a number of key words involved in the focus group's descriptions of teachers who are effective with American Indian students. These key words often had contextual and cultural grounding and attention was given to defining the manner in which these words were used. The following is a list of key words, their prevalence in the transcript, and the manner and context in which the words were used.

Learn. *Learn, learned, or learning* was the most prevalent word and it appeared 31 times in the focus group transcript. Five times the word was used in relation to teachers learning as a means of coming to understand the worldview and nuances of Native cultures and communities. Related to this type of learning was the idea that teachers were open seeing things from the students' perspectives. One student explained the impact this type of teacher learning had on students' abilities to learn.

The best thing that I saw was teachers that learned the culture and talked to the students. I know as far as middle school to high school students, and being a small community, we learn different. You may have 24 students in a classroom, and there's 24 different ways of teaching. The good teachers would find those ways and make sure they understood. The other teachers had a tougher time doing that. It was very frustrating for them, so those teachers didn't really last back home. And they were also the type that they didn't really want to learn who they were teaching to, or who they were teaching *for*, I guess.

This quote suggests that students feel that a teacher's ability to understand how students learn and to teach them accordingly is connected to understanding the culture from which they come.

Focus group participants also used the word *learn* to talk about students gaining information in an educational setting. A number of times students talked about methods teachers employed to help them *learn* subject specific material in a way that seemed to fit the way in which they felt they learned best. For example one student said,

He taught the way I learn. And that's where I had my most success, a teacher who took the time to see how students learn. Instead of just giving an assignment, saying, OK, this is how you do it, and if you had a question... 'What don't you understand? One plus one is two! Well, sometimes it's three. No, it's not!' So with this other teacher, he explained how we were learning.

It was also clear that students favored student-centered learning as seen in this description of learning in a math class:

What she did with her classes was she'd ask the students specifically what they wanted to be when they grew up. Some would say an architect, or an engineer, or just like physicist or something. And she'd build her curriculum for the semester around what her students wanted to be.

Focus group participants also used the word *learn* whenever they discussed teachers engaging them in activities and making the experience fun. Incidentally, the word *fun* was used 11 times to describe learning that was enjoyable because it was engaging and connected to both their interests and their relationship to the teacher. For example one student praised his teacher because,

He was really knowledgeable and made learning fun. He added personality to it, where it was fun to engage us as students. We'd joke around, and he'd draw squiggly faces with different-colored markers, like a cloud over the right answer or a Jaws in the parentheses...

Students also associated the ability to learn with intelligence, and problems learning material with ignorance that others might blame on their race or cultural identity. For example one student summarized his perception of how he felt teachers viewed

students who were unable to master material that he felt was often delivered poorly.

“There were even some teachers that were like, “You guys are Indian students – you don’t know how to learn. You guys have learning disabilities. You’re all dumb.””

Talk. *Talk, talked, or talking* was used 30 times to refer to intentional, one-on-one communication. *Talk* was important to the students because it marked intention on the part of the teacher to connect in a direct, but often informal way with the students. The use of *talk* also suggested a level of sharing that was emotionally responsive, respectful, genuine, and on-going, both in and out of the classroom. These qualities are seen as a student explains what he meant when he said a teacher really connected with him.

Just being on the same page, knowing he was there for us as students. Being comfortable around him, being yourself, talking to him, come out of your shell around him. He was never the type to make you feel uneasy or uncomfortable. Being personable and connecting as to who we are as people. Some teachers don’t have that quality; instead they’re distant and cold.

Teachers who failed to engage students through connected *talk* came off as reserved, intimidating, and less approachable.

Another student described how *talking* allowed a teacher to encourage, challenge, and support him.

And that’s how he talked to me. “Take chances; you never know. Don’t be afraid.” He said, “If you give up, that’s easy. But it’s harder to start back up.” It’s easy for me to quit here and run back home to the reservation. But by him talking to me and through the years, after college and going through the workforce, we’d still sit down and talk. We’d sit back and have a pop and BS for five or ten minutes. He’d ask me, “How ya been?” “Good, and you?” “I’m here...I’m here. I see you’re doing good.” “Yes, I am.” All that talking must have worked.

This statement illustrates that students valued teachers who *talked* to them and that this process of *talking* helped students to find success. It is also important to note that the word *talk* fits with cultures whose teaching and learning systems are based on the oral tradition. For this same reason, the word *talk* may also have a deeper and more contextualized meaning to the focus group members than it may in mainstream culture.

Ask. Closely related to the word *talk* was the word *ask*, which was used 24 times. In the context of the focus group conversations, *ask* or *asking* was an important component of the learning exchange, where teacher and student or teacher and parent worked together to gain information. It was clear that learning was seen as cooperative endeavor rather than an individual pursuit and that asking questions was the type of communication that allowed learning to move forward for everyone involved. One participant attempted to illustrate this by saying,

He really helped me and a lot of Natives get through school – and even past that. He was always there to listen...his motto was, Don't be afraid to ask, because the dumbest question is the one that's never asked. If you never ask, he said, you'll never get the answer.

Tied to the idea of asking questions was also the idea that good teachers would “work with” students until they gained understanding, showing that they valued the question and this form of learning. One student liked her teacher because, “she was accepting of the students, and she's willing to work with them to the point where they understand everything.” Another student noted that she could tell when a teacher had given up on her because this type of exchange stopped. She said this looked like, “Not giving you the

time of day; blowing you off; saying, Oh, she's not going to do it; might as well not bother with it. Or when they quit asking questions."

Students found *asking* challenging and sometimes intimidating, but noted that being invited to *ask* was a sign of openness and acceptance during each person's process of learning. One Native student who grew up outside of the Plains culture explained this by saying,

I've learned, from you, that if you ask the question I may not have an answer right away, but if I speak out I feel like I'm quelling someone else, and if I wait long enough, someone else will speak up. And [my Native classmates are] so polite that they let me run on, and I like that I've learned to sit back. And you had a lot to do with teaching me that; the way that you spoke and put it out there and gave everyone time. These are not people in a hurry. They take their time, they're methodical, they're thoughtful, they're fun.

Here the student was explaining this openness and acceptance of where each person is at in their learning process in addition to attempting to explain that when a question is asked, the focus is not on being the first and fastest, but on careful consideration of the question and the best way in which to respond. "I was taught in that class to not be so bold, fast to react, sit back and let others...kind of...be first." This is a cultural pattern she said she has learned to appreciate.

Asking is a central component of comfortable traditional forms of teaching and learning. One student commented,

I think in general Native students learn a different way. And when teachers say, What, you don't know that answer? Traditionally we're told to ask questions; if you don't know something, ask so that you'll know. I was told that by my parents and grandparents and great-grandparents; to ask questions. Otherwise you'll walk through life not knowing anything. And Native students will ask those questions, and they don't want the answer to be, You don't know that?

This quote also illustrates that students seemed to be of the view that squelching a persons' opportunity to voice a question was demeaning to their sense of dignity, because they are being judged as ignorant for asking a seemingly foolish question, while according to their cultural perspective, asking a question is a noble pursuit.

Understand. The word *understand* or *understanding* was used 18 times by focus group participants. Additionally the word *understood* was used 4 times. The use of the word *understand* and its variations was generally different from learning or knowing because it tended to convey that students had a more holistic concept of the content to be known. Only twice was the word *understand* used to convey cognition alone. Beyond just having a conceptual knowledge of certain content, *understanding* inferred an internalization of the information that sometimes seemed to have an emotional or sensory component. For example, one parent seemed to suggest that kids who had real *understanding* would be better able to connect with her children and treat them better on a social and emotional level. She said, "I think if they taught more about the different issues and cultures, I mean, maybe the non-Native students would have a little more understanding." Another student said, "That she was accepting of the students, and she's willing to work with them to the point where they understand everything," attempting to convey the emotional commitment and investment of time her teacher made to help students internalize information, not just learn it superficially.

Similarly, when *understanding* was applied to comments about teachers, the participants again used the word to convey a holistic knowledge that encompassed

cognitive and affective learning, showing the ability to both conceptualize and empathize within Native culture. One student explained,

The ones that lived on the reservations seemed like they had a better understanding of our way of thought. When I moved to Hardin, I came from Phoenix, and it was a big difference, being around Indian kids. It seemed like the teachers that understood the most were the ones that lived around Crow or whatever, and -- I don't know. They seemed more understanding. They were there; they were living it too.

Another student echoed this about another teacher by saying,

He seemed understanding of what was going on. A lot of the students there came from bad situations. For a lot of people, they were either going to prison or the military -- just those two options. But he would encourage you to do what you wanted to do, not what you thought you needed to do. But he was understanding with situations that were going on in homes, and because his wife was Native and being a teacher there as well, he understood the importance of family and stuff.

Again, voicing the same feelings, a student talks about how important it is for a teacher to understand his students,

There's also the philosophy where you can tell the teacher is all about 'teaching the students,' instead of teaching for the sake of teaching. They have to understand the needs of Native students -- family issues always come up; reservations are so family-oriented. I think if a professor understands that our priorities are that school comes second to family issues...some students get discouraged that teachers don't understand that.

When another student was asked who the most effective teachers of Native students were, she replied, "Probably just teachers who understand where students who grew up on the reservation come from. And know that we have struggles." It is important to note that students believed that teachers need to have this *understanding* in order to really connect with students and teach them.

Just at the Indian schools, the ones that were living it and it was a constant thing for them, it seemed like they had a better understanding of the

students. And the ones that commuted, they just seemed a little disconnected, which, I mean, they are.

Clearly this idea of understanding the student as a person with outside influencers was important to students and not only did they want teachers to know cognitively about the Native experience especially on reservations, they also wanted them to understand Native students in a way that allowed them to identify with their struggles while still valuing them as dignified people.

There. While a seemingly small word, *there*, used to mean present both physically and emotionally was used 15 times by focus group participants. When students used the word there they were referring to the feelings of support they garnered from good teachers taking an active interest in their lives. Students felt that being there for students took the teacher/student relationship beyond the classroom walls and that this was expected of good teachers. Mediocre or bad teachers confined their involvement with students to the classroom setting. One student described her teacher being there for students in this way, “She was willing to help them and she’d, like, go after you if you needed a ride. She hung out a lot after school, and had sheep and greenhouses, and was really involved. I don’t think the other teachers liked her very much, but she didn’t care, because she wasn’t there for them; she was there for the students.” When asked why she thought the other teachers didn’t like her, the student said, “Just because she was so involved; willing to back up the students and nobody else was.” Another student described this level of teacher commitment saying,

Like Mr. X, I was president of AISES for a lot of years, and we went to all kind of conferences, and did fundraisers, so yeah. And basketball, he’d

always come watch our games. All our teachers were like that, showing their support. And business club, Indian club, powwow club...always there to show support. Going above and beyond the call of duty to show that they're really here to show their support and that they care.

Other students didn't use the phrase *being there* to talk about these qualities, but they described teacher commitment in similar ways. One student said, "One of my teachers helped pay for my room and board." And another said, "Most of my teachers will try to work with us, knowing we don't come from privilege. They'll buy more supplies in abundance so we can have stuff to work with – so we can do our best in the class."

Another asset of being there was that it conveyed consistency to students. For example one student talked about a standing 6a.m. bird-watching invitation one teacher had, "Yeah, I was there a few times. He was there, regardless." In many ways it was clear that students found good teachers were both present and reliable because this is often not the norm as observed by a student who emphatically said good teachers were, "Teachers who stick it out the whole year! Because where I'm from, teachers would last like half a year and then quit."

The final use of *there* involved the idea that teachers were immersed in the same experiences as their students as a result of being a part of the community. In talking about teachers who chose to live in reservation communities, one student said, "They seemed more understanding. They were there; they were living it too." Another student used *there* to convey the idea that his teacher intentionally planted himself in the community, saying, "He loved and respected our culture. He didn't make it feel like it was – he made himself one with the community. He was there for five years." This idea was expanded upon by another student who mentioned a different non-Native teacher,

“And she taught me, my dad, and my grandma. She’s been there for so many years, and there’s a reason for that. It’s because she is effective with Native students, I think. Because you wouldn’t be there that long if you didn’t feel like you belong.” Students also explained that this type of presence in the community had a direct link to their classroom performance. For example, “When I see teachers out there at pow wows or games that makes me respect them more and I feel like...it makes me want to go to their class.” As one student explained, being present in the community is important because, “Someone who experiences it on their own; they can better share it with you,” indicating that there is a better teacher/student bond because of shared experience.

Open. The word *open* was used by focus group participants 14 times in reference to a disposition that was available, approachable, and non-judgmental. In Native cultures the idea that everyone is both a teacher and a learner underscores the importance of relationships where people are seen as equals, equally human and equally valuable, even if there are significant differences in academic or professional position. This is illustrated in the way one student described one of his favorite teachers.

He pushed us and was gentler and a lot more civil. Treated us like adults. I think the stuff they talked to us about really created curiosity in me, at least – made me want to explore higher education and see life off the reservation. Teachers like that that are very personable, and at times they really open up and share their experiences and their struggles.

Conversely, teachers that seemed to act superior (“better than everyone”), failed to acknowledge their weaknesses, or took themselves too seriously were seen as narrow-minded, lacking the important quality of openness. Often these teachers were considered strict, a negative quality according to students. Teachers could not be both strict and

open because “When they’re not so strict, they can tell jokes, and take jokes.” My husband, an Apsaalooke man, often says that Native people value joking for two reasons. The first is because things often get so bad that if you don’t laugh you will be consumed with sadness. The second is because when you laugh at yourself and with your friends this gives you the buoyancy and resilience you need to keep on going every day. One student explained how a sense of humor was related to *openness* and being able to connect with students saying,

She was funny. I think to effectively teach Native students you have to have a sense of humor, because Native students like to laugh and have fun. So I think that’s key in being an effective teacher to Native students, is having a sense of humor and being able to relate to them and be open to them, as far as where they’re coming from. A lot of Native students come from dysfunctional homes, and they come to school, and it’s kind of their outlet. How they display that is sometimes through humor, and there are other ways as well, but one of the good ways to connect with Native students is to joke around with them and be friendly. And that’s how she was with myself and others.

Incidentally, the use of the word *humor* as an important component of an effective teacher’s persona occurred 7 times in the focus group transcript.

Teachers who could quickly adapt to students’ needs with flexible responses were considered *open* as well as those who were confident enough in who they were that they did not take themselves overly seriously. One student described such an *open* teacher,

There was this one teacher in high school, and he was the best we had. We would be messing around with stuff, but then he would turn it into a project. He’d say, Why don’t you try this? And it would be the lunch hour – a lot of times you weren’t allowed into the building– and we’d sneak in and just chill – like draw on the boards, play on the computers...and he’d play rock music or pop music, not like the piano music you’d expect teachers to play...and he’d always wear funny clothes; he looked like a mountain man half the time. He had one of those Russian hats, with the ear things. He would always include students, even if they weren’t in the

class. I don't know if it was against the policy, but if students wanted to go on trips and stuff...he knew everyone, so he'd say, Hey, you guys want to go on a field trip? And we'd get permission slips, he'd sign them, and we'd get to go on field trips. And it was cool field trips, too. We'd go cave diving, and he included people.

These ideas of openness often reinforce the importance of inclusion and are heavily endorsed in Native cultures. In Apsaalooke culture students' lineage links them to a teasing clan whose position in the students' lives is to teach them life lessons by making fun of them. This is seen as more constructive and less damaging to the psyche than punishment, (especially public reprimand which strict teachers are likely to enact in the classroom) in spite of the fact that it often leads to mild embarrassment. Anyone who takes himself too seriously is likely to get teased relentlessly until he learns the value to being able to laugh at himself and keep life's mishaps in proper perspective. Native cultures are also very real about the road each person must walk as they make progress in life. The fact that everyone errs occasionally is respected and accepted as an essential part of a truly human experience. Native people value being accepting and inclusive, as illustrated by the fact that few traditional public or private institutions support the idea of one person's worth being greater than another's.

Openness also was seen as essential to establishing a positive student/teacher relationship. One student said, "His door was always open. He would talk to you more like a friend." Another explained, "She was really nice and open to us Native students, she and I had a good connection and got along good." The connections fostered by *openness*, seemed to suggest that because teachers showed they valued students by being open to them, that students should reciprocate similarly in the classroom. Evidence of

this reciprocity is seen in a student's words when he said, "A successful academic career depends, of course, a lot upon the students too. They have to be receptive and open to the teachers, which I always strive to be, and to be open to what they have to teach."

This open-mindedness also applied to the style in which good teachers exercised their pedagogy. As one student explained,

Yeah, because he was one of the much more fun and open-minded people. He played Papa Roach all the time too; he was in love with that. Even that music, it was in our minds – that's the thing about Native Americans: when we can hear music, that helps make the environment less dry. When you're trying to read something, for me, with the music it aided me in focusing. There was always something going on to feed my mind. Working to music made us much more productive. And then there were teachers who didn't sing at all, and their classes...I don't remember much from those classes.

Another student described a science class that he considered to be more *open*,

She had some classes where they'd go for a nature walk, and she'd do a lecture while walking, instead of sitting in class. And I thought that's the kind of teacher I'd like to be: take walks, get fresh air, kind of relax, not worry too much about taking notes, just be able to listen.

These quotes illustrate that often being *open* simply meant being willing to allow students to learn in ways that were seen as out-of-the-norm.

Every culture has its unspoken set of rules and Native students and parents voiced that if they had experiences in schools outside of Native communities, they described them as *open* when they were given an avenue to have a voice. One mother talked about how much she felt like an outsider when teachers gave her no way to talk to them about her concerns unless she approached them. This year she notes a positive change,

This year all the teachers have open communication through email, so they give updates once a day, or once a week -- so that way if I ever have

concerns I can get it right back to the teacher, or the principal, who is really good at addressing issues.

This helps her feel that her children are safe in an environment she fears may be intimidating to them, both socially and academically.

Connect. The word *connect* was used 12 times in the focus group transcript.

Three of the 12 times *connect* was used to describe an engaged relationship with the learning material. One student said,

If I was a teacher, I would teach American history, but I'd incorporate what was going on with our personal history, back home. I would tell them, This is what was going on over here, during Prohibition or Great Depression or whatever, that would make them – my issue was to connect things that were going on in my home during a certain point in history and connect things like that.

One parent described the effect of asking a teacher to help her find some learning materials that her son could *connect* with because she felt he was becoming disengaged at school.

His teacher gave him a book because that was one thing we brought to her attention: Why can't you give him something he's interested in, besides all this other information that seems – I don't know – not necessary? Some of it is, but...she gave him one book by Sherman Alexi, and he read it in like two days, wrote two papers on it -- everything she asked him to do, he had it in within like three days. And he was talking to me about it and saying that he was really psyched about that book, because he could really relate to it. He's accomplished things when it's dealing with something that's more towards his background. He goes all out for it.

The word *relate* was very closely related to *connect* as it is used here to describe an engaged relationship to learning material. One student explained why he felt material students could *connect* with was very important to the future success of students.

So he liked teaching with books that were relating to Natives, like Sherman Alexi books, and contemporary issues that Native Americans face. He would incorporate books like that into his classroom, so we could relate to the books as Native students, and we could relate to the real world. The books he taught from bridged the gap between Native society to modern-day American society – because they are two different worlds, I think. And it just made it easier – he brought these ideas from off-reservation, and brought them onto the reservation. Because if you have people that grew up there and taught there, it's like a big pool of water that if you just leave it there, it's stagnant. But if you bring in new ideas, the river will flow.

This student clearly felt that when teachers made an effort to make learning meaningful to students that students were able to convert this learning into progress toward goals that mattered to them.

Nine of the 12 times *connect* was used to describe a student/teacher relationship marked by positive interpersonal exchange. The word *relate* was used to describe this relationship as well. One student described the effect of extracurricular activities on the student/teacher relationship. “And outside the classroom, his extracurricular activities helped too, like football. When you connect with teachers on different aspects of your life, I think you can relate to them better too.” One student further noted, “Once you gave him your respect, then he really connected.” That was his approach. When asked to describe what that connection looked like, the student replied,

Just being on the same page, knowing he was there for us as students. Being comfortable around him, being yourself, talk to him, come out of your shell around him. He was never the type to make you feel uneasy or uncomfortable. Being personable and connecting as to who we are as people.

As they talked about *connecting*, students also supported the idea that this needed to happen both in and out of the classroom. One student suggested that out-of-class *connections* could be used to improve in-class results.

So if you can transform that support for sports [meaning teachers' attendance at sporting events their students are involved in] into the academic also, and use those, and connect to the students through [attendance at events for] sports, and also be their teacher, their mentor, and their friend, it's going to be a lot more effective.

It was further noted that failure to connect with students outside of class, in the community lead to negative results as seen here, "the ones that commuted, they just seemed a little disconnected, which, I mean, they are" because *connections* failed to happen.

Encourage/Push/Challenge. The last set of strategic words was used somewhat interchangeably. *Encourage, push, and challenge* were all used to describe the manner in which teachers supportively urged and motivated students excel. These words with this meaning were used a total of 17 times in the focus group transcript. It was important to students that teachers engage in realistic *encouragement* of students rather than sugar-coated words that became unrealistic. One student explained this in this way,

I think they have to challenge you and show you the outside world. I think a lot of teachers, especially when they encourage kids to go to school, they don't really give you details about school and what it actually takes to be a college student. Maybe someone who's really realistic and somewhat prepped... they're honest, not just, 'Oh, go to college.'

At the same time, however, students were also *encouraged* to set higher goals for themselves than they may have initially felt they were capable of. One student remembers,

he would push me, because I was taking two math classes during my senior year. He made me sign up for an extra hour during my free hours, to be the TA of a class. He would make me come in during lunch, and I think that persistence...if it weren't for that...he's the one that got me rolling on that. He proofread my letters to get into college; he even set up my email account when I first went. That's pretty rare. It made a lasting impression.

Another student talked about a teacher who *encouraged* students to rise above their difficult circumstances,

A lot of the students there came from bad situations. For a lot of people, they were either going to prison or the military -- just those two options. But he would encourage you to do what you wanted to do, not what you thought you needed to do.

Another student told the story of a life-long mentoring relationship he had with a teacher that began with an encouraging talk.

With me, personally, when I was young, he said, "Where do you see yourself in a year, or five, or ten?" I said, "I don't know." That's how I try to tell people to put their goals: where do you see yourself in ten years? He said, "The one thing I can always try to do with Native American students is to encourage you to graduate high school, because that's your first step in life. A GED really isn't nothing. Once you get the high school diploma, it opens up the door for your career. Once you get that diploma, you can become whatever you want to become."

Often *encouraging, pushing, or challenging* students meant teachers urged students to see a broader picture of the world than what their reservation experiences provided. One student recommended,

If teachers worked to get students pushing outward, people could get off the reservation more. I mean, you can always go back. The reservation never changes. Ever. I go back every few years, and it's the same. I know it's always going to stay the same, regardless of how many buildings they put up. The whole vibe never changes. Always drama. I think if a teacher pushes to make students excel and think or go outward, and be more independent...it was always cool to get out on these trips, off the reservation.

Another student received this advice which he learned to pass on to other students,

That's why I encourage them: take chances, because you never know where they're going to take you. And that's how he talked to me. "Take chances; you never know. Don't be afraid." He said, "If you give up, that's easy. But it's harder to start back up." It's easy for me to quit here and run back home to the reservation.

In short, *encouraging, pushing, and challenging* students was an important mark of an effective teacher of American Indian students because it led students to "sense that they [had] a vested interest in our school; they felt like it was a worthwhile cause."

Research Question #1

Analysis of the focus group responses generates enough data to answer the question, How do American Indian students and parents describe effective teachers?

Analysis of significant words situated within the focus group transcript allowed for an assembly of terms and phrases that describe effective teachers of American Indian students. As the words *learn, talk, ask, understand, there, open, connect, encourage, push, challenge, relate, and humor* were examined a descriptive illustration began to emerge. American Indian students and parents who participated in the focus group said effective teachers:

- Work to understand the world view and nuances of Native cultures and communities
- Are open to seeing things from the student's perspective
- Understand how students learn and that this is related to understanding their culture
- Use student-centered strategies
- Make learning engaging, fun, and active
- Relate learning to student interests
- Support learning with a strong student-teacher bond
- Do not see students as disadvantaged or less intelligent because of their race

- Are emotionally responsive, respectful, and genuine
- Engage in on-going relationships with students both in and out of class
- Are encouraging, challenging, and supportive
- Support students by their actions and with their presence
- Engage in real conversation (talk) with students
- Consider learning a cooperative activity engaging both students and teacher
- Initiate, invite, and value questions
- Are accepting and inclusive
- Respect traditional ways and cultural values
- Engage students in learning until they understand both cognitively and emotionally and internalize the information
- Persist in helping students achieve mastery with a “whatever it takes” attitude
- Are capable of understanding students’ situations and responding with empathy
- Are willing to be immersed in the community for good or bad, sharing in all experiences
- Take an active interest in students’ lives
- Go beyond the basic duties of a teacher to meet students where they are
- Are consistent, reliable, and resilient
- Are respectful and respected because of the value they place on students and community members as equal humans
- Have a sense of humor paired with a positive sense of self-esteem
- Are adaptable and flexible as people and as teachers
- Employ a pedagogy that is creative, inventive, and responsive to students
- Keep opportunities for communication open and available to students and parents
- Are realistic with students while also supporting students in achieving high expectations and future goals
- Understand where students come from while also holding a broader view of the world
- Introduce students to opportunities and ideas that push their thinking outside of the reservation
- Believe the community, school, and students are a worthwhile cause

Cross-Comparison with Other Research

In reviewing this list of teacher qualities and characteristics solicited from the focus group, it is clear that this description shares many similarities with other research on the topic of good teachers of American Indian students. Cleary and Peacock (1998) touch on a number of issues closely related to those in the focus group list including:

community challenges, the importance of culture and tradition, the need for appropriate positive reinforcement, the importance of knowing students on a personal level, and understanding cross-cultural differences. Gilliland (1999) has also compiled a similar list. What is striking about all of these lists is the fact that there are very few components that rely strictly upon correct or ideal pedagogy. Instead most of the list components show very strong affective tendencies. This suggests that perhaps execution of effective pedagogy is not a superficial, one-layered, approach to positive academic results. The results of this focus group in addition to the research done by Cleary, Peacock, Gilliland, and others suggest that proper pedagogy must also be tied to another set of skills or teacher aptitudes that comprise a more comprehensive picture of what actually occurs during the teaching process. In consideration of this concept, both Gilliland's list of teacher qualities, and the focus group list from this research were analyzed according to Daniel Goleman's primary indicators of social intelligence.

What is Social Intelligence?

In the field of psychology, social intelligence is examined in a number of ways according to a number of differing terms. Among these terms are Thorndike's (1920) interpersonal effectiveness, Wechsler's (1950) "general intelligence applied to social situations," Davidson's (1996) "social emotional intelligence", and Goleman's (2006) "social intelligence." According to Goleman's most recent examination of human intelligence in social situations, there are 7 basic ingredients to social intelligence that can be divided into two categories. Social awareness, or what we sense about others, is

divided into the skills of primal empathy (SA-PE), attunement (SA-A), empathic accuracy (SA-EA), and social cognition (SA-SC). Social facility, or what we do with our social awareness, is divided into skills related to synchrony (SF-S), self-presentation (SF-SP), influence (SF-I) and concern (SF-C). Both social awareness and social facility encompass a range of capacities from “low road” or somewhat automatic, to “high road” very intentional articulations. In addition both social awareness and social facility involve cognitive and emotional centers in the brain.

The table below provides a breakdown of how Goleman’s social intelligence categories might be applied to the list of qualities and characteristics of effective teachers, first compiled by Gilliland and then compiled through the focus group of this research.

Table 1. Cross-Source Comparison – Gilliland, Goleman, and the Focus Group.

Gilliland’s Suggested Teacher Quality	Goleman’s SI Category	Focus Groups Suggested Teacher Qualities
Maintains an accepting classroom climate	SA-EA	Are accepting and inclusive
Respects students	SA-A	Are open to seeing things from the student’s perspective
Has a people-centered orientation	SA-A	Take an active interest in students’ lives Are respectful and respected because of the value they place on students and community members as equal humans
Values cooperation and sharing	SA-PE	Consider learning a cooperative activity engaging both students and teacher
Values/understands extended family	SA-SC	
Values silence	SA-PE	
Has a sense of humor	SA-PE	Have a sense of humor paired with a positive sense of self-esteem
Respects ceremonies/traditions	SA-SC	Respect traditional ways and cultural values
Is part of the community	SA-SC	Are willing to be immersed in the community for good or bad, sharing in all experiences

Figure 1. Cross-Source Comparison – Gilliland, Goleman, and the Focus Group (continued).

Gilliland's Suggested Teacher Quality	Goleman's SI Category	Focus Groups Suggested Teacher Qualities
Knows the culture and values of the community	SA-SC	Work to understand the world view and nuances of Native cultures and communities
Understands students' backgrounds and community needs	SA-EA	Understand how students learn and that this is related to understanding their culture Are capable of understanding students' situations and responding with empathy Understand where students come from while also holding a broader view of the world
Recognizes the importance of elders	SA-SC	
Raises student's self esteem	SF-I	Believe the community, school, and students are a worthwhile cause
Expects every student to succeed	SF-I	Engage students in learning until they understand both cognitively and emotionally and internalize the information
Emphasizes students strengths	SF-I	Relate learning to student interests
Includes Native culture in the curriculum	SF-I	Employ a pedagogy that is creative, inventive, and responsive to students
Gives students pride in their heritage	SF-I	
Is concise in his/her expression	SF-SP	
Does not impose time pressure	SF-S	
Makes school fun	SF-C	Make learning engaging, fun, and active
Uses positive reinforcement	SF-C	
Helps students set and meet goals	SF-C	Are realistic with students while also supporting students in achieving high expectations and future goals
Challenges students	SF-C	Are encouraging, challenging, and supportive
Reinforces and values effort	SF-C	Persist in helping students achieve mastery with a "whatever it takes" attitude
Helps students see the connection between school learning and their community	SF-C	Introduce students to opportunities and ideas that push their thinking outside of the reservation

Figure 1. Cross-Source Comparison – Gilliland, Goleman, and the Focus Group (continued).

Gilliland's Suggested Teacher Quality	Goleman's SI Category	Focus Groups Suggested Teacher Qualities
	SA-A	Use student-centered strategies
	SF-F	Support learning with a strong student-teacher bond
	SA-SC	Do not see students as disadvantaged or less intelligent because of their race
	SF-S	Are emotionally responsive, respectful, and genuine
	SF-S	Engage in on-going relationships with students both in and out of class
	SF-SP	Support students by their actions and with their presence
	SA-A	Engage in real conversation (talk) with students
	SA-A	Initiate, invite, and value questions
	SF-C	Go beyond the basic duties of a teacher to meet students where they are
	SF-SP	Are consistent, reliable, and resilient
	SF-S	Are adaptable and flexible as people and as teachers
	SF-SP	Keep opportunities for communication open and available to students and parents

Social Awareness of Effective Teachers

Social awareness refers to a continuum of abilities ranging from “instantaneously sensing another’s inner state, to understanding her feelings and thoughts, to “getting” complicated social situations” (Goleman, 2006, p.84). Under the category of social awareness are four important ingredients of this awareness: primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy, and social cognition. Often there is overlap in how teachers may think and act within these categories, but an attempt has been made to assign one ingredient to each teacher quality or characteristic.

The first ingredient in social awareness is primal empathy, that ability to feel what others are feeling and to cue in to emotional signals that are non-verbal. In Gilliland's work and the focus group, teachers had primal empathy when they valued cooperation and sharing, considered learning a cooperative activity, valued silence, and had a sense of humor. Effectively utilizing primal empathy in these areas requires teachers to sense unspoken cues from students and to internalize values so that they act upon them in an almost autonomic way. A great example of this type of empathy can be seen as a teacher sits in her room after school amongst a small group of students. As they talk they intermittently join in a chorused, "AAAAAAAY". Although no one tells them when to say this, it is as though a conductor is standing before them and has given them all a cue signaling the note. When a teacher is new to the context she wonders how they can all do that in exact unison. When she has been immersed in the context long enough, she "gets" the students well enough to join in the chorus without fear of jumping in a count early or a count late. In this way a teacher's experiences and immersion have allowed her to feel and sense with the group on a very sub-cognitive level.

Attunement is the second ingredient of social awareness and it involves actively listening with absolute receptiveness and being fully attuned to others. Teachers in Gilliland's study and in the focus group showed attunement when they respected students, were open to seeing things from the student's perspective, took an active interest in students' lives, valued students and community members as equal human beings, used student-centered strategies, had a people-centered orientation, engaged in real conversation with students, and invited and valued questions. Teachers who are truly

attuned have the unique characteristic of being intensely interested in people and they convey this interest to their students. Attunement may be especially important in Native cultures because of the oral tradition and social structures that place an emphasis on cooperative existence. In general Native people seem to be very attentive to those around them. For example, one of my Apsaalooke relatives once told me you can tell a lot about a person's character by how they respond to your children. If your child smiles at someone and they pretend not to notice or even worse if they notice and still refuse to return a smile, you know this person is self-centered and probably not very happy. Additionally, if a person spends any significant amount of time on a reservation he will inevitably hear the phrase, "He didn't even say hi to me." In mainstream culture if someone fails to say hello, it may be because he was preoccupied with something else, or simply didn't notice you. In American Indian culture, failing to greet another person has much more significant connotations because it suggests a preoccupation with self that is manifested in a failure to acknowledge others. A failed greeting in this context is tied to negative emotions in the should-be-greeter to which the other person must be attuned.

One parent observed it this way,

He sees the difference in how he's being treated by the principal walking down the hallway. He greets him. My son told me that [at his old school], even the principal wouldn't even say hi. Here are these students in the hallway, and just the way he acknowledged them, or didn't acknowledge them...

When I first arrived on the reservation and even still to this day, I often missed vital cues that would have been insignificant in my own mainstream culture and I only became alerted to them when my husband or other friends would say, "Did you see the way...."

Or “I could see that...” Often I was completely oblivious to the intricate workings within these relationships because I simply was not trained by my own life experiences to access this level of attunement.

Part of this level of attunement is also closely related to asking questions. Often I missed what was going on because I didn’t know the right questions to ask. My Apsaalooke relatives are masterful question askers. When my husband gets off the phone, I can say, “Who was that?” and he will know every detail about significant people and events within the span of the short call. When I get off the phone, my husband will say, “Who was that?” and I will say, “It was so-and-so.” And then he will come back with well what about this, and that, and this, and that. And I have to say, “I didn’t ask.” To which he replies, “Man, you white people don’t know how to talk on the phone,” which is probably true. Clearly attunement is a skill and one that can be improved with intention. It is also strategic because when teachers are attuned they are able to do the things that students said they valued in effective teachers: talk to you, connect with you, be comfortable with you.

Empathic accuracy is the third ingredient to social awareness and it is the ability to understand what others are feeling, thinking, and intending. Teachers in Gilliland’s study and in the focus group exhibited empathic accuracy by maintaining an accepting classroom climate, being inclusive, understanding students’ backgrounds and community needs, understanding how students learn and how this may be impacted by their culture, understanding students’ individual situations and responding with empathy, and understanding where students are coming from while also holding a broader view of the

world. Empathic accuracy is vital to success in cross-cultural communication because misinterpretations can easily occur. Many teachers have cited the importance of understanding culture because it impacts our views on student intention. For example a student who fails to make eye contact with a teacher is not insubordinate, rebellious or rude in an American Indian context. Instead, the student is exhibiting respect in a culturally appropriate way. Additionally, a teacher may say to a student or community member, "I am going to work on this community service project on Tuesday." The person on the other end of this statement will say, "Oh yeah, that's a great idea," and may even seem to commit to being there, but then when the day arrives, the person is absent. When empathic accuracy is absent, the teacher may feel betrayed by the person or feel that the person did not keep his word. However, within the context, when teachers are more tuned in to cultural patterns of communication, they may see that this person's true intention is not to commit to participation, but instead to show support for the idea, its merits, and the teacher. Within the Native cultural context students and community members are astute at organizing their priorities and a sense of obligation to this or that person does not tend to have undue weight in this prioritizing process. One student in the focus group talked about a standing 6 a.m. bird-watching invitation from one of his science teachers. He commented, "I was there a few times. He was there, regardless." Even though the student only attended a few times, he felt that the teacher held him in high regard and knew that the students would come when they could. This scenario illustrates an accepting perspective and inclusion of all students. Students are welcome to participate or NOT participate and the teacher remains non-judgmental, appreciating time

spent with students who can participate. In this example empathic accuracy allows the teacher to believe the students have good intentions and want to participate which keeps his view of students positive rather than negative.

This ability to prioritize and not feel overly obligated to any one person is a skill that may go all the way back to the original workings of tribal societies, especially those of the Plains Indians. Because of the way in which history has been recorded, we often think that Indian people were ruled by a chief which dictated the actions of the tribe. In many instances however this idea was one created by the U.S. government which assigned the title of “Chief” to whatever Indian leader was most in support of a treaty or other working that required Indian approval. In reality, most plains tribes had a number of leaders, and the people were free to follow their own leanings when it came to the leader they chose to follow. In fact, the literal translation for the English word “chief” in the Apsaalooke language means “good man” and there could be any number of good men at any one time. There are a number of traditional stories in Plains Indian culture that show that people were free to change their loyalty with no hard feelings. This is not as common in mainstream culture where we have sayings like, “His word was his bond” or “he is a man of his word” or “pinky promise”. People in tribal communities and especially in today’s traumatized tribal communities understand that circumstances and priorities can change in an instant and a person’s good words are a true reflection of their feelings even if they are unable act on them. In cross-cultural contexts empathic accuracy often requires a somewhat developed understanding of culture, history, and context because these spheres of knowledge contribute to accurate interpretations. This

means teachers who have strong skills in empathic accuracy are often very open to indigenous perspectives on history, and have worked on their own to gain foundational knowledge about the culture.

The fourth ingredient of social awareness is social cognition which allows one to understand the social world and its workings. Teachers in Gilliland's study and in the focus group accessed social cognition when they valued and understood extended family, participated as part of the community, respected ceremonies and traditions, respected cultural values, willingly immersed themselves in the community, knew the values of the community, worked to understand the world view and nuances of the community, recognized the importance of elders, and did not see students as disadvantaged or less intelligent because of their race. Social cognition within any cultural context requires time in the setting because there are so many unwritten social rules. When I first started teaching in an American Indian context my social cognition was low. I remember one specific incident that illustrates this clearly for me in retrospect. I was coaching a team of 5th grade basketball players and a misunderstanding occurred between me and a parent during the game. At half time the parent berated me in front of the entire audience and stormed out of the gym. I was visibly shaken but finished coaching the game. At the end of the game as people were preparing to leave, the woman who adopted me sat beside me, pulled a tissue from her purse and carefully unfolded it. Inside was a delicate purple necklace that was obviously quite old. She gave it to me "because I want you to wear it". At the time I thought it was a gift given with unusual timing. Now, however, I know differently because I have since learned that the Apsaalooke believe that if a person is

injured they should be given gifts that will bring them back to their original state before the injury. She gave me that necklace in public to signal to others that she wanted to help heal me because she saw that the experience was wounding for me. At the time that this happened I did not understand the social workings going on, but time has since allowed me to learn a few of these nuances and intricacies.

Social cognition or understanding social workings is vital to teachers teaching American Indian students because students must be responsive to their teachers and it is difficult for them to be fully responsive if teachers' requests conflict with what they know about their society. Another example of this from my own teaching experience came when I had the bright idea of making every student apply for college. To me it seemed that if I believed they were college-bound people that would be enough for them to want to go to college. I truly did believe that each of them could be successful in college, but what I did not understand was the magnitude of stress this assignment would cause my students. In my life the decision to go to college was as difficult as deciding where to go and when to fill out the application. However, after giving the assignment and my students' reluctance with it some thought, I realized this decision was much more impacting for them than it was for me. Many of them were thinking about family that relied on them, not just for subsistence, but for physical presence, for emotional and spiritual support and for communion. These things are as important, if not more important, than career or financial success. My students had been taught and had grown up believing that being a good person is much more important than being a successful person. In mainstream culture being successful is very important and financial success

may be seen as communicating a positive hard-working ethical character, but in Native culture whether you can be both successful and good is under serious scrutiny.

Therefore, a clear understanding of social workings is vital to effective teachers because social context directly affects students' ability to respond to the pedagogy in effective ways.

The four components of social awareness are clearly markers that indicate when people are deeply immersed in the human experience with those around them. Students in the focus group noted that one of the characteristics of a poor teacher was one who didn't become a part of the community. These teachers were seen as distant, cold, out-of-touch. One student stated matter-of-factly, "the ones that commuted, they just seemed a little disconnected, which, I mean, they are." These teachers were seen as disconnected both socially and emotionally, illustrating how closely the social and the emotional are related.

Social Facility of Effective Teachers

Social facility is the second category of social intelligence and it deals with interactions based on the information social awareness affords us. According to Goleman (2006), "social facility builds on social awareness to allow smooth, effective interactions" (p.84). Social facility also has four primary ingredients including: synchrony, self-presentation, influence, and concern.

The first ingredient of social facility is synchrony which embodies the ability to interact efficiently with others on a non-verbal level. Teachers in Gilliland's work and in

the focus group established synchrony by not imposing time pressure and supporting learning with a strong student-teacher bond. Much of what unites students and teachers in the classroom occurs without an exchange of words. A teacher stands near a student to communicate that the student needs to get to work. As student says she can tell the teacher doesn't like her by the way she looks at her. A teacher communicates she has time to work with a student by getting down on his level. A teacher shows humility and advocates openness and student ownership by positioning herself in less-dominant ways in the classroom. The number of non-verbal interactions that occur daily in lives of teachers is almost infinite and each interaction is important. What is interesting here is that students' empathic accuracy and attunement skills play a role in how this non-verbal communication is perceived. This means effective teachers are clear non-verbal communicators who give students positive "vibes". As one student said, "a good teacher is someone who teaches you even when they're not saying anything." These positive "vibes" and lessons contribute to students' senses of acceptance and self-confidence in each classroom setting. The sense of being liked by another is truly a powerful motivator. One parent recounted his son's comments saying,

I was surprised when he told me the teachers were mean to him, he thought. He didn't like going to school there. The minute we moved down here, he wanted to go to school. He'd get up in the morning and be excited about things they're doing.

For this child getting the sense that he was liked by his teachers afforded him a reason to get interested in school. If I stop and think about people who "like" me I can't think of single one that said, "I like you." Instead I feel they "like" me by the way they act and communicate to me and around me. The same is true for students. Students understand

that communication can be non-verbal and this type of communication is a valid way to measure the student/teacher relationship.

The second ingredient of social facility is self-presentation or the ability to effectively present ourselves in a variety of social situations. Teachers in Gillilands' work and in the focus group used effective self-presentation by being concise in their expression, supporting students with actions and physical presence, maintaining open opportunities for communication, and being consistent, reliable, and resilient. The manner in which teachers present themselves is crucial to how students will perceive them. In general teachers were praised because they presented themselves publically in the community in positive and supportive ways. They attended athletic competitions and pow wows. Students saw them in the store, at their homes, at funerals, and at ceremonies. This physical presence was important because it communicated to students and parents that the teacher was approachable and somewhat predictable because they had seen a consistent picture of the teacher's character both in and out of school. In addition, in Native communities, the manner in which one presents themselves in public is very heavily scrutinized because people who are honored are well known in public not because they are loud and easily recognizable, but because they have established a consistent character. In Indian communities to know who someone is means "knowing how they are." In mainstream contexts someone will ask you who you are and you will tell them what you do as a means of defining yourself for them. In Native contexts it means little to understand what someone does, and much more to understand who they come from. Knowing a person's family line is a means of judging who they are in

addition to coming to know “how they are” over time. There is virtually no one on a reservation who cannot be known if enough questions are asked and in fact, often first contacts on the reservation are a bit of an interrogation in the friendliest way. I recently visited a trading post run by Native people. Upon meeting we engaged in an exchange that allowed them to gain a sense of me. It went like this: “You’re not from around here.” (As evidenced by my car, my clothes, my accent, and probably several other indicators - a great example of attunement.) “No I came down from Bozeman, but my husband is a Crow. I’m married to Shane Doyle.” “Shane Doyle...is he related to Pat Doyle?” “Yea, Pat is his cousin.” At which point the man goes behind the counter into the back room and I can hear him talking to his mother in Crow. A few recognizable words come through the curtain that separates the store from the back room. Most of the exchange occurs in the Crow language but I hear his aunt’s name and Lame Deer, etc. The man comes back. “Yeah, I’m related to him by marriage, cause I’m on the Northern Cheyenne side.” (Shane’s aunt who is Northern Cheyenne married his mother’s brother who is a Crow. This man is related to his aunt.) Finally he decides I’m not a complete tourist and he leaves me in the front room to peruse the beadwork while he eats his breakfast in the back room. This interplay has allowed the storeowner to know me by knowing my connections.

Actions and reactions are also a form of self-presentation by which teachers are measured. In social circles on the reservation you will often hear people say, “Oh yeah, that’s how they are, huh.” For a teacher it is important that their “how they are” is perceived positively, because this identity will quickly be known community-wide. If a

teacher presents herself in a way that is prideful, coercive, overbearing, or mean, this will soon be her identity, an identity that will be difficult to overcome. Fortunately, my experience has been that Native people are very forgiving. I remember a time when I got carried away in support of a particular athlete and I cheered when his opponent fell. My husband quickly made me aware that I was the only one excited about it. In his community one should never rejoice at another person's demise. I was so embarrassed and I consider myself very fortunate that that didn't become a part of my "how she is". At the same time until a teacher has an established "how they are" identity, it is difficult for community members to trust them or "buy into" them. Such is the case for teachers who are not engaged in the community because they have no established identity within the community. Thus, self-presentation not only needs to be executed effectively, it needs to be done consistently within the community.

The third ingredient of social facility is influence which is the power to shape outcomes with social interactions. Teachers used influence to raise students' self-esteem, communicate their belief in a worthwhile school, community, and student body, set the expectation that every student can succeed, engage students in learning until they fully understand, emphasize student strengths, relate learning to student interests, include Native culture in the curriculum, employ a pedagogy that is creative, inventive, and responsive to students, and give students pride in their heritage. Teachers have a huge amount of influence over how students see themselves and their futures. Many students commented that the teachers they recommended were at least partially responsible for their ability to see themselves as successful college students. Additionally because many

of the teachers came from off the reservations they were able to bring new perspectives to students which were “highly influential” and appreciated by students who wanted to know more about life off the reservation. In addition, teachers were able to use their influence to help mold students’ perceptions of themselves in positive directions. One student talked about how his teacher signed him up for a number of leadership positions that he would not have felt qualified for. Another talked about how his teacher had invested a lot of time and extra effort in encouraging him to go to college and helping him get there. He felt his teacher understood his potential better than he did at the time. Students also believed that teachers had complete control over their curriculum and that they alone influenced what students learned and how they learned it. Teachers who implemented Native ideas and culture in their lessons and who were creative and inventive were esteemed. Students felt that teachers had the power to influence them in significant ways and respected those teachers that used that influence in edgy and engaging ways.

The final ingredient of social facility is concern. Teachers that showed concern used actions to show that they cared about the needs of others and they did this by making learning engaging, fun, and active, helping students set and reach goals, being realistic with students, setting high expectations and supporting students to achieve them, encouraging and challenging students, reinforcing and valuing students’ effort, persisting in helping students to reach mastery, helping students see the connection between school and community, introducing students to ideas and pushing their thinking outside of the reservation, and going beyond the duties of a teacher to meet the students where they

were. As a rule students seemed to believe that teachers who cared about them saw their lives as a whole. Instead of just wanting them to do well in their class, caring teachers wanted to see students happy in school and out of school, in the present and in the future. To that end when teachers truly enjoyed their students, laughed with them, and empathized with them, students knew that they cared and because they cared students were interested in attending their classes and working hard for them. A number of students also talked about how a caring teacher would “come after you” if you needed them, meaning they would pick students up in order to make sure they attended important events. This seemed to be a major indicator of a teacher’s commitment to the students as people, not just as students. In a way it is a metaphor for the teacher’s willingness to help students surmount the obstacles they face daily. For many students daily stressors were a reality and a teacher that was tuned in to these in addition to being willing to meet these students where they were was the mark of an effective teacher.

Now that the analysis of focus group data has afforded a window into the effectiveness of teachers of American Indian students, an analysis of case study interviews will allow for the opportunity to examine an intimate portrait of each teacher as they navigate conscientization process that develop and inform their pedagogy.

Case Study Teacher Selection

Focus group participants recommended 34 people as models of effective teachers of American Indian students. Of these 34 nominations 15 teachers were no longer teaching, three had passed away, two did not teach in a setting with more than 50%

American Indian students, three did not teach in Montana, and three were not teachers (they were coaches or principals). This left eight teachers remaining that fit all of the criteria for eligibility. The criteria for eligibility were: involved in full-time K-12 education, have direct experience teaching American Indian students in a Montana school that serves 50% or more American Indian students, have taught in the classroom setting for a minimum of three years in one qualifying context, and be among those nominated by the American Indian parent/student focus group. The original nominated group of “teachers” had nine American Indians and 25 non-Natives. Of the nine American Indians nominated, three were not teachers (coaches or principals), one had passed away, one was no longer teaching, two did not teach in a context with more than 50% American Indian students, one was a Native Hawaiian teaching in Hawaii, and one was still teaching. Thus only one of the final eight eligible teachers was American Indian.

For the purposes of this research, teachers who were not currently teaching were not used in the study. Current teachers, immersed in their context were best suited for the study because they have current conscientization related to their pedagogy on which to draw and are immersed in a context that allows for the cycle of conscientization to play out. Thus, the process of reflection initiated by the interview process has the potential to benefit their students now as they continue to modify their pedagogy based on an enhanced awareness of conscientization resulting from participation in this research. Teachers who are not currently teaching do not have an avenue that will allow them to apply what they gain from becoming aware of conscientization.

Of the eight eligible teachers, six consented to enrollment in the study. The researcher interviewed each of the six eligible teachers regarding living educational theories, teaching philosophies, life histories, and conscientizing events. The analysis of results reported here was executed according to Creswell's (2007) Collective Case Study Approach illustrated in Figure 1 of the Methodology.

Case Context and Description

Mr. Smith – 10am Friday, March 16, 2012

A cool 5am arrived early as I loaded up a few blankets, some sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco, my computer and a large cup of hot coffee. Four and a half hours later, after a rolling ride through the prairie dawn, buffeted by a wind that gathered strength as we neared, I arrived in Browning, my mom in tow for company. The home of the Browning Indians, support for their teams was clearly declared often and sincerely on hand-painted signs, on plastic pieces clinging to glass, on nearly every jacket that passed, billowing and puffed up by the wind.

The new high school sits up on a raised hill just west of town. The parking lot holds about 50 cars, most with their own version of Native identity, a beaded feather, a dreamcatcher, a piece of beaded regalia hung from the rear view mirror for safe keeping. The new school is large to say the least. It is only a single story, but it spreads out in long spokes from a central round area housing a tipi-shaped entrance. The geometric designs and earthy colors suggest that this building has been designed with Piegan culture in mind. A bronze warrior stands under the tipi poles, faceless, but still with the potential to

act, holding a spear and a small shield, looking squarely toward visitors from a head dressed in metal feathers.

Inside the ceilings are high and lit naturally from above. I pick up a visitor's pass and a student escort at the front office. The area is so open, I feel like I am in a university setting. The library and computer labs are encased in glass and are open to view, yet closed to the ears of passersby. It seems as though everyone is together at once and yet it is also quiet and contained. Clean white walls with red lockers line the halls, a few student-made posters placed here-and-there along the corridor to the classroom wings. Four wings housing each of the grades radiate out from the center common area that serves as a stage, cafeteria, and coffee lounge. I can smell lunch cooking. "Umm, smells good," I say. "Dunno," says the quiet male office aide. "I never eat it." As we make our way to the senior hall, I can hear both young men and women singing around a drum. The sound of women's voices piques my curiosity and I peek in the music class window as I pass because in the Apsaalooke culture that I am used to, women rarely sing around the drum. The students are all focused in on the rise and fall of the drum sticks, many smiling, all looking contented and engaged in the song. We turn down the senior wing and continue three-quarters of the way down past a number of other class rooms. Each classroom door has a red marker with a historic Piegan name like "Rides At The Door". Below the name is the phrase written in the Piegan language. At first glance it appears that this is the teacher's name, however, upon further inquiry it becomes clear that this is not the case. I hypothesize that these must be important clan or family names because I recognize a number of them as prominent surnames in the community. Student work is

displayed neatly and simply on the long light gray display boards that line the walls in the space above the rows of red lockers. The student office aide points to Mr. Smith's door and I shake his hand as he turns to head back to his post. Haiku poems with computer artwork backgrounds hang in an up and down pattern on the display board. A picture of Mr. Smith with his name below in large letters sits inside a page protector that has been taped to the wall by the classroom door. It is 9:45am and the period bell will ring in 4 minutes. As I wait in the hall I can hear Mr. Smith summing up his policy on due dates for an assignment and students begin gathering at the front of the class in his room and the one across the hall (Mrs. Salois', which I will also visit later in the day), waiting energetically like horses in their starting gates for the moment when the doors will swing open and they will come pouring out into the hall. When the bell does ring, I am surprised at how smoothly and quietly this pent up flow enters the hall and redistributes to new classes.

Mr. Smith wraps up a final explanation with a student, says hello, excuses himself for a quick break, and is back before the next bell rings. The last image from the KONY 2012 video remains on the projector screen as I wait. The room is decorated simply with hand-made posters and displays, a number of laminated photos of authors' faces are placed in a collage on the storage closet door. A small list of classroom rules includes, Be on time, Be prepared to learn. Below this is the school's policy on no cell phone use during the hours of 8:00am and 3:30 pm. Hanging just inside the door is a gaudy WWWF wrestling world championship belt. Mr. Smith smiles and says, "Everybody loves that. That's the one thing they never forget to take." The belt is his bathroom pass.

The desks in his class are in a traditional formation and we move two of them together to begin our discussion.

Mr. Smith is a relatively young teacher with short brown hair, and a straightforward smile. He looks like an average guy in a black Browning Indians shirt. He is easy to talk to and eager to understand the facets of the study. The hour passes quickly as we talk about his educational theories and draw on his life history timeline. When our interview concludes, I thank him and hand him the blanket bundle I have brought which he seems surprised but happy to receive. Later I will repeat the process in the class across the hall.

Mrs. Salois – 2:15 p.m. Friday, March 16, 2012

At 2:15 pm I wait again in the same hallway as Mrs. Salois' last period wraps up for the day. On Fridays school gets out at 2:15 instead of 3:30. Announcements over the intercom begin with a Happy Birthday wish and are followed by a request that "Book, please come to the office." The name makes me smile because it is obvious that everyone knows to whom the announcement refers. This process of donning nicknames comes back to me as a fond memory of my own teaching context when Soup, G-Dog, Snowbird, and Scrap Iron were names everyone knew. Informal names like these were so beloved that in fact, some people paid to have the names bestowed upon them and wore them like a badge of honor. In a way they seem to say, "I belong." I am curious about how Book came upon his name. The bell rings and students begin filing down the hall. Again I am surprised at how quietly and calmly this occurs. No one seems to be chomping at the bit to escape.

Inside Mrs. Salois' room it is simple and serene. There is little in the way of decoration and what color there is comes in the form of necessary utilities such as a blue and gold organizer hung from the wall with pockets for the orange graphing calculators the students use in class. Above the chalkboard is a small poster with rainbow-colored letters that reads, *Everyone can learn*. "I have that poster up every year. It's a different color every time, but I always have it there," she says. She also has the same page of classroom rules and the cell phone policy I saw in Mr. Smith's room posted on the board closest to the door. Mrs. Salois is in her 60s and although she does not move quickly she is graceful, and it would not be difficult to assume that she is at least 15 years younger than she is. She smiles easily and gets a twinkle in her eye whenever she talks about something she finds exciting. In our discussion she is very deliberate and certain, a disposition she deserves after serving 42 years in the same school. She is also very humble, often understating her experiences and quickly crediting others. Though she is not Native by birth, her marriage to an enrolled Blackfeet man and her mothering of their Blackfeet children have earned her an established place in the community. As she notes in her interview, she is related through marriage to many in the community and has been bestowed with the title of "Auntie" which as many American Indians will tell you, means much more in the Native social sphere than just being the sister of someone's father or mother.

After visiting with Mrs. Salois for an hour and a half, I give her the blanket I have brought and she offers to walk me down the hall. It is easy to get lost in the building although it is convenient to know that if you just keep going forward you will eventually

end up back where you started, a uniquely Native philosophical and architectural design. “Here we are,” she smiles. I thank her as another teacher approaches. When I exit the large glass front doors, it strikes me that I have seldom seen unmarred glass on the reservation and all of this glass is pristine. I am thrown into a memory of a moment of conscientization that occurred when I was teaching high school.

Conscientization in the Researcher

When I was teaching on the Crow reservation I opened a coffee shop for the students in an old greasy spoon known as the Cozy Corner that the students and I renovated. There was extensive discussion about how we should replace the shattered front window which was quite large. A number of people said, you’ll have to put bars over it. I really didn’t want to do that. Someone else said, “Put chicken wire over it.” Which was met with a “Pssssht, might keep the chickens out.” And then an, “Aaaaaaay,” from the group. I asked my dad about the kind of glass he installed in the new hospital psychiatric ward in a different rural Montana community. The first hour it was in someone went running head-on into it only to end up with a headache and stiff neck instead of freedom. It was way too expensive. Finally we decided on the common wire caging over Plexiglas used by all the businesses downtown. It was not pretty. It looked ghetto. In fact according to the insurance I tried to get, our business was in a ghetto. At the time I didn’t think we had ghettos in Montana. The window survived intact for a while, but eventually someone burned a small hole through the Plexiglas and a short time later a skyrocket went sailing through the hole, landing on the reading couch inside which caught fire and quickly burned the whole thing down.

At that moment conscientization was occurring for me. I had missed something when I started this project. There had been some success, but it obviously wasn't a complete success. There were still some students who did not respect me or what I was trying to do. It felt like a significant setback, and the insider status I felt I was gaining seemed a lot smaller than I had thought it was a few days before because no one except the few students who had helped me start and work the shop offered to help me fix things or even said they were sorry it had happened. When I surveyed the damage, it was deflating and humbling. As I stood outside, I peered through that little hole that had ended everything and I saw the partially burned cover of a book. The only words readable were "Love is a decision."

I spent a lot of time reflecting on the experience and on those words, which somehow seemed meant to be seen and this reflection on life, on direction, on history, on my assumptions and my intentions, refined me. It moved my theories, my philosophies, and my practice in a number of ways, some of them small, some larger. But the interesting thing is that I didn't realize how this experience had modified me as a person and as a teacher until I had the opportunity to talk to a group of people about it. I was searching for a way to explain how I had recovered from that event, and as I searched I was reflecting. Through this reflection I began to see an overall picture of where I had been and the new place where I now stood and then I began assembling the internal story of what happened at that critical moment. I saw that the experience brought out the best in my students and showed me where they could be challenged, as well as how high I could set my expectations (which was quite high). It brought out my weaknesses, and

more clearly defined my worldview. It added a new thought to my educational theories which was, you can't teach based on how you feel, you have to teach based on what you believe. As a result, I made it a point to teach to the great people I believed my students to be, even when I didn't feel like it. Although I was not conscious of it at the moment, I was experiencing conscientization and reflection as a result of needing to explain the experience to others helped me to understand the conscientization I had experienced. Thus, through conscientization I came upon a greater consciousness of the context in which I was teaching and this improved my pedagogy. It also made me aware that I would need to continue to go through this process if I wanted to continue to be an authentic person.

As I examine the conscientization process further as a result of my interest in this study, I find it revealing that instead engendering a sense of having "arrived" so to speak, conscientization creates an awareness of how much there is yet to learn because when the need to reform becomes evident, adjustments are made, but then these adjustments must be tried and tested and what will come of new consciousness gained through the process is yet to be seen. In a way the continuousness of the conscientization process embodies that mystery that American Indians so revere, that idea that although one may continuously work toward an understanding, one will never fully know, and that is the blessing that gives impetus to continue the pursuit while simultaneously causing feelings of satisfaction in the present. This allows educators to be pleased with the progress they have made while also continuing to feel a passion for continued learning and progress – an attribute students found magnetic.

Mr. Tackes – 7:30 a.m. Friday, March 24, 2012

Making it to this interview means leaving Bozeman at 4 a.m., a feat I am willing to undertake if it means not being away from my family overnight. I used to find it unusual that my students seemed to always go everywhere together, and that families visited about in encumbering flocks, but I have come to deeply appreciate this sense of the importance of togetherness that is so seldom reinforced in my own mainstream culture except on holidays or “family reunions” said in a tone that suggests the experience is obligatory and just short of loathsome. In fact I appreciate it so much I can count on my hands the number of times my family has been apart for more than a night during the 12 years my husband and I have been married. Even as I write about the profile of this teacher I am going to interview, I am experiencing conscientization. Now that I am aware of the concept, the process seems to occur quite often as I think about what I believe and why and how this influences my teaching.

I used to have a little group of three high school students who did everything together. They were considered “resource” students, but in my class they defied this label performing as some of my best students. Once I discovered the power of their togetherness I used it to generate a level of work they were surprised to find they could do. Now all three of them have gone to college and are strong, wonderful people, in spite of the fact that no one ever expected this from them. This success didn’t come because of how I taught, it came because I allowed them to support one another in the work they did for me. They generated the achievement and all I did was open myself up to understanding them. I can still remember the moment I realized how important their

support of each other was to their success and I understand now why this value of living together in the present has become so important to my pedagogy and to my life as a whole.

As I pull up to Hardin High School, I am in a good mood because even though it's early, I am deeply satisfied with my life choices and I'm eager to meet a teacher multiple students recommended. Hardin High School is situated on the side of the border town farthest from the reservation, but it's still only about a block away from the nearest bar. The Crow reservation is dry meaning alcohol is not allowed within its borders. Hardin, however, is in a prime position to cater to the stereotypical drunk Indian because it is just off the reservation. Border towns often have the inauspicious reputation of harboring the worst representatives of minority populations, creating a difficult negative atmosphere for intercultural relations. To its credit, however, Hardin has been relatively successful at overcoming this, becoming a town many respected Crow people have called their home as the number of Crow people living in Hardin has steadily grown. Over time the make-up of the town has slowly shifted from mostly non-Indians to its current state where the majority of the students who attend the high school are American Indian. In 2011, according to the Office of Public Instruction, Hardin High School did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and has been identified for restructuring. I could not interview Mr. Tackes earlier in the week because the Superintendent of Schools, Denise Juneau, was working with the school on professional development and improvement strategies. Today is Friday, of what I know has been a long week for Mr. Tackes.

As I make my way into the front office, I think about how amazing it is that Mr. Tackes has been so responsive by phone and email even as he has been so occupied. He has asked me to come at 7:30 a.m. because he usually arrives early anyway and although he has a prep hour at 9 he has a detailed and engaging science lab to prepare for students. There is no one in the office when I arrive. A friendly teacher points out an orange door at the end of the hall. “He usually comes in that door right about now,” she says. Now I know what I’m looking for, but when he enters the side door of the orange and black school building his stature is neither large nor imposing, in spite of the accolades attesting to his intrepid character. Instead he is small, gray, and quietly energetic. He has been teaching longer than I have been alive (38 years), yet he is exactly the opposite of old or decrepit. As we grab chairs in the room where he has taught science since 1995, the walls alive with all kinds of specimens and illustrations, he sits back comfortably in one of those plastic school chairs that are never comfortable and launches into a lively chat about what he does here every day. An hour later as we wrap up our interview he hurriedly puts on his coat saying, “I could keep on talking for hours, but I’ve got to run to the grocery store real quick for some parsley.” It seems this is the magic ingredient for today’s science adventure.

Mr. Bell – Noon on Friday, March 24, 2012

The road to Lame Deer runs straight north from the I-90 turnoff at Crow Agency. I can tell I haven’t been in this part of the country enough lately, because when I stop at the hospital to say hi to my mother-in-law who works there the security guard makes we wear a visitor tag. It must be obvious that I neither belong nor need medical attention. I

think my mother-in-law is a little embarrassed because the guard makes her feel like she is fraternizing with “the other”, but as we leave she introduces me to a friend who has pulled up at the entrance and she gives me that very light hand hold, that can’t really be called a shake, characteristic of a Crow woman. Again, I recall a moment of conscientization.

In my culture one should grasp another person’s hand with firm confidence and a weak or “fishy” handshake is almost abhorrent. Here a firm handshake signals an overbearing attitude or a desire to exercise power over another. If hands must be grasped, it should be done in a way that communicates humility and approachableness. When I recognized this difference it caused me to see the purpose of human relationships in a new way. I saw that in my culture relationships were used to gain position or notoriety, but in this culture a relationship can simply be a relationship, an opportunity to know someone and for that someone to be completely free to act as they wish in governance of themselves. It was as if people said, “I am not shaking your hand to influence you, but to touch who you are.” Incorporating this philosophical foundation into teaching is trickier than it seems. A teacher’s job essentially is to influence students to learn the right things, to act the right way, and in order to balance this job with values from the community I learned there must also be a way to communicate to each student, “You are free to make your own choices and I will not judge you negatively if you do not choose the way I would.” My husband essentialized this by saying, “Indians don’t proselytize.” I realized that I come from a culture that does, constantly, and that the educational environment may not be the appropriate place for this. Now I am more

conscious of the need to evaluate whether I am trying to make my students “like me” or if I am allowing them to learn while remaining themselves in the manner and material that I teach.

After parting with this touch, and an, “I’m glad I met you.” I leave my mother-in-law and her friend to chat. It will take about 45 minutes to get to Lame Deer High School so I need to be on my way. Aundre and his wife Jennifer are the only two American Indian teachers among the focus group nominees that are eligible for this study. As I take the high road across the largely uninhabited land, I understand that although there is no one with a house on this or that spot, it belongs intimately to these people. I attempt to snap a picture with my phone while driving, a slightly reckless and now illegal maneuver for Bozeman residents, because I know that is what my husband would be doing if he were in the car with me now. Whenever we crest over the long grassy hills into the Big Horn Basin, he remarks, “Aww man, this is my home.” Then he snaps a picture and texts it to his friend in Florida because he knows his Montana roots will be moved.

When I get to the outskirts of Lame Deer, a teenager is jogging down the highway and two grade-schoolers are bouncing on a trampoline outside their HUD house. I’m curious as to why they are not in school, but they are definitely not concerned. The last time I was at the high school, I was coaching girls’ volleyball. As I approach the gym we played our game in its clear this isn’t the right building. Looking around, I notice there are lots of teenagers strolling down the road. My husband got a kick out of a show on TV where people were lost in what they thought was the wilderness. It turned out they were in urban areas not far from their own homes but some of them nearly starved to death

because they failed to look at the signs around them. “That would never happen to a Plains Indian,” he says,” because they grow up from the time they are little orienting themselves to the world by the landmarks they see around them – that’s real place-based education.” That thought passes through my head as I follow some of the students over to the local gas station. I pull in, dodging a few “rez dogs”, and enter the store. There are two young people working behind the counter. I inquire about the beadwork behind the counter, asking the girl how much they want for a beaded headband. She knows, but she says to the guy working with her, “How much did Frank want for those?” I realize that a few years ago I would have thought she just didn’t know, but now I understand that acting like you always have the answer is rude and conceited and not conducive to forming and maintaining relationships. That came out of a moment of conscientization too.

When my daughter was three, her Montessori teacher said, “I don’t think Florence understands how to do things in sequence. It seems like I can explain the steps and she will do a few, but then she will want me to do the rest with her.” I took this information to heart and I watched her for a few days. I tested her with sequences of things I wanted her to do. “Put your p.j.’s on, brush your teeth, and go to the bathroom.” I didn’t see anything out of the ordinary until one day, she was half way through one of my requests and she came up and said, “Well, what shall we do?” and I heard my mother-in-law’s voice in her. My mother-in-law will often pose this question, but it isn’t that she doesn’t know what she wants to do, it’s that she is inviting the participation and the will of others into her life processes. In my culture there is an emphasis on conveying decisiveness and

a direct route according to a certain plan. In my husband's culture, where our daughter has spent a lot of time, there is enough flexibility along any one path to invite others to join in the experience. I explained to my daughter's teacher that Florence was interrupting work she is very capable of completing alone because she has learned to value relationship within our life processes and she is asking for that. "Ok," her teacher said, "I can see that..." and off the two went hand in hand. Their relationship to each other and to learning had changed.

After complementing the beadwork, I ask the girl how you get to the high school, wishing I didn't sound so much like I'm not from here, which is pretty much impossible to do when you don't know where the only high school in town is. I actually do have some ties to this community, but I don't have a good way to demonstrate that in this moment. My husband was raised for a time by his aunt and uncle and they live just a block from the store. I attended a traditional Northern Cheyenne wake in their back yard for their daughter and grandson. Hajesk, was what Shane's uncle named the little boy. The name is Cheyenne for "ant". He was raising his boy to be one of the best Cheyenne speakers of his generation. Like many Native grandparents, he had taken on the responsibility of raising one of his grandchildren as a "grandparent's grandchild", a child whose role in life was to learn the traditional ways and keep them going for younger generations. It was difficult to watch him mourn his son and all the hopes he had had for him.

A mile down the road, clear outside of town, Lane Deer High School, rests at the top of a road that rises up the side of a broad hill. The girl at the store had said you have

to go a mile, but the school seemed so far out of town, I was just about to turn around when I saw the sign reading “Lame Deer High School”. As I approached the top of the hill a few students were quietly walking along the road. It was lunch time and a beautiful day to get some fresh air. The parking lot had only a few cars, which probably means most of the students had taken the bus. The teal and grey school colors accent the architecture of the school as I step under the overhang that protects people who may have to wait outside from the weather or the sun, depending on the season. Although it is made of steel and cement it is very similar in shape and structure to the wood-and-branch shades that dot the campgrounds during outdoor summer pow wows and sundances. In fact, the pow wow grounds sit out on the plain just below the school hill. Just inside the front door I enter a space that seems unusual for schools. The multiple sets of double front doors open directly into the cafeteria. Students are milling around tables socializing. A number of adults, presumably school staff, sit or stand visiting. To the right is the office where a cheerful woman greets me. I tell her I’m here to see Mr. Bell and she looks at the other ladies in the office. “Wasn’t Aundre leaving in like 5 minutes?” Again she probably knows the answer, but she brings the other women into the experience intentionally. She is acknowledging that they are there and also probably know. Everyone chips in a few words about his whereabouts and plans for the afternoon. “Lemme go get him for you,” she says disappearing down a back hallway. I set my sweetgrass and blanket bundle down to rest on a nearby chair while I wait for the first of my two American Indian teachers, only when he comes around the corner, he is clearly not Cheyenne.

Aundre is an imposing African American man until he starts to talk and then he seems more jolly than giant. He is clearly kind and comfortable. I follow him back to a small cluster of offices closed off from the hallway. It is clear that this is his office because pictures of two cute children bearing his resemblance grace the walls, shelves, and window sills. There is also one long bulletin board on the south wall covered with various candid shots of students. I am wondering why he has an office as a teacher, but eventually I find out he is both principal and P.E. teacher. He took his first teaching job in Las Vegas, but he wanted to work with underprivileged youth and his wife wanted to be closer to home, so when a position opened he took the job teaching in Lame Deer. He has been here only 5 years and already he has mastered many of the nuances of the people who have lived here all their lives. On the phone his voice suggested he was Native or at least not white, and in many ways his vernacular matches that of his students. As we begin our interview he is confident, but not conceited and it is clear he is fully invested in this place and the people who work with him love him. A few poke their heads in and joke with him intermittently. After visiting for about an hour, Aundre's phone rings. He answers because it is his wife, Jennifer. "She's waiting for her mom to get there so she can watch our kids, but she'll be right up."

Mrs. Bell – 1:30 on Friday, March 24, 2012

Fifteen minutes later Mrs. Bell, Jennifer, walks in. Young, strawberry blond, and bubbly, she is not Native either. But like her husband she has mastered the accent. "I knew I was starting to fit in when the kids said, 'Mrs. Bell, you're Crow right?'" she laughed. Jennifer is happy, enthusiastic, and humble. She began her career in Lame

Deer as a character education coordinator, but when pushed by her husband, completed her special education degree and has now been in the classroom full-time for three and a half years. After about an hour we are visiting energetically, and I feel as though I have known these two for much more than two hours. As I pack up my things to go, a staff person puts her head in and says, “The dog is here, so we are on lock down.” Jennifer looks at Aundre and says, “I guess we are stuck in here for a bit.” I wouldn’t have regretted that because I have enjoyed this visit so much, but Aundre replies, “We ain’t stuck in here. I ordered the dog.” The police have brought in a drug dog to scan the school for controlled substances. For a moment I have a fleeting worry that I will get in trouble for the ceremonial tobacco I have wrapped in the blanket I brought as a traditional thank you. “You’ll have to give us an escort then,” Jennifer says. The three of us walk down the empty hall to the front entrance. As we pass a classroom with large glass windows, an expression of gravity is fixed on the face of each student. When we step out of the school and into the sunshine, I can’t help but feel some relief. A police car is parked under the overhang directly in front of the entrance doors making it clear to anyone coming in that something is up. As we part, Jennifer carries her stack of blankets across the parking lot and places them inside a candy-apple red Charger. My dad would love that car. As I follow her slowly back through the heart of town I am sure everyone knows that is the Bell’s car.

As I head back out onto the soft brown plain, I smile, remembering. I started teaching in Lodge Grass right out of college. After a few real paychecks I decided to buy myself a car. My dad bought me a used Cavalier after my first year of college so I

wouldn't have to rely on the doctor's son who had Indy 500 delusions when I wanted to make the 5 hour trip home to Havre. It's a long trip from Lodge Grass to Billings and one I needed to make frequently especially if I wanted to eat celery that didn't flop into an arch on its way to my mouth. There are few shopping options on the reservation and I didn't want to be broken down on the side of the road in who-knows-what kind of weather. I went to Billings and picked out a brand new silver two-door Chevy Cavalier. I don't think anyone in my family up to that point had ever owned a brand new car.

The next day, during lunch break I went out to grab something from the car and found a small group of students hanging around it. "That your new car, Miss Penniman?" "Yeah." "Why didn't you get a bigger one, or at least one with 4 doors?" "Hmmm," I thought. "Well, I don't know." "You can't really give anyone rides in a car that small." It's true. Clearly I had a different frame of reference when I weighed my purchase. That moment is interesting to me because as I reflect, I remember that I felt bad that I had not thought about how this car might help me help others or even be closer to others, to create community. Instead I was thinking about how to avoid needing the help of others and maintaining the things I liked from my other life rather than just immersing myself in this one. That moment was conscientizing for me because it showed me how my thought processes differed from those of my students. It made me question whether I might have other assumptions that differed as well and my awareness was piqued.

Teacher X – 2:30 Friday, March 24, 2012

As I drive through town, there is a gaping hole in the ground where our coffee shop used to be. A few months ago my husband's cousin, the local telephone guy, reported that it had been burned again, this time completely to the ground. "It's better this way," I thought. Abandoned buildings are dangerous. After the building burned the first time, it was painful to drive by it not because I considered it a loss, but because there were empty cans of aerosol paint strewn about when I went to see what was salvageable. It was disheartening, maybe even heartbreaking since I feel a pain even as I write this, to see that this space that I had had high hopes for was facilitating a pastime known as "huffin". Kids, sometimes much younger than those I taught, were getting high off of canned aerosol fumes. That's the trouble with good teaching, the kind the MSU focus groups talked about. It hurts. As I drive up the hill to the school, I am counting in my head the faces of 9 of my students who have passed on since I had them in class. Hoooowh, those faces hit me in the gut like a lead weight. I know it now, especially now that I have children of my own, I loved them.

At the top of the hill, grade school children are shooting hoops, that most famous of Indian sports. A broad asphalt flat pours out in front of the school where I park my car. I used to park right in front of the side door which explains why it feels so strange to be going in the front door. As I duck under the low, dark overhang that is the front entrance to both the elementary and secondary wings of the school, I am thinking about how I will be met by all the people I used to know when I worked here. It is almost shocking to walk in the door and find the lobby dead empty. The cage has been pulled

around the main office and everything is locked up. I calculate that today must have been an early release and I wonder why Teacher X asked me to come so late in the day.

Everything is pretty much the same as the day I left, except that the office is oriented a little differently, so I know exactly where to go to find Teacher X even though I never thought to ask what room she teaches in. It is two brown synthetic wooden doors down from where my door used to be. The sound of laughter and chatting lilts out the door followed by that, “Aaaaaay!” that I have not heard in long time.

Teacher X is sitting in front of the computer, leaning comfortably on her desk chair, alongside two smiling high-school-aged girls. “Ok girls, this is my interview. Why don’t you head on down to the gym and I’ll come grab you when I’m done and we can head out...Love you guys.” “We’re going to the Hunger Games in Billings after this,” she explains to me. Teacher X is young and engaging although I get the sense that she is wary about me and what I am trying to do. As we begin the interview she explains that she wants to remain anonymous because she has seen too many people come in and begin acting like experts when even the elders in the community whom she greatly respects don’t act like that. She has “only” been here 5 years and she wants it to be clear that she is still learning and does not want to be perceived as a know-it-all. After what I hope is a reassuring explanation of the goals of my research and the transcript review process, we begin to talk. At first she is formal, but slowly she begins to settle into the joy of talking about her experiences. A few minutes into the interview two guests arrive at the door. Instantly she shifts to a heavy Crow teenager accent until she has visited appropriately with them.

Instantly I am reminded of another important lesson. I can see my husband, who at the time was not my husband, descending a ladder perched precariously against the stucco walls of the Cozy Corner. A group of friends have come down from Bozeman to put in a weekend of intense work on the building as we prepare it to enter service as the new coffee shop and scholarship opportunity for the students I am working with. I have grown up with an overdeveloped sense of work ethic that makes it difficult for me to watch Shane work. Each time a community member ambles by, he descends the ladder where his is painting, and talks at length to each one. In my culture that's what we would call shirking your duties. In fact when I was little my dad used to say, "when you are working, one kid is a kid, two kids is half a kid, and three kids is no kid at all," meaning the more opportunities you have to visit and have fun the less you get done. My dad was born on a farm and I am certain this saying fell upon him any time he was "goofing off". I labored hard all day and at its end, my husband came up to me and said, "You're being kind of rude. People are coming by to visit because they are interested in what you are doing and you can't even make the time of day for them." That stopped me dead in my tracks. I had thought I was communicating how dedicated I was to this project, but I realized then and there that I was in fact, pledging my allegiance to a building rather than to the people I cared about. My students needed me to work on my relationships more than the needed me to work on these four walls. The renovation would move along at a slower pace, but we would be stronger for it. Since that time, I have been much more aware of the need to stop what I am working on so that people know I am really listening.

I understand the importance of what Ms. X is doing and I am not bothered by the extra time it takes.

As we continue our conversation, Ms. X. returns to her more formal voice although it has warmed considerably. When we part, we have uncovered a great deal of common ground and I think the experience has been gratifying for both of us. Her two teenage charges are quick to meet her as I leave the school, not without a fair amount of nostalgia.

Sitting in the car, as I prepare to make the three-hour drive back to my family, I text my husband. “This place brings back a whole lot of memories about you.” I laugh to myself and wonder who might be watching as I sit here in the parking lot. The entire school knew about it the day after our first kiss. I could have sworn there was not a soul around to see it. The next day when I was bright red, everyone knew I was human, and I felt my students loved me for that. That’s when I understood it’s good for teachers to be human.

The Others. Initially the list of teacher nominees for this study had eight eligible teachers. As I was preparing to contact the two teachers from Rocky Boy more aggressively than by email and school office message, my husband had a death in his family. The grandson of the aunt who raised him, who was considered Shane’s nephew, passed away. They closed the tribal buildings in his honor and held a three-day wake before burying him near his mother’s homeland. A death in the community is an intimate and far-reaching event and no one in Indian country can escape its grasp. My husband is a Crow and yet he is grieving with his Northern Cheyenne family as they bury a child of

Rocky Boy. To request to interview these two, no-doubt amazing teachers, would be callous and inappropriate because their community is still in mourning. The research will be void of their contributions, but it will also hold all that it was meant to. The words my students often said sing, “Everything happens for a reason.” I have been taught and I am learning that it is right to accept things in life as they are given to us.

Explanation of Reporting Methods

I am aware that it is challenging to read this back-and-forth reporting in the familiar and winding weave of a story, but it is intentional. Perhaps I should have told you earlier, but then again perhaps not. To be plunged into this experience may be more authentic and rewarding than being rationally prepared to chase a small rabbit in and out of its various burrows. I have chosen this way of speaking for a number of reasons.

The first is to express that the people I interviewed were not my research subjects. I wish to honor the relationships I have formed with socially intelligent people, students and teachers with whom I have shared a connection and a common purpose. I wish for the reader to know them as they should be known, not for the data they supply, but for the human models they embody with heart.

Secondly I have used this “unconventional” style to convey the important crux of this research which is the idea that good education occurs because of a series of interconnected relationships, both within and outside of events and contexts, as the focus group results have already illustrated. Were I to pick and choose important information in isolated chunks, as may be considered more appropriate, without illustrating how

connectedness occurs I would be doing the foundations of this research an injustice. American Indian's have never supported the idea that compartmentalization of ideas makes them more clear, or more true, more scientific, or more scholarly (Cajete, 1999). In fact to compartmentalize is to deny the true existence of things all held within a great web of connections and influences. When we compartmentalize we may come to understand what something is according to its limits, but we cannot fully know why it is. I have relayed to you, the reader, this story of my data because a great many scholars have explored what makes good teaching, but I have wanted to show why good teaching happens. And you, my friend, are a part of the why because our minds have touched and now this story has become a connection between you and me so that you are now also connected to all that connects me.

This idea that everything is connected is a powerful supporter of the idea of conscientization because conscientization is based on the awareness that everything has an influence on what people, or in this case teachers, think and do. Conscientization explains what the focus group students have observed because it shows how good teachers are effective because of the manner in which they perceive and use all of the input they get from the world around them. Because of their heightened levels of social awareness they are able to understand and act effectively on this input. In addition they are able to think with their whole selves. They not only use their cognitive knowledge to make decisions in teaching, they also use their emotional and social knowledge. This creates an interesting parallel with Native thinking, best illustrated by an example from Plains Indian sign. Plains Indian sign was developed before American Sign Language as

a way to communicate across tribes with very different language roots. The Plains Indian sign for “think” is a hand gesture extending outward from the heart, whereas the American sign for “think” is a hand gesture extending inward toward the head. This difference may well illustrate strategic differences in frame of reference between mainstream and Native cultures and may also further explain why Native cultures value social intelligence as they clearly do.

I have also chosen to express these descriptions in this unconventional style because I respect the idea that words have a power of their own and should be used with intent. Native people are known for the great reverence they hold for words, believing that once they go out, they cannot be brought back in, and once spoken, or in this case written, they live out in the world as medicine with a power of their own, for good or for bad. That is why it is important to choose words carefully. It is why I have chosen these words for this story, our baleiichiwee. From this point forward you will never again be able to live your life as if you had never read this paper and I will never be able to live as if I had not written it. Thus, Mitakuye Oyasin, we are all related.

Finally, the power of a story to tell truths is not experienced just once upon the telling, but over and over, in new and impactful ways whenever it is recalled or retold. Story is revered in Indian communities because stories are words that live in the psyche of the people who do the telling and in the people who hear them. This is why the truth of stories is considered rooted in the individual and why there can be multiple ways of telling and knowing a story that are all accepted as true. Now that you have known this illustration of baleiichiwee, and have been able to see how conscientization occurs and

reoccurs to affirm lessons and teach new ones, I can continue with the reporting of this research in a more conventional manner.

Within-Case Theme Analysis

The Living Education Theory Segments (LETS) and Teaching Philosophy Statements (TPS) isolated in the text are listed below for each of the six teachers involved in the collective case study. The lists are numbered to aid in identification of specific items used in the Cross-Comparison of Effective Characteristics and Philosophies section immediately following this within-case theme analysis. The numbers do not infer hierarchical importance.

As LETS and TPS were evaluated and compiled it became apparent that in this context there is little need to distinguish between the two. The study made it clear that teachers are acting on what they consider their important beliefs about teaching and learning. While these beliefs may have theoretical grounding, all of the teachers said they have not thought about teaching theories in a formal sense since they left their college classrooms. In the more practical sense teacher's living educational theories and teaching philosophies become a melded and somewhat intuitive foundation providing internal justification and rationalization for what teachers do, how they do it, and why they do what they do with respect to their teaching. In response to this the following exploration of each teacher's foundational beliefs will serve to answer research questions two and three. Research Question 2 reads: For teachers who have been selected by American Indian parents and students as effective teachers, what are their living

educational theories? Research Question 3 reads: For teachers who have been selected by American Indian parents and students as effective teachers, what are the elements of their teaching philosophies? In answer to these questions, all of the teaching beliefs isolated from the interview transcripts will be listed followed by supporting statements from the interviews that serve to justify the components of each list.

Mr. Smith, English Teacher, Browning, MT

Upon working with a colleague to review interview transcripts according to the case study protocol for analysis, a number of living educational theories and educational philosophies were isolated from Mr. Smith's interview. Mr. Smith's guiding theories and philosophies included:

1. The teacher's job is to prepare students for future academic and life success.
2. Native American content should be used to help students connect to material, but it should not be the only reference point for learning because having a broad perspective and teaching students from that broad perspective serves them best.
3. High school students should be treated as adults, with respect and an expectation that they will act in responsible ways.
4. Literature is important because it informs our lives.
5. I am teaching students, regardless of their race.
6. It is detrimental to teach a particular way to students because of what others have said about the abilities or aptitudes or their race.
7. It is possible for students to be experts on certain topics and to have the ability to teach each other and to teach the teacher.

8. No one should experience culture shock from any angle because we should all be informed and interested in each other.
9. Giving students the skills to become confidently independent is essential to helping students become positive contributors to their communities.

Mr. Smith believes the teacher's job is to prepare students for future academic and life success. He explains, "Being that I have predominantly seniors, I've looked at it as, are these kids ready for college at this moment? Usually the answer is no." However, preparing students for college is not merely an academic challenge. Mr. Smith acknowledges that there are other barriers to Native students that make college success difficult.

I feel very strongly that college is a good thing. I definitely believe in the importance of it. And then just being here and knowing how bad the rates are in general, kids from Browning going to college...the rates have gone up dramatically, but they were bad when I got here. So now it's retention. Many students go to college, but they return home after a semester, or can't make it through a semester. The reservation mentality, I think that's part of it too, why the students come back. When the reservation was established, it was like, you all go here, and you stay here. And even though it's many, many, many years later, I think that mentality is still there: 'This is where I'm supposed to be; I'm not supposed to go to Great Falls or wherever. This is where I am, where my family is, this is where I'm always going to be.' And I think that's just a bad mentality in general; not just because it's a reservation. To tell anyone, you live in Great Falls - stay there; never, ever leave Great Falls. If you love the place you live, great. Live there, but feel comfortable to go somewhere else. Spend your time there, get whatever you can out of it, and then come back.

Some of Mr. Smith's desire to see students be successful in college is related to improving graduation and college retention rates for underrepresented American Indian students, however, he acknowledges that his desires are also emotionally invested. "I have a daughter... you just do everything differently once you have a child in the world.

And of course I'm preparing her for college, and I view - to a lesser degree, I have to admit - my students as my children too, in a sense. I want my daughter to succeed, and I want them to succeed." It is clear that Mr. Smith believes that preparing students for college and believing that they are college-capable is something all caring parents wish for their children.

Mr. Smith also believes that Native American content should be used to help students connect to material, but it should not be the only reference point for learning because having a broad perspective and teaching students from that broad perspective serves them best. Mr. Smith feels that too much emphasis on Indian Education for All may backfire in that it causes Indian students to think they are academically less able and need to be catered to in order to have academic success. Because his students already live on a reservation they are "living IEFA" and have more awareness of multicultural ideas. Having said that, he does think that the use of the familiar or the novel, which may include American Indian content, is an important tool for creating bridges that promote learning for his students. As he explains,

I've even considered, during my five years here, whether I could ever take the curriculum I have elsewhere and not have to change it, and I think that's possible. I might use more Native American literature than teachers at other schools, so specific materials might be a difference. But I don't think I need to use "Indian" materials to make the connection; just that I need to make the connection. Sure, I might use a Sherman Alexie story instead of a William Faulkner story, and they're going to be able to connect more. But, I think I could also use a Louis L'Amour story and they'd connect to that more than to Faulkner as well. Just because it's a Native American author doesn't mean they're automatically going to connect. It can help, but there's no guarantee. And quite frankly, I've had students that don't really care about the more cultural stuff, because that wasn't how they were raised, so it doesn't mean a heck of a lot to them.

So I could just as easily use a white author, or a Mexican author, or whatever, and accomplish just as much.

Mr. Smith is concerned that too much emphasis on American Indian material may rob students of the opportunity to be exposed to new and engaging ideas and limit the experiences they can have because they already live in such a “fish bowl”, as one focus group member called it. As he says,

I think about the fact that, especially as an English teacher to Native American kids, I could get too heavily into Native American authors. I could spend all this time giving them just that, but then when they go off to college, what is the overwhelming majority of literature you’re going to study? It’s not going to be Native American literature. So again, that could be a detriment. The literary canon is full of white authors, and it could be a disservice to them if they know nothing about this literature that technically they are supposed to know about. Certainly I use Native American authors, but I also use white authors. I use black authors.

The most important thing about using American Indian content is to make sure that it contributes to getting students where they need to be in their classroom learning. Any bridge that can help students get to the understanding they need is a valid educational tool. For example,

I might tell the students about Shakespeare, and they’re thinking, well, what do I care about a white guy in England, 500 years ago, who may or may not have even written this stuff? But with Sherman Alexie, I can show a picture, and right away, they go, Oh, he’s Native. I’m Native. And I’ve at least caught a couple more kids’ attention that I wouldn’t have with Shakespeare, and now I can more easily transition into Shakespeare later. I’ve used that a lot, to get somewhere else. I do that with other things too. I show a video that has nothing to do with Native American culture, to bridge a gap.

Mr. Smith also has the philosophy that high school students should be treated as adults, with respect and an expectation that they will act in responsible ways. Mr. Smith

believes that schools often fail to communicate responsibility to students and have structures that sometimes reinforce a lack of student accountability. He says,

Before I was even done with college myself, I was already frustrated with the way we treat the gap between high school and college. So I've always tried to approach my seniors from the perspective of, this *is* essentially college. I know it seems like 50 years away, but the gap between 12th grade and freshman year of college is no different than the one between 11th and 12th grade. You are adults. So I have this weird middle ground...like when I get a parent contact, they want us to do this. I'm like, yes, parents are important, but when I've got a kid who's 17 or 18, I shouldn't be dealing with the parents; I should be dealing with them. I guess elevating them up to adult status; they're the ones who are invested in this.

Mr. Smith also believes that having expectations that students will be responsible and structuring his class in a way that supports this idea, have allowed students to feel proud of their accomplishments and value the student/teacher relationship. "I have always liked to think it's because I treat them like adults and with respect. I guess that can't hurt, and that I try to make connections with things they care about." In his mind, high expectations and a caring disposition communicate respect to students.

Mr. Smith is an English teacher, and he sees the subject as more than just reading and writing. His theory is that literature is important because it informs our lives. He explains that he believes this because:

Well, above everything else, I had that "aha" moment in college where – I didn't start out as an English major. But I took the right class, and that changed my whole perspective. And the more I looked at my life, the more I saw how it all revolved around literary analysis. Like with television, and music...so I was able to make that connection myself, and really appreciate literature – I really tried to capture that passion that I have, and share it, because I feel that it's really important. And I'm sure math teachers, for example, would tell you the same thing: they feel passion for math, they're motivated to go out and share it, so...that's number one. I know how much this meant to me, and how it changed my

life. I want them to at least acknowledge that passion. Theirs may be for something else, but that's really probably the number one thing. The appreciation for language; the art of writing about the world as you see it.

This is one of the reasons he puts a lot of effort into ensuring students connect with his lessons. He wants to guarantee students will find themselves and gain knowledge and a sense of direction through their meaningful and connected work in his class.

Mr. Smith also believes that above all he is teaching students, regardless of their race. In some ways he thinks focusing on race, or buying into the victim mentality, does a disservice to students and that since the expectations will be the same for them as for other college students off the reservation, it is important make sure he teaches them to the level he would any student, even if the content or the methods vary some. In his words,

I don't think I've ever approached teaching in the sense that I'm teaching American Indian kids; it's just that I'm teaching. And maybe part of that is because it is my first fulltime job, and...maybe it's that some teachers teach five, ten years at a "white" school and then come to a reservation school; they might think about the kids being American Indian more. But I've never really approached it that way. Of course, in the state of Montana, and particularly with IEFA, you kind of have to approach it from an American Indian perspective. But I feel I treat everyone the same. And I've always felt like that's why I get respect from students, because of that. One piece of advice I got when I came here from a fellow white educator was that the teachers who have trouble come to Browning with the mentality of, I'm going to fix this "Indian" problem. I can come in from the outside, with my expansive knowledge, and fix all these problems. And she said, if you approach it like that, you're going to fail. You can't treat it like a pet project. So I took that to heart.

These sentiments lead to another of Mr. Smith's philosophies which is that it is detrimental to teach a particular way to students because of what others have said about the abilities or aptitudes or their race. This is particularly important with respect to considering American Indian students college-capable. Historically Mr. Smith feels that

people have found it easy to slack off in their teaching because they think American Indians are best prepared for life through vocational studies. He, however, believes each of his students can go to college if they want to. He admits,

Then in the course of getting them ready [for college], sometimes that question does come up: do I need to do that any differently because of the fact that they've lived on the reservation their entire life? But I really try to be NOT conscious of that fact, because I look at as a detriment to think, I have predominately Indian students, so I should teach them "this" way. I don't do that.

In his classroom, Mr. Smith appreciates the new and interesting perspectives Native culture may bring to students' learning and he invests in the idea that it is possible for students to be experts on certain topics and to have the ability to teach each other and to teach the teacher. Therefore he frequently creates opportunities for students to bring their own knowledge and leadership into class work and to engage in lessons where students and teacher can learn alongside one another. Projects that incorporate Blackfeet culture are one way he achieves this. He comments, "A lot of it is them teaching me, as far as white versus Indian. I learn a lot from my students about how things are here in Browning, and I can compare that to how I grew up...These kids have grown up on a reservation; most of my students know more and teach me more [than I teach them]. His KONY 2012 project is another example. When students became enamored with a YouTube video that hit the internet in early March, Mr. Smith immediately incorporated it into what his students were learning, creating an interdisciplinary unit with other teachers at the school. The project reinforces another of Mr. Smith's philosophies.

No one should experience culture shock from any angle because we should all be informed and interested in each other. It's a basic concept, but one Mr. Smith feels

Native students are insulated from because of the IEFA micro-focus and their own limited life experiences. He says to students,

Spend your time there [off the reservation], get whatever you can out of it, and then come back. I think that's very beneficial. It really goes back to the whole Kony thing – and this is something that's happening in Africa – well, yeah, you're from Montana, you're from the United States. Should you not care what's going on in Africa? I think that's a bad mentality. So the importance of college is the importance of experiencing the world, and college is just part of that.

Mr. Smith feels his own multicultural experiences have helped him find success in teaching saying,

I've lived in different places, and different cultural places, too – like I lived in Kentucky for years, where I was one of two or three white people and I think that people who haven't had this background will come to a reservation and...I've heard all kinds of horror stories. When I first got here, they'd gone through like seven or eight English teachers in four years of high school; three in one year. One didn't even make it through the first day. And I think that's where some of those issues start to come in, culture shock. And we talk about Native Americans going into the white world and having culture shock, but it certainly happens on the flip side. So I don't go into a new environment and think it's going to completely change my world, because I'm open to new ideas.

Mr. Smith hopes that his approach to teaching demonstrates this openness and encourages students to also gain the confidence to be open to new things. In order for students to gain this confidence, however, they must be taught the skills to become confidently independent.

Mr. Smith feels that being confident and independent is essential in order for students to become positive contributors to their communities. Although he strives to communicate this by teaching explaining, “The higher level of thinking, and being able to do work on your own – I try to put a lot of onus on them, which backfires a lot, but I put

a focus on that. Again, that's how college is, and it annoys me that we have – our kids shouldn't be shocked when they go to college," he sometimes feels that cultural patterns work against this philosophy.

And I think that goes back to the cultural thing too, at least in Browning: very strong family units, which can be such a positive thing, but it can also be a negative thing. If you grow up in this strong family, and you live with all these family members that you're around all the time, of course you'll miss them when you get to college. And there's this "pulled back in" mentality. So I actually think we need to develop them more as an individual: I can be away from my family for a year, or four years! And then maybe I will come back with my doctorate degree and now I can go teach or whatever. But I think a lot of kids, whether they know it or not, are *too* tied to their families, and too tied to the reservation. And that "I gotta stay here and struggle" mentality.

Still, in his classes, Mr. Smith pays special attention to the rigor of his assignments saying, "I try to make my classes as college-like as possible. Working on your own, being given freedom to choose your work and follow through with it...like, I see the inability of a lot of kids to do homework. I have been in other schools and have not seen that." He believes that the students are capable of higher-level work, but that they have not been taught how to be responsible with it. As Mr. Smith reflected on his philosophy of student responsibility, he sees that some of it may have come from his own upbringing. He recalls,

I grew up as a latchkey child: home alone after school, both parents working...so I wonder if that did contribute to the way I see this. I was very independent growing up; I had to be. If I wanted a snack after school, my mom wasn't there to do it - I had to do it myself. Some of my students were essentially raised by their grandparents, and I think there was a lot of coddling. It happens until they're in high school. So I think there's something to be said for that; maybe if they were a little more independent when they were younger, maybe they'd be better off. That's why college can be such a shock – if you're 17 or 18, and it's the first time you've ever really spent alone, that can certainly be rough. Why would

students do homework that they've never been asked to do by their parents? Why do they have a hard time staying in college? Because they've been coddled too much.

While Mr. Smith does not fault his students for being caught up in this cultural pattern, he does feel that students need to be aware of their own abilities and that these abilities can get them the things they want in life as well as helping them to avoid what they don't want, such as poverty, alcoholism, or feeling trapped.

Finally, running parallel to the importance he places on openness, Mr. Smith believes it is important for students to know and teachers to be open to the fact that there are multiple perspectives and ways to arrive at an answer and all can be correct. He feels flexibility is key to maintaining positive relationships with students and helping them to feel a sense of fair treatment in his class. He attributes some of this perspective to being raised around diverse groups of people saying, "I've always been interested in [multicultural] stuff like that, I can't put my finger on why – my parents certainly didn't prevent me from having that kind of world, but little things like growing up with people that weren't my same race made me aware that my way wasn't the only way." In a situation where teachers can easily misuse their power to be the ones representing what is right, it is important to remember that a student's sense of success is grounded in discovering a route to the answer that makes sense to them and teachers need to be flexible in order to accommodate for these paths to discovery.

Mrs. Salois, Math Teacher, Browning, MT

Upon working with a colleague to review interview transcripts according to the case study protocol for analysis, a number of living educational theories and educational

philosophies were isolated from Mrs. Salois' interview. Mrs. Salois' guiding theories and philosophies included:

1. Everyone can learn. Specifically, everyone can do math. Everyone.
2. To teach successfully you must have students' respect and you must have their attention.
3. A positive attitude is the key to success for everyone, however, this must be tempered with acceptance of the fact that everyone, teachers and students, has an occasional bad day.
4. Being a good teacher is more of an attitude than a method.
5. Always ask for the best in others.
6. Students want to learn and expect teachers to keep them engaged in meaningful learning experiences.
7. If you reward students they will rise to meet your expectations. Even if the reward is minimal it is a sign that you are investing in their experience and acknowledging the effort they will expend to meet your expectations.
8. Being adequately prepared shows students you believe they will make progress and move on to new and greater things.
9. There is more than one way to arrive at the right answer

Mrs. Salois teaches math, a subject with a reputation for being difficult, especially for girls or people with an artistic bent. But Mrs. Salois' seminal philosophy is "Everyone can learn. Specifically, everyone can do math. Everyone." When asked how she arrived at this philosophy she said,

My dad just believed that everyone could learn and my mom was very good at language; she could pick up Latin...and so when I got here, so many kids I got were saying, I can't do math, I'll never do math, I was told I'll never take math. And I said, I'd like to see that, a whole culture that can't do math. And it's not just here, but I also work with groups of kids from inner city Detroit, and they had the same attitude. Somewhere along the line, someone had told these kids that they can't do math. And it seems to be more girls that are told this than boys. And I said, OK – I'm a girl, and I do math. And I've always loved math.

She didn't always have this well-defined philosophy for her own teaching. Early in her career, Mrs. Salois taught at "high-brow" schools where math just happened, but teaching in Browning was what really brought out her belief that math is for everyone. She describes her experience in this way,

When I first started teaching [in Browning] I got the lower-level kids that were working at first and second-grade levels; I never had experienced that low level. So it was kind of eye-opening. It didn't take me long to figure out that math had to be the center of things to them, and it had to be visual. And it's becoming more important, especially with algebra. It's so easy to make everything visual. You want those holey jeans and you would pay \$80 for holey jeans? How much would you pay for jeans with no holes? Well what's the difference in price? If it's fractions how many legs of holey jeans can you get for the price of the ones with no holes?

Mrs. Salois believes this perspective that everyone is math-able has allowed her to get a lot of gratification out of teaching the subject. She says, "The greatest moment is the "aha" moment – you can tell when they get it. And they're so happy! And once they get it, they're ready to tell everybody else how to get it. So your job is cut in half." And she remembers one incident in particular:

I think that the theory that they couldn't do [math] was set in my mind when I had a special ed student that for years was told that she could never, ever do math. She used to come in and she used to sit by me. And I started to see that she could understand what was going on, and finally I discovered that she just didn't know her multiplication tables. And I got

her a calculator. Now she's an accountant. So I thought, you know, I'm sick and tired of hearing I can't do math. It's for everyone.

From then on there was no student who in her mind could not do well in math and she has continued to teach according to this philosophy ever since.

Mrs. Salois also believe that in order to teach successfully you must have students' respect and you must have their attention. Part of this comes from knowing students and their background experiences. "I babysat for my sister-in-law and I got to know the reservation. The living conditions were so tough it was amazing those kids got to school at all." Understanding the challenges of living on the reservation brought to attention that students were so burdened from outside life that "you have to have their attention. And you have to fill their days with meaningful words." In retrospect she realized that she didn't start off teaching in this way and it affected the respect she got from students. She recounts,

Like I said, I came from a student teaching job where it was very high-brow, you didn't have to do anything. You would get [respect] if you would stay in school, and everyone was afraid of the principal. He would go around and hand out report cards, and there were like four times as many seniors there as there are here, and he handed the report card to every last kid. So I was in this setting where [respect] was expected of you, and when I did my student teaching I expected it of the students. And when I first got here, my first day here, boom – I had twins, a boy and a girl. The girl didn't have any math level, and the boy had a fifth-grade math level. And I had them in the same class, and she did not like me. [She had some developmental disabilities.] And she came after me with a knife. And her brother ran after her, picked her up, and threw her over the railing into the high school gym...So I thought Hm, I think I really need the respect of the kids if I'm going to make it here. So that was eye-opening. I almost quit; that was pretty scary. But we had a really strong principal. That's what you need; a really strong principal that the kids respect.

Once she realized she needed to earn the students' respect she set about figuring out how to gain it. She says,

I got to know the kids more. I volunteered more, spent more time with them outside of class. My husband was a horseshoer and I went with him to shoe the horses, and I ended up talking to the people in that town and getting to know them. You know, when you come in from the outside, you don't know what to expect. They were always so nice to me. As soon as you let the kids know you're doing that, that helps. And, I acted older than I was. I'd been tutoring my sisters for years in math. But to earn respect, it doesn't come all at once. As soon as the kids started calling me "Aunty," I knew I was in. Now it's "Grandma."

When asked if there was a specific moment in time when she realized she had the respect of students she replied, "I don't think that there's a timeline for knowing when you have respect...it's just something you know." While there may not be a specific timeline, longevity certainly seems to help. One of the focus group students remarked that Mrs. Salois had achieved elder status in the community because she had been teaching for so long, so long in fact that she had taught his grandfather, his mother, and him.

Mrs. Salois has a strong appreciation for positivity and believes it is one of the factors that allow students to tackle difficult work. Sometimes students don't have that attitude on their own, and they need teachers to have a positive environment set up for them so they can enter into a positive work space. Mrs. Salois espouses that a positive attitude is the key to success for everyone; however, this must be tempered with acceptance of the fact that everyone, teachers and students, has an occasional bad day. Fortunately she says, "Kids have bad days, and they accept that you have bad days too." Accepting this has helped her to have a realistic outlook on each day's events whether they seem good or bad.

This philosophy that positivity is a key to success supports Mrs. Salois' belief that being a good teacher is more of an attitude than a method. She feels teaching methods are subordinate to the manner in which the methods are delivered, the consistent and underlying atmosphere established by the teacher's persona. She says, "I think what the kids pick up on is that you're happy about what you're doing. It's not a drudgery to come to work and you have a positive outlook every day. You're happy to see the kids. You can tell it when a person is talking to you, you can see it." A teacher's attitude about teaching and about life day in and day out with kids directly affects students' perceptions of how much they think their teacher values them.

Because she values them, Mrs. Salois always asks for the best in her students.

She explains,

I want them to do their best, and I don't let up on them. If I know they can do it, I'm going to pick on them and pick on them, and push them, and they might say, why? And I say, because I know you can do it. And I want you to do it. I have high expectations of kids. I tell them, it's important to me that you succeed. Why be a teacher if you don't push them to succeed?

Mrs. Salois believes that taking a position in her teaching methods that challenges students is in their best interests and that students who are not challenged stagnate. This perspective leads to another one of Mrs. Salois' theories.

Mrs. Salois believes students want to learn and expect teachers to keep them engaged in meaningful learning experiences. She says, "Kids want someone as a teacher that they actually learn from. If they don't like education once they leave, you didn't do your job." When she reflects on how she came to this conclusion she says,

One thing is that I don't want my time wasted. I am not very good at wasting time. I don't have downtime; I have hiking, cleaning...I'm always doing something. I just don't believe in ... even with my grandkids. They don't get to sit around much – we go bicycling, sledding, or something. I just assumed that everyone is like that. But over the years, I've learned that the kids actually do want to be engaged all the time.

Mrs. Salois has found that a good challenge is one of the best student motivators.

Occasionally students find it difficult to embrace the challenge sometimes for fear of failure, but she has found a solution for that in her next theory.

Mrs. Salois believes that if you reward students they will rise to meet your expectations. This is because even if the reward is minimal it is a sign that you are investing in their experience and acknowledging the effort they will expend to meet your expectations. Mrs. Salois said she learned this from a professional development workshop:

I learned that – it's a little trick I learned... you know that dam outside of Helena? Canyon Ferry? We were at a workshop there, and the woman came out with those little chocolate candy bars and said this is really a good attention-getter for little kids. And I said, little kids? That works for adults! I'm going to try it! And I've been doing it for the last several years, and it's unbelievable. They don't need much, but if you give them that little treat, they'll do almost anything for you. These kids are shy and quiet sometimes and sometimes they have extra credit questions and you know the kids get candy, not points, Jolly Ranchers, and it gets volunteers a little quicker. That way they are jumping in to the learning and trying it out here where I can help them instead of struggling at home with homework.

She doesn't consider it bribery. Instead, rewarding students in this way turns the experience into a game and one student doesn't have to come across as the know-it-all.

They all want candy so they are all engaged and participating together.

Mrs. Salois believes that being adequately prepared shows students you believe they will make progress and move on to new and greater things. Sometimes teachers get lazy about being well-prepared for class, but Mrs. Salois says this has a detrimental effect on student morale. She explains,

I do lesson plans just for me. I want to know, and I want to be on track, and I want to know exactly what I'm showing the kids so they understand the concept. I do it for me, not for the administration. You have to be prepared. And that's when downtime happens, when a teacher's not prepared. Planned time is different; the kids catch on very quickly. You can't tell kids – not at this level, anyway – oh, I don't care what you do for the last 15 minutes – just study your notes. They don't know what to do with those minutes.

Being unprepared communicates low expectations to students because the teacher does not have something for them to move onto if they finish what was planned for the day.

Well-prepared teachers, on the other hand, communicate a continuous drive to learn and improve which is healthy for students.

Finally, Mrs. Salois believes there is more than one way to arrive at the right answer. As she explains, “What works for one person doesn't necessarily work for another.” She came about this belief by reflecting on her own experiences with math.

She remembers it this way:

When I first started teaching, I went by the book. You know, ‘the way I learned is the way you'll learn’ kind of thing. Then I started to think, you know what? Not everyone is getting it this way. My dad was not a teacher, he was an engineer, but he was probably the best teacher I ever had. When I took calculus in college, he got the book too, so he could help me. And whatever the guy said in the classroom just didn't dawn on me until the way my dad said it. So over the years, especially with my students here, if you can show them why it works, how it works, how it makes sense to them – memorizing is not the way. When I was growing up, that's what you did. But some kids just can't, and others do it but have no clue what they're memorizing. So I wanted it to be something they

saw. Show them more than one way, but *show* them. People receive what they learn if they understand why it works...See I used to take apart appliances with my son and put them back together. It doesn't matter how you get it back together if you can get it back together so it works.

Mrs. Salois' children also had an impact on her support for multiple right methods. She discussed her children's math experiences saying,

My daughter loves math, my son loves math and they had a teacher that said, "My way or no way," and I would get so mad at him. It was geometry and proofs. There is not just one way to do a proof. I could not get that through that man's head. Pretty soon [my son] just stopped doing it. You gotta accept the fact that kids do things differently. That should be good enough for you; that he didn't do it your way – who cares? So I never let any of my kids take his class ever again. It's whatever way you see to get it done; there's not just one way. That's my ACT speech. When we're down to the crunch, and you don't have a lot of time and don't know how to solve a problem, use a calculator, if you're pressed for time. They don't care how you got the answer, just that you got it. We have kids that just don't do well with time-sensitive pressure. They spend half the allotted time calming down to *take* the stupid test!

For Mrs. Salois, the most important part of learning is understanding why something is the way it is. Whatever path a student needs to take to gain that information is a valid and worthwhile route, even if it differs from others. Quelling a student's ability to learn because of a teacher's closed mind is one of the most severe misdeeds a teacher can commit.

Mr. Tackes, Science Teacher, Hardin, MT

Upon working with a colleague to review interview transcripts according to the case study protocol for analysis, a number of living educational theories and educational philosophies were isolated from Mr. Tackes' interview. Mr. Tackes' guiding theories and philosophies included:

1. Teachers need to be sensitive to the conditions and circumstances affecting students who attend school.
2. Ethnicity is not the primary determinant of degree of difficulty in school, it's the other things that accompany that like chronic poverty.
3. Teachers need to teach and understand the whole student through strong relationships.
4. You cannot reach kids until they trust you.
5. Effective teachers are unique because of their personalities.
6. Being successful in school is a choice students have to make for themselves so they become self-sustaining.
7. Struggling students need guided practice to create strong foundations for learning.
8. Teachers need to be flexible.
9. Teachers need to love more and care less.

Mr. Tackes believes teachers do best when they are sensitive to the conditions and circumstances that affect their students. In his own words he says, "But given the fact that we're in a public school, I am of the opinion that a teacher's got to be sensitive to what you see, in terms of...our circumstances are different here." He says the tutoring program at Hardin was designed to meet the needs of some of the students with difficult circumstances, "I think some kids really make use of it, partly because when they're heading home, who knows what they're going home to. Do they have an opportunity? The things that you and I took for granted growing up..." He believes there are a number of different reasons students experience different circumstances. One of them may be

cultural. “As you well know, within the Crow tribe there are factions – political, economic, and cultural. There are families that are highly educated; then there are families that reject education, in a sense. And a whole bunch in the middle. I think you need to be – it’s so important to get a feel for this.”

Mr. Tackes believes being attuned to a student involves spending time in conversation and communicating expectations in a safe environment. He provides an illustration of this idea: “So if I’m sitting here trying to do a problem like that with a kid on the board, it doesn’t really matter who they are. But I need to be aware of where they come from, and what their background is. I do a lot of conversational stuff with the kids, once I get them trained. Because, believe me, when they come in from the middle school, they’re like unbroken colts.” Mr. Tackes also thinks that first step to really understanding students is getting them engaged and not letting them hang out on the outskirts. As he says, “We need to get the kids involved – we have a lot of kids that for whatever reason they just don’t want to be here. It could be family things, a bunch of them are way too cool, I’m going to wear everything black until I find something darker.” Whatever their circumstances, Mr. Tackes is of the persuasion that students are much more likely to succeed if they have a teacher who has taken the time to know who they are in an academic, personal, and community way.

Mr. Tackes believes that when it comes to American Indian students, ethnicity is not the primary determinant of degree of difficulty in school; it’s the other things that accompany that such as chronic poverty. He explains, “A significant number of our kids deal with what is referred to as chronic, rural poverty. From a socioeconomic standpoint,

that's really where a bunch of them are at. It doesn't matter what causes that, it just is."

He goes on to say, "The issue to me is not your tribal affiliation or ethnicity, but the other things that accompany that. I think the brain works the same way." What are the limiting factors for some students? Mr. Tackes defines them this way,

So what are the things we're dealing with? We know, for example, that the kids here come in with less background knowledge; they simply – the things that you and I, when we were six years old, had heard from our parents, in terms of conversations that are held in the household, just don't happen for them. I mean, you grew up in a different world. You read *Cosmopolitan* by the time you were seven years old. That experience provides you with resources that give you background knowledge that you can build on. Our kids come in with spoken language skills that are four years behind when they arrive in kindergarten. They go to Crow, they come here, wherever they happen to go – they make suitable progress, but they're still behind.

Mr. Tackes firmly believes that Native students are as capable as any other students, but because they often arrive in his class with less foundational knowledge they struggle more.

One of the things that helps create an effective learning environment for struggling students is teachers who teach and understand the whole student through strong relationships. Mr. Tackes explains how relationships work when teachers are authentic:

I've made a couple blunders this year I've regretted. Dealing with a kid in a reprimanding sort of way. If I could take it back, I would. But if you're authentic, if the kids know you like what you're doing, and you think they're important, then what happens is they recover from that. No different from when you discipline your child and you find out later that it was the other kid that did it; they forgive you. Humans are resilient in that regard, if they know that – and in a family setting, what's the thing that overrides that injustice; is your kids are confident that you love them. They forget that. I'm sure there were times as a youngster that I got blamed for things that I didn't do. And I blamed others too. But kids are

forgiving. The kids that are damaged have more trouble with that, because they have issues. And we have more of those, I would say, than other places do...It's not compartmentalized. That's the way I think of it. I read a book ten years ago by Parker Palmer, and the one thing that really struck me was this idea of what he called authenticity.

While authentic and strong relationships are important, how each teacher establishes these may be different, and Mr. Tackes believes it is important to make sure that these relationships are balanced and have appropriate boundaries. He explains,

I tend to be quick-tongued with kids. But you've got to know who they are, and build that relationship with them. You have to be able to take it too. For years, they said, you look like one of the Mario brothers. Or they'd tease me and say, "How old are you?" And I'd say, "I'm older than dirt." I think it's really important to be able to do that, but you also have to draw a line. You have to maintain a professional boundary. In a small town like this, it's really easy to know the parents, and be friends with them. And the kid's suddenly in your class. It doesn't matter if they're Native or not, but you've got to let the kid feel comfortable first. If you do share something, it's got to be positive. But on the other hand, you can't have that favoritism either. So you've gotta take care, because if I acknowledge that I know this kid from the time they were a little child and I've been around them a bunch, I can't let that color what other kids' opinions are, and it might not be good for that youngster either.

Beyond being able to have successful exchanges with students, teachers also need to be able to convey trustworthiness. Mr. Tackes believes you cannot reach kids until they trust you. As an example, "There was a kid at Pretty Eagle that came here to high school, and he said I'm glad you're here, and I said why's that? And he said you're fair. He wasn't looking for an easy class, he just wanted to be able to count on something." One of the people who influenced his thinking in this area was a man named Dennis McLaughlin. Mr. Tackes described him this way:

In '96, a guy named Dennis McLaughlin, out of California – he is wacky like you can't believe. He does these workshops called High-Trust Psychology, and he has this acronym, "ARF": Achievement, Respect, and

Freedom. Kids have to have that same thing. He said, you cannot reach kids until they trust you. I believe that. You've got to be connected somehow.

Mr. Tackes said hearing McLaughlin speak caused him to reflect on a prior teaching experience:

Then I [taught at] an all-girls school. That was fabulous. I hate to say it, but it doesn't get any better than that. We did a lot of innovative things there in terms of relationships with kids. It was a safe but challenging place where kids were expected to do a lot, but there was a support system to help them.

He believes that because students were well-supported, and trusted that support because of strong relationships, they were able to pursue educational challenges more successfully.

Reflecting on his 30+ years in education, Mr. Tackes has come to believe that effective teachers are unique because of their personalities. He explains,

You probably had professors in college that were authentic. They had antique dog-eared notes, and it wasn't the content, but what it conveyed. They just had that – I don't know what it is. I used to think you could make a teacher, that anybody could be a teacher. But I don't know any more if that's the case. I'm beginning to think that effective teachers, it's in their personality. Can you get better at your craft? Absolutely.

He acknowledges that although teachers may be able to learn some things about effective teaching, there may be a part of teaching that is innate and unique to certain individuals.

Even though Mr. Tackes knows that many of his students come from difficult backgrounds, he still firmly believes in a student's responsibility for his own education. Being successful in school is a choice students have to make for themselves so they become self-sustaining. Mr. Tackes discussed how in his environment it is easy to want to coddle students along, but again he acknowledged the influence of McLaughlin in

changing his thinking. As he says, “McLaughlin’s stuff gave me the ability to say, it’s on you, as a student. It’s your choice.” One of the reasons this is important is because Mr.

Tackes believes that dependency is detrimental to the students. He explains,

I think that’s what you have to do. To bring kids to the next level, so that they become self-sustaining. The argument has been that kids become dependent, and to a degree they do. But if they don’t become independent learners and all you’ve started is a discovery process, what have you got then? Someone who doesn’t have any information, that’s what. How is that a saleable commodity? I was reading this one article and it said a lecture was a bad thing. Is a “lecture” me standing up there and reading my notes? I would never do that. I wear out markers on the board like crazy, and I ask questions. I need to know, hey, do you get this? You practice it. You show me that you know this, can you make connections? How do you remember complicated terms? I have four years of high school Latin, and kids complain to me that I use big words. I say, “So?” You can learn those words, because I’m using them in context. If I come in with a word that’s really above the level, I provide a synonym. Hopefully they’ll add that to their lexicon. If I can give them root meanings, which I do every day, that’s background knowledge. A lot of kids don’t get that; television doesn’t give it to you. It used to be, kids would read.

Mr. Tackes suspects the problems of dependence and academic disability begin early, in elementary school.

But we have a difficulty here that I think comes from late elementary school, that’s sort of, what’s my accountability? You mean I’ve got to remember that? So you try to come up with tools to address that. It takes the better part of freshman year to get kids to realize that they are accountable. All they’re doing is warming a chair. There is a compelling amount of research evidence that shows that you need to really bombard middle school kids with learning and really hold them accountable. Demand a lot from them, because it helps them develop that pre-frontal cortex, that managerial part of the brain. There was a guy that I listened to on the radio, Westminster Town Forum, I bought the tape – Dr. Garberino. This was after the episode in Columbine. He talked about teaching the kids how to behave; he said you really have to demand a lot from them, because their brain is very capable. I don’t buy the middle-school model. What happens here is we get 30% of our drop-outs are freshman. They don’t know what it is to be a student.

Within a context where academic aspirations and expectations can be varied, it is important to provide a learning structure that is effective for students.

Mr. Tackes believes that especially in the area of science, students need strong knowledge bases upon which to structure further learning. Through trial and error he has come to believe that struggling students need guided practice to create strong foundations for learning. One of the factors that contributed to this theory was the reflection time his school allotted for considering school improvement actions. He says,

Another thing is that our school process here has allowed me to kind of look at teaching practices – what is it? And years ago I would have never even considered even looking at this, and now I do. What is it that we look at? One of the things we've listened to for a lot of years, a long, long time, is experiential learning. Constructivist learning. Discovery learning. Inquiry learning. And what they're finding is, those are OK, but socioeconomically challenged kids, without a background, they need more guided practice.

He goes on to illustrate what this looked like in his science class:

We had a guy who came here one year, and he had been at Stoneybrook in physics education, and he said, here's what we're going to do. He had a lesson on thermal expansion with younger kids, and took a popcorn popper and a big sheet, and popped the popcorn without putting the top of the popper on. And I thought, what? Those are hot missiles coming out! The kids were supposed to describe it, but I thought, you've got to have background. They need something to build upon. Inquiry is great, to a point, but what do you hear in college? You hear that kids are coming in without any information. And they spend all this time doing process learning, but they've never accumulated enough background knowledge to put it to work. You've seen that quadrant thing with A level, B level, and so on? Level B is where you can take unfamiliar ideas and consolidate them. Synthesis, I think they call it. Well, you can't apply knowledge you don't have, and that's the thing that I saw happening with some of the science inquiry stuff. You give the kids something, and they might have fun doing this, but what did they learn in the final analysis? I'm of the opinion that kids can't discover everything in science. You don't have to memorize the periodic table; you can look the details up. It's more

important for you to understand it practically, so you can utilize this resource.

In light of these realizations, Mr. Tackes feels one of the most strategic things a teacher can do for students with limited background knowledge is teach them to use the resources available to them. He says, “I don’t even remember the whole periodic table anymore, but I know how to find out the information on it and I understand what the table represents, like this row is noble gasses and what does that mean. Which elements have what properties.” It is unrealistic for students to memorize this type of information, but this information is realistic and practical for student lives if it teaches them how to access and use resources.

Another one of Mr. Tackes’ philosophies is that teachers need to be flexible. His own experiences have taught him the value of being flexible. As he says, “And here’s the other part: if you’re rigid, you’re going to run into trouble. When I first started teaching, I was pretty rigid.” One of the things that lead him to see his rigidity and become more flexible was Dennis McLaughlin’s class where he adopted his next philosophy.

Mr. Tackes believes teachers need to love more and care less. He explained this idea in the context of his own teaching observations:

Dennis McLaughlin’s class was the thing that changed [my rigidity]. His comment was how to love more, and care less. Because think of all the teachers you’ve seen in your career that just fuss. They screw themselves into the ground, because they’re worried. I still do that. I lie awake at night thinking about things. I once had this kid who was acting out, and finally I asked him, instead of trying to use a heavy hand, “Cole, did you wake up on the fifth-grade side of the bed this morning?” I don’t know where that came from, but it made him laugh, and now he likes me. He took all my classes.

Through the process of learning to love students more and getting less wrapped up in student behavior, Mr. Tackes was able to create better connections with students and this improved his effectiveness.

Mr. Bell, Health Enhancement Teachers
and Principal, Lame Deer, MT

Upon working with a colleague to review interview transcripts according to the case study protocol for analysis, a number of living educational theories and educational philosophies were isolated from Mr. Bell's interview. Mr. Bell's guiding theories and philosophies included:

1. You can teach a kid almost anything if you have a relationship with them.
2. Being a good teacher means being open and asking questions.
3. Each student is his own individual, there is no generalizing, especially by race.
4. Students have to learn to live in both worlds.
5. Material needs to be broken down into manageable steps that apply to real life.
6. It takes a special person to want to teach in a poverty situation.

Mr. Bell's formative guiding philosophy involves the importance of relationships with students. He believes students become teachable only after a good student/teacher relationship has been established. In his own words he says, "The big thing with me is building relationships. I think if you do that, you can teach a kid just about anything."

Mr. Bell also believes that being a good teacher means being open and asking questions. Speaking from his own experience teaching in a cross-cultural setting he says,

One of the big things with me is, I came in with an open mind. I asked a lot of questions. I just feel it out and see how things go. I was lucky

enough to have some elders here that said, if you have any questions, come ask. A couple said that no one ever did ask, but I did. I took full advantage: why can I do this, why is this wrong, why is this culturally sensitive? We didn't grow up the same. So I was lucky enough have someone that guided me in the right direction so I didn't make such big cultural mistakes.

Even though he has worked hard to understand the nuances of the culture, Mr. Bell also emphasizes the fact that there is no secret recipe for successfully teaching Native students.

Mr. Bell has learned through frequent interaction with students each student is his own individual, there is no generalizing, especially by race. He explains,

I realized that every student is different, even though most of these kids are Native American. When I have a conversation with one kid, I'll have a totally different conversation with another. You can get very, very real with them. You take the shirt and tie off, and you can have a real in-depth conversation. Then there are kids that you have to leave the tie on, and you can have an in-depth conversation with. I don't think there's any science to it...you just deal with every situation that comes across your desk.

He feels it is important for students to develop their own identities and pursue their own goals that go above and beyond what people have said about American Indians in their short-sighted labeling. He explains that when he talks to students he says,

One day it won't matter what color your skin is. It's going to matter what's up here [thumping his skull]. You get that degree, it puts you on equal playing field. I talk to my kids that way. Yeah, you're Native American. Yeah, you're poor, you're on food stamps. When you get outside these four walls, that doesn't matter. What you get in here opens up the door for those next walls. You can do whatever you want after that.

Mr. Bell believes that students can't be coddled just because they are Native and that they have to learn to live in both worlds. Because he also grew up as a racial

minority characterized by poverty he understands the two-world feeling, but he counsels students according to what his grandfather taught him,

He grew up during segregation, and he taught me that I had to learn to live in both worlds, because one day I was going to work for one of these white people. I never understood what that meant, but I always listened to everything he said. As I got older, I realized that education put me on a level playing field with everyone else. My background didn't matter – now I can market myself. I can prove to you that I'm the best option you can have. I got that from my grandparents. That gave me the opportunity to be able to break out of the shell and go get that education, because I had a guiding factor. I got to see what it was like to put in 60 hours a week to make ends meet. That education makes it so you don't have to settle.

His experiences growing up in the projects as a child of a dysfunctional family allow him to identify with struggling students and in a way he is able to act a stable base for students who are just now considering entering the “other” world. He describes the way he encourages them like this:

If you want to be a doctor or a lawyer, you go find the information you need, chase your dreams. You might not be a surgeon, but you can still be a doctor. I try to help the kids see that. You got these big dreams that you want to do, but – I had a kid tell me, I want to be a vet but everyone is telling me I got to take all these science classes, for eight years, to be a vet, and I can barely get through science now. And I told him, you know what? I was a P.E. teacher, and I had to take a lot of science classes too. It doesn't matter what career you choose. You're still going to have to take those classes; don't psych yourself out before you even try. We have all these tools now that can help you; it's nowhere near as hard as it used to be. College is tough, but college is not hard. It's just about being dedicated to getting the job done. It might take a long time, but it can be done. A lot of our kids don't think they can do that. We've got kids who have never been as far as Billings. And they think, if only I could get to Billings...and they don't realize there's a whole other world beyond Billings.

Talks like these allow Mr. Bell to lay the groundwork for a level of confidence that lets students struggle successfully with the difficulties they will face if they attend college.

He acknowledges that high school can provide some of the knowledge students need, but it is unlikely to provide all that they need.

In order for students to get as much out of their time in the classroom as possible, Mr. Bell believes it is important for material to be broken down into manageable steps that apply to real life. When he first began teaching he was not as successful at this as he is now that he has his own children. He explains,

You always have this dynamic plan that you put together that's going to save the world, and every kid's going to get it, and it's going to be great. But my first couple years teaching, if I had a lesson they didn't get, I'd complain: I can't believe they didn't get it – I taught it! I gave them all my energy I had for that lesson and it didn't work! It must be the kids...How do I do this? So I take it back to the same way I teach my son at home. If I'm teaching my boy something that I think he should know, I break it down. I'm trying to teach him how to tie his shoes right now. So rather than get frustrated, you take it step by step. If I'm teaching kids in the classroom about body composition, I'm not going to expect them to get it all. To understand that this percentage of body fat means this, or this. I have to go step by step. Have to teach them how to measure. You have to learn this in home ec and science too. So that's the first thing we go over. I have to teach them what it means to have 18, 19% body fat, what the height-weight chart is. If it doesn't work, you have to go back and re-teach it, because evidently you didn't hook them to understand. And a lot of times I'll sub; the other day I subbed a math class doing fractions. These kids are struggling. They said they've been working on it for three weeks. So I broke it down in terms of a basketball play; they understood and did fractions. We have to make it real life, and they get it.

As experience has taught Mr. Bell what works best in Lame Deer, he has gradually built a perspective on effective methods and dispositions and he has come to the conclusion that not everyone can teach here.

After five years living in the community, Mr. Bell believes it takes a special person to want to teach in a poverty situation. He explains his philosophy this way:

I am a firm believer that it takes a special person to want to teach. It takes a real special person to teach in a poverty situation. I mean, your students come to school with more. We have students come in here and they haven't had a meal, mom and dad are on drugs, they saw someone get arrested last night, there's alcohol abuse, they're abused themselves. It takes a special person to work with those kids and try to get on the same level with that kid and prove that education is important, but also to understand what they're going through. In a 'normal,' traditional school, you kick a kid with a bad attitude out of school and tell them to come back when their attitude is better. In this school, we sit down and talk about what happened at home last night; about why is your behavior like this. Then I know at that point that something happened last night: this kid is hungry, or tired, and needs something basic before they can do well in class. It's stressful. It will drain you. You want to save the world, but you can't. In a perfect world, you'd have this big old home, and you could take 70 kids in and make sure they all get a bath, they all get a meal, they all get a good night's sleep, they all have someone to hug them every day and tell them they love them, they're special, pat them on the back when they come home with As and Bs, but in reality it doesn't happen. So our job here is to make sure we fill some of the gaps, not only educational, but personal. When I first got here and patted a kid on the back or complimented them on their haircut or new shirt, some kids will cuss you out. Because they've never had a compliment. Some kids go into their shell when you say something good about them, because last time that happened, someone tried to take advantage of them. So I think it takes a special person to do that. I consider myself pretty tough, but you have to learn not to take it personally. That's the tough part for anyone in this situation. You can only do what you can do. If you've helped one or two, you've done a good job.

What Mr. Bell describes is not a place where teachers can teach their content for the day, go home and feel a sense of peace about their contributions to the world. For Mr. Bell, good teaching is deeply social and emotionally engaged and perhaps not all teachers have the skills or disposition to teach from this platform effectively for a prolonged period of time. This is why he believes the right teachers stay and the unequipped ones leave.

Mrs. Bell, Elementary Special Education
Teacher, Lame Deer, MT

Upon working with a colleague to review interview transcripts according to the case study protocol for analysis, a number of living educational theories and educational philosophies were isolated from Mrs. Bell's interview. Mrs. Bell's guiding theories and philosophies included:

1. It should not be difficult for special education students to get an education that serves their needs and supports them in their life goals.
2. Education needs to give kids what they need for life no matter what path they choose.
3. Teachers need to play a significant role in the lives of their students on a holistic level.
4. The "bad" kids are the ones who need a loving teacher the most.
5. Every student can be successful.
6. Teachers should be open and authentic.

Because Mrs. Bell is a special education teachers one of her primary philosophies deals specifically with this group of students. As a result of experiences within her own family she has come to believe that it should not be difficult for special education students to get an education that serves their needs and supports them in their life goals. She explains who she came to this philosophy, "I picked special ed because my brother is hearing-impaired, and I felt his struggles, and the struggles of my parents. He was one of the first kids to be integrated, and I saw how my parents had to fight for his educational life. So I said, it should not be that hard for special ed kids." Building on this

philosophy, Mrs. Bell has a second theory about the manner in which students in special education classes should be taught.

Mrs. Bell supports the philosophy that education needs to give students in special education what they need for life no matter what path they choose. She explains how she strives to do this daily:

So I try to make it fun and functional for kids to be here, and I try to give the kids what they need to succeed. Many of them will not go off to college. I take pieces of the curriculum and make bits and pieces of it for *them*. I know a lot of resource teachers slowly give all of the information to them, and I don't do that. I think a lot of what we teach is not necessary, especially for special ed kids. They just need to know the information to make them successful, whether they go to college or not. The most important thing is you have to fit the textbook and the knowledge to their needs.

In order to tailor knowledge to the needs of her students, Mrs. Bell believes teachers need to know their students and their life goals well. They need to understand the obstacles each student may face, and the best way to challenge and encourage the students to achieve their goals. To do this well, teachers need to be a part of students' lives.

When Mrs. Bell talks about making connections with students she points to her philosophy that effective teachers need to play a significant role in the lives of their students on a holistic level. She contrasts teachers who see the whole picture and those who do not saying,

You know, you have these teachers that come in and almost mother, and then the teachers that just show up in the students' lives. And you don't see that at basketball games, at fundraisers...kids need to see – especially in this situation, where teachers come and go so much – they need to see that you care. And by showing them that, you don't have to give them money – just show up at their events. They just need to see you. That's a huge part of it. Another thing I do in my classroom is, I feed my kids all the time. I do, all the time. Food is key. You don't turn it down if it's

offered to you; I kind of grew up like that anyway, being on a farm... And I'm very honest with my parents; you can't lie to parents. If their kid is struggling, they can tell. The way I look at it is that I'm their parent for eight hours of the day. You have to watch them, you have to make sure they're OK, you have to make sure they're fed – so it's a much bigger job than people think it is. You're not just a teacher, you're a counselor too.

Both Aundre and Jennifer Bell have strong convictions about being involved in students' lives and helping students to cope with the difficulties of growing up in poverty. Jennifer Bell describes a painful lesson related to these convictions.

There's a girl and she had a brother and they would come stay with us, we call them our kids ... after she graduated, she left us and got pregnant ... the harder we pushed, the further she went. So my own kids, because of that, I kind of watch my own kids differently. Addie [not one of their biological children], we pushed her. But she's actually going to community college and she'll graduate this year. So that was – on the reservation, there's all this drama and everyone talks about all the bad stuff. We both felt that if no one else ever goes to college that we touched, we still have Addie. We made a difference in one person's life. We helped somebody. And then we had a boy that we took in and we tried to help him, but he committed suicide, so that was another of those "aha" moments. You know, you think everything is perfect in your world, but the bubble pops.

Although the experience was very difficult for them, it allowed the Bells to define their boundaries and balance their relationships with students in healthy ways which helped them to cope with the loss and also continue effective connections with students. She describes processing this event here:

It was very hard. I think that was one of those things where Andre and I stepped too far in. That was just too hard, so now, it's not that we don't get close, but we no longer get that close. I've learned from that that you can still be helpful, but you can't overstep. I think a lot of people come onto the reservation with ideas of how they're going to save children, and you can't do that. Some teachers you can tell just by their attitude, and how they act. If you come in here thinking you know something, you have to show them that you care about them.

Mrs. Bell has come to appreciate the fact that real help is sustained and consistent, rooted in humble service, rather than just “swooping in to fix everything”.

Her experiences in Lame Deer have taught Mrs. Bell that those students who have been labeled, the “bad” kids, are the ones who need a loving teacher the most. She says, “Especially the bad kids. Those are my favorite ones. [Aundre would] come home with a story and I’d think, I know how to handle that...I think the bad kids are the ones who need the most loving. They don’t lie to you; they tell you exactly how they feel. So those are my favorite.” She believes she has been effective with these students because she genuinely likes each of them and sees no one as a “lost cause”.

Because of this, Mrs. Bell is also fully invested in the philosophy that every student can be successful. Through the example of her brother’s perseverance, Mrs. Bell is able to communicate her faith in her students’ abilities. She says,

[I have] Just one younger brother [who is hearing impaired], three years younger. He was going to school in Laramie, Wyoming, and for some reason they denied him...but he’s the head mechanic at the Ford dealership now, so that also motivates me. My kids say, I can’t do this or that, and I say, yes you can. My brother is proof of that.

Finally, Mrs. Bell believes teachers should be open and authentic. She explains her perspective:

When teachers come in, I think they need to come in with an open mind... we’ve learned so much about the culture, and I think the moment when I figured out that I fit in was when the kids thought I was Crow. I was like, no, I’m white! When I first came here, they told me, don’t wear lots of jewelry...I don’t wear jewelry anyway and I don’t know what that was all about, but I wear jeans every day to school, I think being yourself – people can see.

Being authentic as a person allows her teaching style to communicate concern for her students and this allows them to trust her so that they can learn comfortably in her classroom environment. Thus, she believes being authentic proceeds being effective.

Ms. X, High School Teacher, Lodge Grass, MT

Upon working with a colleague to review interview transcripts according to the case study protocol for analysis, a number of living educational theories and educational philosophies were isolated from Ms. X's interview. Ms. X's guiding theories and philosophies included:

1. Teachers need to teach to the whole student.
2. Teachers should be humble learners.
3. Caring teachers are what make education successful.
4. It's important to give students a perspective of their future lives.
5. What is being taught needs to connect with students' lives.
6. The most important thing is that the students turn out to be good people in the community.
7. Actions speak louder than words.
8. Teachers should not take students' misbehavior personally, everyone has bad days, even teachers and when students fail, it's not my fault.
9. It is important to interact with students outside of class.

Mrs. X believes effective teachers teach to the whole student. In her mind it is not possible to teach students effectively without recognizing their emotional and social condition within the learning environment. She explains her thinking on this,

You think on your feet all the time; if the kids are one way when they come in you're going to teach this way, and if they come in in another way you teach a different way – and not by any means letting the kids run the show, because I run it; I'm the teacher. But our principal tells us, you need to be at the door every day when the kids come in, so you can know which kids have a chip on their shoulder and which kids are having the best day of their life, so you can accommodate that. Not just accommodating learning, but the whole shebang. You have to be flexible all the time.

Because she has extensive training in the dynamics of leadership, Ms. X often thinks of her classes as teams and attempts to guide them in the learning process as a team facilitator. She says,

When you're leading a team, you think of each person as a string, and you tie all those strings together. And sometimes, I know I can't tie this kid to that kid and all I know to do is – you take all those different kids, different strings, and you have to tie them all to yourself, and then to the next outside experience, if that makes sense. It's a group dynamic, and in the classroom...I wish I could do it more, but I'm learning how. If this kid is having the worst day of their life, how can I make it better by the connections I set him up with. It helps. The days I don't do that are the days I go home and feel like a failure. I'm learning though.

Ms. X is the only teacher who did not consent to having her identity made public.

Her reason for choosing to remain anonymous is linked to her strong conviction that teachers should be humble learners. She explains her feelings this way,

One thing that gets me – and one reason I want to speak anonymously – is I hear so many people come in and be here three months, and suddenly they're an expert. And you hear them in staff meetings: well, why don't we do this? and I hear the elders and people in the community who are from here, that I respect very much, and I see them be quiet and not speak very much. And then when they do speak, it's not as experts - it's as, well I've seen this, but it used to be this way - and they never pretend to be experts. I feel like – I try to take pieces of what I can learn from other people.

She further reiterates this philosophy saying,

Pride is just repulsive and I think here in this context it's just so clear. When you're in a meeting and someone's acting like they know it all, it's so clear that it's ugly and it's off. So partially my faith, I know that's not how we're made to be. I try to just be quiet and watch and listen and learn. I try to not speak, because I haven't been here that long. What I see from the elders has taught me a lot. Not just elders, there are 39-year-olds that have taught me too. There was a situation where I felt taken advantage of and I was pulling more weight than I thought I should, and I went up this individual, and I was like, what do you do? And they said, it's really hard, isn't it? And that's all they said. And I just shut up after that. I was like, you have seen in this situation for like 30 years of your life. And you just take it, things roll off your back, and you just keep moving. And I realized you don't complain.

This philosophy of humble service not only guides Ms. X's actions as a teacher and community member, it also affects her class structure and the learning experiences she designs. She has implemented the philosophy of cultural humility into her classes through service learning experiences she shares with her students.

I've had some teachers who taught me the value of connecting to our own story, and I value that a lot. I also spent time on the Navajo reservation in college, so I take my kids there every year. We do a service learning trip. We haul wood for the elders in the community, and it is hard work, but it's my favorite thing we do all year. And the kids love it. That's really taught them about a different reservation, and it helps me learn my cross-cultural experiences, how these places are...and my mentors, the elders down there, have shared a lot of wisdom with me, which I appreciate.

Ms. X fully endorses the theory that caring teachers are what make education successful. She suggests that one of the reasons OPI was unsuccessful at reforming her school was because they failed to show concern at the human level, especially concern for the way in which the experience would impact students. She says their involvement was

Not positive. It was – there were some well-meaning people, but it was not well-thought out. We felt like guinea pigs. It affected the kids the worst; it was hard. We're adults, we can deal with it, but the kids were getting the results of all that. It was not helping the kids.

Ms. X believes that the best thing her school has going for students is its caring teachers.

I think the biggest thing I see here is the teachers that care. That is what makes a difference; those are the teachers that the kids listen to in the hallways, that spend time after school, and some teachers have just been here a while...but if you care, the kids appreciate that. We have a teacher that has been acting as full-on dad to a lot of the young men, taking them fishing and stuff. It makes a difference; he's not just a teacher.

This quote is illustrative of Ms. X's belief that demonstrating care is both an in an out-of-class disposition that has a direct impact on students' responsiveness in the classroom setting.

Because Ms. X teaches secondary students she is especially committed to the idea that it's important for teachers to give students a perspective on their future. She sees the value in establishing long-term life goals because she feels this was lacking in her own pre-college school experiences. She explains,

I went to a private high school, and my school didn't do any career planning. So when I went to college, I really saw the value in that for our kids. So I really appreciate that here we're like, what are your goals? What do you want to do? Every kid is thinking ahead to what they want to do someday. I got that through my parents, but not through my school. So I appreciate that this school does that.

Not only do schools need to help students connect with their future goals, teachers also need to help students connect school with their present needs and experiences. Ms. X believes that what is being taught in her class needs to connect with students' lives. She explains how she tries to achieve this in her lessons,

In my class we're teaching lots of cultures. It's important to me with the kids, when I'm teaching them against racism, to teach them close to home. When we study Native Americans in Alaska, it's like, they eat whale blubber, but we don't want to make fun of them, because they're another tribe. Or when we study Australia, we talk about indigenous people and how much they have in common with people here in boarding schools. And I'll show pictures, and even though they have much darker skin, and their dress is very different, and their song is very different, the kids are already like, we can't make fun of them, because we know their story is like ours. So it's easier to build on that, and the kids are really open to it. I teach a lot of U.S. history and why there's so much racism; I try not to shy away from that. I teach about Richard Pratt and when he said, "Save the man, kill the Indian." I try to stir the kids up, make them mad, and realize how bad things really were. And a lot of them, it's all new, and they get mad and that's good, because they just talk through and experience it. And I like having both sides, because I tell my students how awful [boarding school] was, and I tell them that one of our favorite teachers down the hall met her husband in boarding school. And she loves her husband; they're still together – they've been together 30 years – so don't forget there's good stories. Some kids know their family stories and some don't, but it's great when they do.

Ms. X believes that when lessons connect with students emotionally and socially they are able to engage in the learning in more electric ways, generating that spark indicative of a drive to continue learning. This is essential to ensuring that students gain the tools they need to continue to find success and happiness as they work out their individual life journeys.

As a final product of her teaching Ms. X believes that education should aid and support students in becoming good people in the community. Subject-based lessons are important, but effective teachers are able to teach their information in such a way that it can transcend the textbook and improve students' daily lives.

I think the main heart behind what I do – I mean I love what I teach, I love [my subject] – but the main thing I want to teach is these kids to be productive members of society. Whether that means being the best mother, and hopefully wife, they can be, whether that means becoming a

doctor, whether that means leaving and coming back...that was really one of those moments when I realized so many people on the reservation – there's this assumption that we have to get the kids out. If we don't, they'll be trapped and never get out. And realizing that some need to get out, but some need to stay. Some of them, our community needs. And to give them the skills they need to be productive, wherever. We have some of those in town who are.

Ms. X says she came to value using her teaching to support students in their community lives because she saw how there were other perspectives on success than those purported by mainstream capitalist society.

When I first came, it was like, it's either this, or it's a disappointment. Just realizing that other cultures don't look how they did when I grew up. There are so many ways so see things. Not to put a culture in a box. The kids don't have to fit in one way. I love these kids and I don't want them to feel like they just have two options, like, you can go to Denver and have this job, or you can just sit here and rot. There are members of this community that really contribute something, and when they die, we notice the void – just because they didn't go make a million dollars doesn't mean they weren't valuable members of this community. They contributed a lot, and we notice their absence. And I don't see that as settling or lowering expectations. I think someone on the outside might see it that way. It is possible to stay here and not be a success, for sure...but opening my eyes to the possibilities.... If those kids would just be good people in the community, that would be the greatest thing. Whether they work at IGA or whatever...

In this community going to college and getting a good-paying job may not always take precedence over other occupations important to a community attempting to preserve its values and traditions and govern its independent sovereignty while also managing health disparities, chronic rural poverty, and historical trauma.

Ms. X holds another philosophy regarding what is valuable in teaching and that is that especially for young people, actions speak louder than words. She explains how this impacts her teaching goals,

The example of other people - actions speak louder than words. The hardest thing about being a teacher is that I'm more of an action person; I'd rather show the kids something, and use leadership. So teaching has been hard with that. When I first taught, it was like, I can't just stand up here and bore these kids. If I do, I'll just sit down and stop talking. So I've really had to teach myself how to make it interesting and be humble and do the best I can, and if they fall asleep, well...I gotta go back and figure out how am I going to get these guys with me on this.

Ms. X discussed her background in outdoor education and says it has been a difficult transition to begin teaching in the classroom, but as she continues to refine her methods she hopes to capture what works about outdoor experiences to improve students' experiences indoors.

As a product of trial-and-error and consistent refining, Ms. X says she has slowly learned to separate her teaching from other issues that can emotionally complicate her effectiveness. This has afforded her the philosophy that teachers should not take students' misbehavior personally, everyone has bad days, even teachers and when they fail, it's not my fault. She illustrates this philosophy with a personal story,

I had an experience with a girl that I had a relationship with – I'd taken her places outside of school, and I thought we had a good rapport – and she came in one day in the worst mood and took my head off over something. And I remember looking at this girl and just knowing that she wasn't yelling at me. She was, but I had nothing to do with it. She was taking something from somewhere else. I remember thinking, she's not even talking to me, and that really helped. That was probably my second year, and after that it's been easier.

Later she expanded, saying,

with teenagers you can't take things at face value. They're so insecure, and covering things up, and there's so many dynamics and they're trying to protect themselves. But I know that, myself, I needed my teachers...and I want to be there for my students too. Just loving them for who they are and where they're at.

Ms. X thinks this more practical view of teenage behavior dynamics has helped her to maintain an objective perspective on her experiences and has insulated her some against excessive frustration. In her words,

I think one of the biggest things that has allowed me to stay and not get burned out is realizing that when the kids fail, it's not my fault. When I'm investing in this kid and he was out drunk last night, I don't have to go home and cry as a failure, and he's not a failure either. Tomorrow is a second chance for him – you know, one day they treat me like crap and the next day they're nice. But it goes both ways; some days I'm not in the best state and some days it may be better. We all live in each other's lives all the time, and in each other's houses, and front yards, and classrooms. So you see people, and you see their mistakes and their lives just as human, and you move on and forgive and give second chances.

Within this philosophy of accepting kids as they are, even when their behavior is bad, Ms. X has noted the reciprocal nature of teaching that acknowledges that both students and teachers make mistakes, are imperfect, are in different phases of learning, and ultimately are human. She talks about how she has learned to appreciate this,

I have a kid that came in recently, since I was adopted I'm sort of related to him, who was fighting over a computer with me – we both kept punching the power button to turn it off and on, and I looked over at another kid who saw both of us and busted out laughing. But we were not laughing, because we were mad, and that gave me so much perspective. The next day I apologized to that kid. We moved on and laughed at our humanity.

Finally, Ms. X places a great deal of importance on interaction with students outside of class. She believes that often, teachers can discover keys to engaging and connecting with students and connecting students to the material by really knowing them. This requires an additional commitment of time to the relationship outside of class.

That's why I think my interactions with the kids outside the class are so important. For instance, I have a young man who I've known since I first came here, in 2007, who is a really nice young man. He's really good at

working on cars, but really hates doing book work. And last night we were riding horses with a bunch of the kids, and it was just a better way to connect with him. It's so important as a teacher here to not just drive in and drive out, but to really interact with these kids.

It is clear that Ms. X.'s students equate caring at least in part with presence. For this reason, Ms. X has been very committed to supporting student endeavors and interests that extend beyond the classroom.

Cross-Case Theme Analysis

Completion of the above analysis of Living Educational Theory Statements (LETS) and Teaching Philosophy Statements (TPS) for each of the six effective teachers provides the opportunity to examine how closely these theories and philosophies match, support, or reinforce the characteristics and qualities focus group participants valued in effective teachers. In Table 2, each component of the effective teacher characteristics/qualities list has been analyzed for its relationship to philosophies/theories belonging to each of the six teachers. The numbers listed in the boxes correspond to the numbered theory/philosophy lists for each teacher contained in the within-case theme analysis in the preceding section. Boxes containing a ♦ denote that a quality/characteristic was not directly related to a philosophy/theory or its related discussion. However, evidence of the quality/characteristic was present either in focus group nominations or within the effective teacher's interview. If a box lacks a symbol or number, the corresponding component was not directly addressed in the corresponding teacher's interview. However, this should not be interpreted to mean the teacher does not

exemplify these qualities/characteristics. It merely means they were not addressed in the interview conducted for this research.

Table 2. Cross-comparison of teaching philosophies and teacher characteristics/qualities.

Focus Group Effective Teacher Characteristics/Qualities	Teaching philosophies					
	Smith	Salois	Tackes	A Bell	J Bell	X
Work to understand the world view and nuances of Native cultures and communities	8	◆	1	◆		6
Are open to seeing things from the student's perspective	7		1	2		8
Understand how students learn and that this is related to understanding their culture	2	9	1	6	◆	
Use student-centered strategies	◆	9		5	2	1
Make learning engaging, fun, and active	◆	6	◆	5	◆	◆
Relate learning to student interests	2	◆		5	2	5
Support learning with a strong student-teacher bond			3	1	3	◆
Do not see students as disadvantaged or less intelligent because of their race	5,6	◆	2	3	4	
Are emotionally responsive, respectful, and genuine	◆	4	5	1	6	3
Engage in on-going relationships with students both in and out of class	◆	◆	3	1	3	9
Are encouraging, challenging, and supportive	9	8		4	5	◆
Support students by their actions and with their presence		◆	3	◆	3	7
Engage in real conversation (talk) with students	◆		4	1	◆	◆
Consider learning a cooperative activity engaging both students and teacher	7					2
Initiate, invite, and value questions		7		2		
Are accepting and inclusive	◆		5	◆	◆	◆
Respect traditional ways and cultural values	9	◆		◆	◆	6
Engage students in learning until they understand both cognitively and emotionally and internalize the information	◆	1	◆	5	◆	◆
Persist in helping students achieve mastery with a "whatever it takes" attitude	◆	1	◆		5	
Are capable of understanding students' situations and responding with empathy	◆	3	◆	6	◆	3
Are willing to be immersed in the community for good or bad, sharing in all experiences		◆		◆	◆	9
Take an active interest in students' lives	◆			◆	3	9
Go beyond the basic duties of a teacher to meet students where they are	◆			◆	2	9

Table 2. Cross-comparison of teaching philosophies and teacher characteristics/qualities (continued).

Focus Group Effective Teacher Characteristics/Qualities	Teaching philosophies					
	Smith	Salois	Tackes	A Bell	J Bell	X
Are consistent, reliable, and resilient	◆	◆	9	◆		8
Are respectful and respected because of the value they place on students and community members as equal humans	3	2		◆		◆
Have a sense of humor paired with a positive sense of self-esteem	◆		◆	◆		
Are adaptable and flexible as people and as teachers	◆		8	◆	2	◆
Employ a pedagogy that is creative, inventive, and responsive to students	2	6		5	2	5
Keep opportunities for communication open and available to students and parents				◆	◆	
Are realistic with students while also supporting students in achieving high expectations and future goals	1	5	6	4	1	4

The visual representation of the cross-comparison of teaching characteristics/qualities and philosophies/theories in Table 2 is sufficient to gain a birds-eye-view of the significant match between what students appreciate in effective teachers and what effective teachers believe. In explanation of the manner in which numbered philosophy/theories and ◆s were assigned a few specific examples will be reviewed.

Example 1 – Assignment of a teaching philosophy/theory number with an explicit match to a characteristic/quality. The 8th characteristic/quality on the list in Table 2 is: “Do not see students as disadvantaged or less intelligent because of their race.” There is a number 2 in the box under the column for Mr. Tackes because his second philosophy/theory reads “Ethnicity is not the primary determinant of degree of difficulty in school; it’s the other things that accompany that like chronic poverty.” Although this philosophy/theory is phrased according to Mr. Tackes’ own words there is an explicit

match between his philosophy/theory and the characteristic/quality of not seeing students as disadvantaged or less intelligent because of their race. Mr. Bell is also an example of this assignment. His box for the same characteristic/quality reads 3 because his third philosophy/theory is “Each student is his own individual, there is no generalizing, especially by race,” which is also an explicit match.

Example 2 – Assignment of a teaching philosophy/theory number with a match to a characteristic/quality found in the interview discussion of a specific philosophy/theory. The first characteristic/quality on the table list is: “Work to understand the world view and nuances of Native cultures and communities.” In the corresponding row, Ms. X has a 6 in the box indicating this quality/characteristic matches her philosophy/theory that says, “The most important thing is that the students turn out to be good people in the community.” Clearly there is not an explicit match between understanding Native worldviews and nuances and the importance of students being good people in the community. However, in the review of results in the preceding section, Ms. X explains how she came to believe in the importance of students being good people in the community saying,

When I first came, it was like, it’s either this, or it’s a disappointment. Just realizing that other cultures don’t look how they did when I grew up. There are so many ways so see things. Not to put a culture in a box. The kids don’t have to fit in one way. I love these kids and I don’t want them to feel like they just have two options, like, you can go to Denver and have this job, or you can just sit here and rot. There are members of this community that really contribute something, and when they die, we notice the void – just because they didn’t go make a million dollars doesn’t mean they weren’t valuable members of this community. They contributed a lot, and we notice their absence. And I don’t see that as settling or lowering expectations. I think someone on the outside might see it that way. It is possible to stay here and not be a success, for sure...but

opening my eyes to the possibilities.... If those kids would just be good people in the community, that would be the greatest thing. Whether they work at IGA or whatever...

In this quote we see that Ms. X's philosophy about the importance of students being good members of the community is directly tied to an understanding of the worldviews and nuances of the community. Thus, Ms. X's philosophy number 6 was linked to the first characteristic/quality listed in Table 2.

Example 3 – Assignment of ♦ to denote a significant indicator of the characteristic/quality within the case study interview, but not found in discussion directly related to a philosophy/theory. The fourth characteristic/quality listed on Table 2 reads, “Use student-centered strategies.” Mr. Smith does not have any stated philosophies/theories related to using student-centered strategies; however, during his interview it is clear that he uses student-centered strategies. During the discussion on his philosophy/theory that no one should experience culture shock from any angle because we should all be informed and interested in each other, he says,

It really goes back to the whole Kony thing – and this is something that's happening in Africa – well, yeah, you're from Montana, you're from the United States. Should you not care what's going on in Africa? I think that's a bad mentality.

At the time of his interview, Mr. Smith was teaching an interdisciplinary unit with a few other teachers on the subject of the Kony 2012 YouTube video in response to students' passionate interest in the film. At the time that he mentions this he is not talking about a theory related to student-centered instruction, however, his quote makes it clear that Mr. Smith implements student-centered strategies. Therefore, a ♦ has been placed in the

appropriate box in his column because there was evidence of this characteristic/quality within his interview.

Example 4 - Assignment of ♦ to denote a significant indicator of the characteristic/quality within the focus group nomination. The 6th characteristic/quality on the list in Table 2 is “Relate learning to student interests.” Mrs. Salois has a ♦ in this box in her respective column because she does not have any philosophies/theories directly related to this characteristic/quality. However, during her nomination, a student talked about the manner in which Mrs. Salois related math learning to students interests. The student said,

What she did with her classes was, she’d ask the students specifically what they wanted to be when they grew up. Some would say an architect, or an engineer, or just like physicist or something. And she’d build her curriculum for the semester around what her students wanted to be. My class wanted to be engineers mostly, and that’s what I’m studying at MSU now, because it inspired me, the concepts she was teaching.

This quote indicates that there is evidence from her focus group nomination that Mrs. Salois relates learning to student interests even if she does not have any stated philosophies/theories directly related to this characteristic/quality.

Further inferences related to characteristics/qualities and philosophies/theories were made in this manner to consistently complete the overview contained in Table 2. Table 2 essentializes what works in American Indian contexts by bringing together what students value in effective teaching and the philosophical frameworks of effective teachers to gain a holistic picture through combined focus group and case study responses.

Answering Research Question 4

Research Question 4 reads: For teachers who have been selected by American Indian parents and students as effective teachers, how do Living Educational Theories (LET) and Teaching Philosophy Statements (TPS) develop and inform the content and context of the pedagogy? Now that a clear list of LETS and TPS has been isolated for each teacher and these lists have been cross-referenced with the effective characteristics/qualities listed by the focus group, it is possible to move on to the processes by which these LETS and TPS were developed. In order to examine this process, it is important to explore the life histories of each teacher and then examine the connections between these histories and each teacher's conscientization processes.

Synopsis of Living Histories

During the collective case study interview process as teachers discussed their teaching philosophies/theories they were also asked to record significant life influences on a time line. These life influences were events or experiences they felt molded their beliefs about teaching and their teaching practice. The following is a summary of the events and experiences recorded on each teacher's timeline.

Mr. Smith's Life History

Mr. Smith grew up on a military base, attended an elementary school with a diverse student population, and had a diverse group of friends. This diversity was starkly contrasted with small town Montana where populations are at least 90% white. Thus, he

developed an early awareness of “the others” and the racism they experienced. This racism occurred largely in the form of inappropriate jokes and racial slurs. He grew up a latchkey kid with two working-class parents. He learned to be independent and also to value the friendships he had with his diverse group of school peers. Mr. Smith attended a number of Montana high schools which allowed him to get a feel for the differences between towns and to appreciate that change is survivable. Early in his adult life he experienced a distinct culture in Kentucky and then attended the University of Montana where he feels he benefitted from the town’s open acceptance of diversity. He enjoyed college and found it to be important in developing his worldview and broadening his experiences and most recently he had a daughter whom he credits with teaching him how to teach better.

Mrs. Salois’ Life History

Mrs. Salois grow up in Michigan, as the third oldest of seven children, two boys and five girls. Her father was an engineer and her mother stayed at home. Because of their religious background Mrs. Salois feels she was taught early to be accepting of everyone. While her family was very supportive of education, Mrs. Salois felt that her mother did not really believe in higher education for girls. She credits her father with instilling the importance of education in her and her siblings by taking an interest in what each child was learning, studying alongside them, and quizzing them at the dinner table. When she experienced difficulties in understanding her school teachers, especially in college, she was able to call on her father for explanations she could understand. When she first started teaching she taught at a “highbrow” parochial high school where she

taught by the book and wanted everything perfect. She worked for the Upward Bound program and was exposed to teaching diverse students and saw firsthand how African American students were mistreated citing an instance where she was asked to have her African American students eat sitting outside of a restaurant. She first came to Montana after being recruited to work in Glacier National Park for a seasonal job. She met her husband who was a Blackfeet man from Browning and married him shortly thereafter. She babysat for her sister-in-law and saw how challenging life on the reservation was, but she found everyone in the community was very kind to her and as she followed her husband around with his horseshoeing trade she met many of the families who lived on the Blackfeet Reservation. She credits her children, who are enrolled members of the tribe, with teaching her to see multiple ways of approaching problems and obtaining solutions. Both her son and daughter have gone on to college. She has a number of grandkids who are not allowed to sit around when they hang out with her because she hates to waste time and prefers to stay active.

Mr. Tackes' Life History

Mr. Tackes grew up as one of five children born to working-class, religious parents. Even though they didn't have much money his parents made sure he got a good education. Mr. Tackes recognizes how he has been the beneficiary of their commitment to education. He also credits his education, studying several years of Latin, with giving him a strong background in language which he still uses today as a science teacher. Mr. Tackes started his teaching career in 1974 at an all-male Catholic, Army Junior ROTC high school in St. Paul, MN, called Cretin High School. Then after being replaced by a

coach who happened to teach Biology he took a position in South Minneapolis at an all-female Catholic high school called Regina High School. He taught Biology, Advanced Biology and Earth Science there until its closing in 1987. He then taught middle school science from 1987-90 at Nativity School in St. Paul, MN. Eventually he moved then to the St. Labre organization school in St. Xavier, MT at Pretty Eagle Catholic School with duties in science, math and religion. Finally in 1995 he accepted a position at Hardin High School. Mr. Tackes credits some of his teaching philosophies and successes with a few key people he learned from while teaching. The first was college Ann D'Onis who taught him about teaching literacy in context and about how to expand students' horizons through language. The second was Dennis McLaughlin, a motivational speaker and educator who taught him about "high-trust psychology" and how to help student reach achievement through respect, fairness, and freedom. Finally, he credits exposure to the work of Parker Palmer with inspiring him to focus on his authenticity as a teacher. Mr. Tackes was also involved in two working groups that he considered impactful and transformational to his teaching. The first was his work with the Center for Teaching and Learning in the West (CLTW) which he labeled as "pivotal but troubling" and the second was his involvement in a critical friends group (CFG) where he says he learned to focus meetings and arrive at timely and effective solutions following a strict protocol for discussion.

Mr. Bell's Life History

Mr. Bell was raised by his grandparents because his father was in prison and his mother was a drug addict. His grandfather was a preacher and his grandmother was

deeply involved in the church. Mr. Bell was often told by others that he could not accomplish his life goals because he was going to grow up “just like your parents.” During his formative years he had a number of “down home” discussions with his grandfather who encouraged him to break the mold. His grandfather had a 3rd grade education and worked 60 hours a week at a steel mill. He valued education for Mr. Bell as an opportunity for him to have more choice in life. Because he grew up during segregation, Mr. Bell’s grandfather taught him that he needed to learn to live and work in both worlds (white and black). He believed that education could put Mr. Bell on a level playing field with other people. Mr. Bell’s grandfather taught him to value his intelligence and to use the resources he had available to him to get where he wanted to go in life. When he applied to college, of the 20 he was accepted to, he picked the one furthest from home because few people in his family had ever been out of Texas. He got a teaching degree from the University of North Dakota, where he met his wife, and took his first teaching job in Las Vegas, NV where most of his students were poor minorities who did not speak English. Because his wife is from Montana and he worked for her father on the farm during the summers, Mr. Bell grew to like Montana, primarily because it is the exact opposite of where he came from. He has always wanted to work with underprivileged youth so when a teaching position opened up in Lame Deer he applied so they could be closer to his wife’s family. They have lived in Lame Deer for the last 5 years.

Mrs. Bell's Life History

Mrs. Bell grew up as one of two children born to parents who worked the family farm in Circle, MT. Her younger brother is hearing impaired and her parents struggled to find good education for him. He finally made it all the way to college in Laramie, WY but they denied him an auto mechanics degree. In spite of this he is now the head mechanic at a Ford dealership. Because she grew up on a Montana farm, Mrs. Bell feels she shares some cultural elements with students from Lame Deer such as hunting, riding horses, and large family meals. Both of Mrs. Bell's parents ended their education after high school, but they pushed her hard to attend college. Mrs. Bell's mother grew up in poverty and she credits this with helping her to understand students who grow up in similar circumstances. Mrs. Bell met her husband while attending college, the couple had their son while living in Las Vegas, NV, and when Mr. Bell took a job in Lame Deer he encouraged her to get a Special Education certification and teach at the elementary school there. When she and Mr. Bell began teaching in Lame Deer they took in as their own 3 siblings whose parents failed to care for them. The situation was challenging, one girl got pregnant early on and moved in with her boyfriend and the other has gone on to college. Mrs. Bell credits this experience with teaching her about how to push students and how hard to push, and also about appreciating the fact that we may not choose as others would, and that is ok. The older girl who got pregnant has a happy life. The difficult experience Mrs. Bell has on her timeline is the suicide of the boy who lived with them. She credits this experience with teaching her how far to step into students' lives

and where to set her boundaries. She now feels the most important thing she does for students is be present.

Ms. X's Life History

Ms. X grew up in the country in Ohio with a younger sister. Her father managed rentals and her mother stayed at home. Her parents had a strong religious faith which they passed on to her and she credits them with teaching her morals, discipline, and the value of hard work. She also feels she is well grounded because she grew up in a healthy two-parent home. Her dad encouraged her to always give people the benefit of the doubt, while her mother taught her not to let people take advantage of her. During her formative years she did a fair amount of traveling within the United States, but has never been out of the country. She attended a private faith-based high school which did not stress career planning. Mrs. X attended a faith –based college in Colorado where she received a non-teaching bachelor's degree. During her time in college she had a number of good courses in service learning, leadership, and group facilitation. She gained her first exposure to American Indian tribes traveling to the Navajo Reservation with her college service group. She was also involved in outdoor education programs for young people. She had a great deal of interaction with different tribes and elders during these trips. She credits much of her intercultural understanding to these various service trips. Just prior to moving to Lodge Grass she toured with a Native youth group as their white intern. Two weeks after graduating she says she knew God wanted her to be in Lodge Grass and she moved there doing work for Kids Clubs and substitute teaching. After the real teacher failed to “show up” for the school year, Ms. X was asked to take over as the permanent

teacher with a provisional condition that she works to get her teaching certification by the end of the year. Ms. X was adopted by a Crow family and she now lives in “downtown” Lodge Grass and teaches full time as a certified teacher.

Cross-Case Life History Analysis

After multiple readings of the life history diagrams and the accompanying transcripts of the discussion that occurred while the diagrams were being drawn, a number of interesting themes emerged. A sample of one of the life maps is shown in the image below followed by Table 3 which illustrates the themes that occurred across life histories.

It is important to note that it is not possible to draw causal conclusions from the above comparison. However, it is useful in examining how each teacher’s life history may impact and influence his or her philosophies and pedagogical choices. Prior to these interviews, none of the teachers had ever heard of conscientization. Therefore they were not conscious that any of the components of their life history could be “conscientizing”. After being involved with the study through their interviews, all of the teachers concluded that they had experienced what they considered to be conscientization. Once they had an operationalized understanding of conscientization, several of the teachers commented on how the interview formalized their awareness of the role conscientization played in their teaching.

An example of this developing awareness can be seen in the following comments made during one of the interviews when the teacher was asked whether he could think of

anything from his life experience that may have contributed to a particular philosophy he had. He said, “Well, I haven’t thought about this, but this question is bringing it to my attention – I grew up as a latchkey child: home alone after school, both parents working...so I wonder if that did contribute to the way I see this.” After discussing the theoretical impact of conscientization on pedagogy another of the teachers said, “So it sounds to me like this conscientization thing is really my view,” because he saw something he recognized in the way that this process affects how teachers master holistic awareness within their contexts.

Figure 6 shows a sample life history timeline that was constructed during a case study interview.

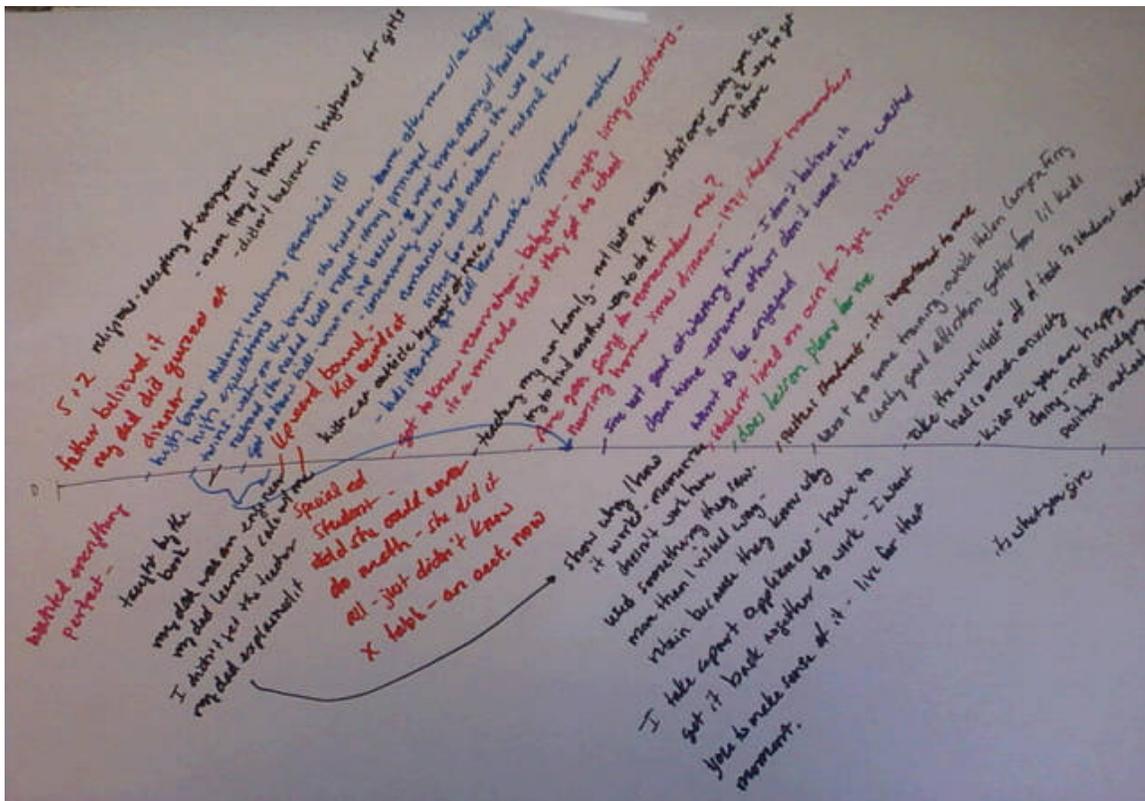


Figure 6: A Sample Life History Timeline Constructed During a Case Study Interview.

As Table 3 illustrates, all six teachers shared a number of life history elements in common. There were also some notable differences. In examining these patterns it is possible to make some loose connections between life history elements, focus group characteristics/qualities, and the development of teacher philosophies/theories discussed in the previous section. This will allow for some conjecture regarding an answer to Research Question 4 and the manner in which LET and TPS are developed and inform the pedagogy.

Table 3. Life History Characteristics.

	Life History Characteristics																		
	Two parent home	Pre-teaching experience with diversity	Religious background	Siblings	Children	Private school experience	Family support for higher education	Working class parents	Urban to Rural move	Raised in a low-income family	Parents stressed hard work/responsibility	Live on the reservation	Moved to MT from another state	Married	Married to an educator	Accepted in the community	Pre-teaching experience with poverty	Stay-at-home mother	Member of a minority race
Smith	x	x			x			x		x	x	x							
Salois	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Tackes	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
A. Bell		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
J. Bell	x	x		x	x		x	x		x		x		x	x	x	x	x	
X	x	x	x	x		x		x	x		x	x	x			x	x	x	

During their personal interviews all of the teachers emphasized the importance of being present in their students' lives to share experiences and show support. This may correlate well with the fact that all of the teachers live on the reservation in the communities in which they teach. In each case they could have chosen to live outside of the community, distanced from some of the negative characteristics such as poverty, commuting daily as some teachers do in each of these schools. But they did not choose to live outside the community. Is this choice somehow connected to previous life experiences? Friere would say, "Yes."

The focus group valued and nominated teachers who were consistent, reliable, and resilient. Some life history factors may have contributed to teachers' abilities to be consistent, reliable, and resilient including having the support of a spouse, or a spouse that was also an educator, feeling accepted in the community either through adoption, marriage, or community member perception, having a strong religious faith, and/or being brought up in a two-parent home with a mother who may have stayed home. These life history elements are indicative of stability which as discussed earlier facilitates student learning in the classroom and makes teaching more effective. Part of a teacher's ability to "raise students up" is due to the fact that socially intelligent teachers also tend to be stable and secure people and this stability is not just magically present. It has been formed as a result of all of the contributing forces in each teacher's life and it impacts everything they do. When teachers have factors such as those suggested above, their security creates a secure base for students that allows them to focus better, set and work effectively toward goals, view obstacles as non-threatening and surmountable challenges,

and move on to do effective work. Even the one teacher, Mr. Bell, who was raised by two grandparents rather than two parents showed evidence of a secure base acting as a solid foundation for anxious students. “Don’t psych yourself out before you even try...College might be tough, but it is not hard,” he admonished them. “It’s just about being dedicated to getting the job done.” As he speaks these words it is clear that they are based on the advice with which his grandfather grounded him.

All of the teachers also emphasized the importance of understanding students’ backgrounds, especially in relation to environmental challenges. Components of the life histories that may have contributed to this perspective were pre-teaching experiences with diversity and poverty. These experiences likely provided teachers with time to reflect and understand some of the issues associated with diversity and poverty and may also have facilitated the opportunity to form relationships of understanding with people who live in contexts of diversity and/or poverty. These pre-teaching experiences may also have allowed teachers to adapt more quickly to new cultural contexts and identify challenges in the environment more adeptly because of prior exposure.

In contexts where there is greater emphasis on close-knit community, such as reservation contexts, a history that places high value on children and family may create a sense of values match. Five of the six teachers had siblings and four of the six had children of their own making it likely that these teachers appreciate familial connections. In fact a number of the teachers extended their familial relationships to their students, raising them in their homes, accepting the title and responsibilities of auntie or grandma, and/or adopting fathering or mothering roles. While these relationships may be seen as

beyond the scope of professional obligation, they were nonetheless seen by these teachers as appropriate ways in which to actualize their efficacy as teachers. They viewed the role of teacher as inseparable from the role of caring and involved community members and in this context, on the reservation, the dominant worldview dictates that a contributing member of the community is a member of the family.

Five of the six teachers had working-class parents, four of the six grew up in low-income households, and five of the six talked about the emphasis their parents placed on hard work and responsibility. These life history components may correspond well with the teaching philosophy shared by all six teachers emphasizing the importance of being realistic with students while also supporting students in achieving high expectations and future goals. Four of the six also showed support for the philosophy that it is important to persist in helping students achieve mastery with a “whatever it takes” attitude, communicating and demonstrating their commitment to hard work to their students.

It is unclear how teachers’ experiences with private school and the fact that three of them moved to Montana from other, more urban states may relate to their conscientization processes, but it is probable that upon further examination there may be some ties to these life history characteristics and teachers’ philosophies and pedagogy.

What may be most intriguing about this group of teachers, nominated by American Indian students as models of effective teaching, is that five of them are white and were raised in primarily white contexts, with intermittent exposure to diverse populations and limited exposure to concentrated diverse populations. Only one of the teachers is from a minority group (African American). He is not American Indian and he

alone was raised in a context where neither white people nor American Indians were the majority (the projects of Texas). Having made this observation, it would appear that being white or from a different race or ethnicity is not a limiting factor in a teacher's ability to be effective in settings that are predominantly American Indian.

While teachers may not have considered basic elements of their upbringing as parts of their conscientization process, prior to these interviews, it is clear that many of these elements have had a lasting impact and do in fact have some bearing on their teaching style and pedagogy. Therefore conscientization becomes one of the ways in which LET and TPS are developed and inform the pedagogy. While all of the explored elements of life history catalyze conscientization, teachers noted some very specific moments of conscientization where important and often dramatic lessons were learned.

Moments of Acknowledged Conscientization

A number of teachers talked about specific "aha" moments that were clear instances in their minds of where context and experience initiated reflection which in turn, had a transformative impact on teaching philosophy and/or pedagogy. As teacher and researcher shared their stories of conscientization in a back and forth exchange that kept the wheels of reflection moving, it created a bond between two people who had never before met. Reflection on conscientizing experiences created an awareness of shared experiences, shared emotions, and a shared sense of purpose that lead both researcher and participant to a state of willful transparency. Together they reviewed their learning processes and saw how conscientization had modified and continued to modify

their life choices both in and out of the classroom. What is powerful about these moments is that when they are retold in the context of the case study interviews they take on the role of the teaching story where both the teller and the listener interpret and internalize meaning unique to each person. This adds to the connections experienced by each person as the meaning of the story is either assimilated or accommodated to construct new understanding. Additionally each time the teacher tells his or her story their experience is reinterpreted based on new contextual factors and this serves to continue the reflection and transformation process that is conscientization.

During his interview, Mr. Tackes relayed an experience where he reprimanded a student more sharply than he felt he should have and as he reflected on the experience, the products of his new awareness were revealed. He said,

I've made a couple blunders this year I've regretted. Dealing with a kid in a reprimanding sort of way. If I could take it back, I would. But if you're authentic, if the kids know you, like what you're doing, and you think they're important, then what happens is they recover from that. No different from when you discipline your child and you find out later that it was the other kid that did it; they forgive you. Humans are resilient in that regard, if they know that – and in a family setting, what's the thing that overrides that injustice; is your kids are confident that you love them. They forget that. I'm sure there were times as a youngster that I got blamed for things that I didn't do. And I blamed others too. But kids are forgiving. The kids that are damaged have more trouble with that, because they have issues. And we have more of those, I would say, than other places do.

Here the experience of regret has led to deep thinking regarding the impact of an action in the teaching context. This reflection then leads to a formative process where important understandings are formalized. As can be seen here, Mr. Tackes' reflection process takes understandings from multiple spheres of his life, not just his classroom teaching, to

interpret the experience. As Mr. Tackes tells his story, his life history clearly comes into play. Mr. Tackes has siblings, which has afforded him the experience of being blamed for something he didn't do and he also had two loving parents whom he forgave for their misplaced discipline. His reflection allows him to carry understanding from his personal context into his teaching so that it can transform his philosophies and pedagogy, allowing them to align with his ever-changing consciousness. This is what conscientization looks like in process. Retelling the story during the interview also gives Mr. Tackes the opportunity to reformulate these thoughts about the importance of his authenticity and this will no doubt continue to impact the application of his philosophies and pedagogy as he moves forward from this moment.

Examining Mr. Tackes' process of conscientization allows us to see how conscientization increases his effectiveness with students. He is made more aware of the importance of authenticity and aligns what he does and how he thinks as a teacher to better reinforce this. Thus he is improving his teaching through conscientization. If another teacher were to have a similar encounter with a student, but failed to feel regret or felt some other emotion, the conscientization experience may have been completely different or it may not have happened at all. This points to the importance of being emotionally aware within the teaching context and also suggests that teachers who have greater emotional and social competency may experience more conscientization.

When Ms. X talked about experiencing conscientization she described it this way,

I think for me, it's not one moment, it's just pieces all the time: the day you realize that some kids aren't going to leave and that's OK; just because this kid has this look on their face that doesn't mean it's what

they're thinking; the day that you find out that the kid you think hates your guts actually loves you the most.

In this example, while the “aha” moments aren't monumental they do initiate reflection and result in a series of small adjustments in philosophy and pedagogy that combine to have a significant overall impact on the execution of an average day for Ms. X. Again, benefitting from these experiences requires a teacher to be aware and emotionally attuned to the small details and nuances of the teaching context. This does not happen in all teaching contexts, but it happens more often when people are socially and emotionally competent. Rather than avoiding uncomfortable emotion or being completely oblivious to it, socially intelligent teachers are able to grapple with superficial appearances and arrive at more accurate assessments of what is actually occurring. Remember, this skill is called empathic accuracy, and Ms. X is able to have empathic accuracy in the cases she mentioned above because she has experienced conscientization.

Ms. X also described a specific encounter she had with a student that was particularly impactful. She said,

I had an experience with a girl that I had a relationship with – I'd taken her places outside of school, and I thought we had a good rapport – and she came in one day in the worst mood and took my head off over something. And I remember looking at this girl and just knowing that she wasn't yelling at me. She was, but I had nothing to do with it. She was taking something from somewhere else. I remember thinking, she's not even talking to me, and that really helped. That was probably my second year, and after that it's been easier.

Through her reflection on this experience, Ms. X developed her teaching philosophy that teachers should not take students' misbehavior personally, everyone has bad days, even

teachers, and when students fail, it's not my fault. Her words make it clear that she has carried this understanding forward and that it has transformed her teaching for the better.

Mrs. Salois recounted how her life experiences led her to value multiple approaches to problems, especially in math. She said,

When I first started teaching, I went by the book. You know, 'the way I learned is the way you'll learn' kind of thing. Then I started to think, you know what? Not everyone is getting it this way. My dad was not a teacher, he was an engineer, but he was probably the best teacher I ever had. When I took calculus in college, he got the book too, so he could help me. And whatever the guy said in the classroom just didn't dawn on me until the way my dad said it. So over the years, especially with my students here, if you can show them why it works, how it works, how it makes sense to them – memorizing is not the way... My daughter loves math, my son loves math and they had this teacher who said it's my way or no way, and I would get so mad at him. It was geometry and proofs. There is not just one way to do a proof. I could not get that through that man's head. Pretty soon [my son] just stopped doing [his math work]. You gotta accept the fact that kids do things differently. That should be good enough for you; that he didn't do it your way – who cares? So I never let any of my kids take his class ever again. It's whatever way you see to get it done; there's not just one way.

Upon reviewing this part of Mrs. Salois interview, it becomes clear that a number of conscientizing experiences have culminated to help her let go of conventional ideas and adopt new ones that seem more fitting. Thus, conscientization becomes significant in catalyzing effective pedagogy because it allows teachers to move from what they have been taught toward developing more innovative and contextually appropriate solutions for specific classroom contexts.

There were many other conscientizing experiences noted by the teachers, but these examples serve as some of the best in terms of lending themselves to analysis of the impact of the conscientization process on teaching philosophy development and the

execution of pedagogy. As these examples show, conscientizing experiences can occur as subtle blips on a teacher's radar, as major catastrophic events, or as anything in between. Therefore a truly tuned in teacher is likely to have an infinite number of opportunities to reflect and transform her teaching over the course of a career. Therefore in answer to Research Question 4, becoming aware of the opportunity to experience the full cycle of conscientization is a significant step in encouraging teachers to initiate "living" (meaning constantly developing) educational theories that lead to refined teaching philosophies and informed pedagogy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Focus group analysis of key words reveals a list of characteristics/qualities that are highly contextual and very similar to Gilliland's. These characteristics/qualities are also closely related to social intelligence skills. Social intelligence has a significant impact on student achievement because it affects the learning environment and determines whether or not students will be able to achieve the optimal zone of cognitive efficiency while engaging with a particular teacher. This in turn, influences that amount and quality of learning that students experience and impacts students' evaluations of teacher effectiveness. The results of the focus group interview analysis clearly point to the importance of socially intelligent teachers as strategic to gaining optimal cognition in students. Addressing the achievement gap experienced by American Indian and other minority students as an issue of failing to learn prescribed material may be a faulty assessment of student deficiencies. This research demonstrates that a large component of being able to learn is not based on what is being taught or even on how it is being taught. Instead the more impactful influence on learning may come from the teaching environment and relationships within that environment, established in large part through the social competencies of the teacher.

Why is a Socially Intelligent Teacher
Strategic to Optimal Cognition in Students?

While on the surface it may appear that students have a preference for “nice” teachers, the roots of effective teaching may actually lay in the biology of the brain. In his 2006 book, *Social Intelligence: Beyond I.Q., Beyond Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman discusses the importance of social intelligence in a general sense, but what he explains about brain function as it relates to social intelligence may go a long way in explaining what may be happening with students as they are taught by socially intelligent teachers.

According to Goleman, every person has a “sweet spot for achievement” (p. 267). The sweet spot for achievement is basically the brain’s zone for prime performance. The biological functions of the brain place students in or out of this zone of excellence based on anxiety and other pressures. As the brain sees it, there is an ideal emotional environment that allows the brain to function at its best. When students are in this optimal environment, their abilities to hold information in the working memory, react with flexibility and creativity, focus attention, and plan and organize effectively are maximized (Ashkanasey, 2000). In this optimal emotional environment, learning can often be called “inspired” (Intrator, 2003) and is characterized by students who are fully engaged, enthusiastically interested, and full of positive emotional intensity. In the field of cognitive science, conditions like these are known as “maximal harmonious states” (Damasio, 2002). During these times when there is an optimal emotional environment, the prefrontal cortex displays the greatest levels of activity. This part of the brain is

considered our thinking brain responsible for creativity, flexible cognition, and information processing. When we are under stress or pressure, however, our brain prepares for crisis and our thinking moves to the amygdala where autonomic functions occur. Instead of using our thinking brain, we begin to use our reacting brain. This severely limits our ability to focus and to learn. While some level of stress can actually enhance brain activity, there is a point where the challenges at hand overwhelm ability and the resulting anxiety begins to impair brain function moving our thinking processes from the prefrontal cortex to the amygdala (Ashcroft & Kirk, 2001). These experiences describe what is known as the “upside down U” of optimal cognitive efficiency. See Figure 7.

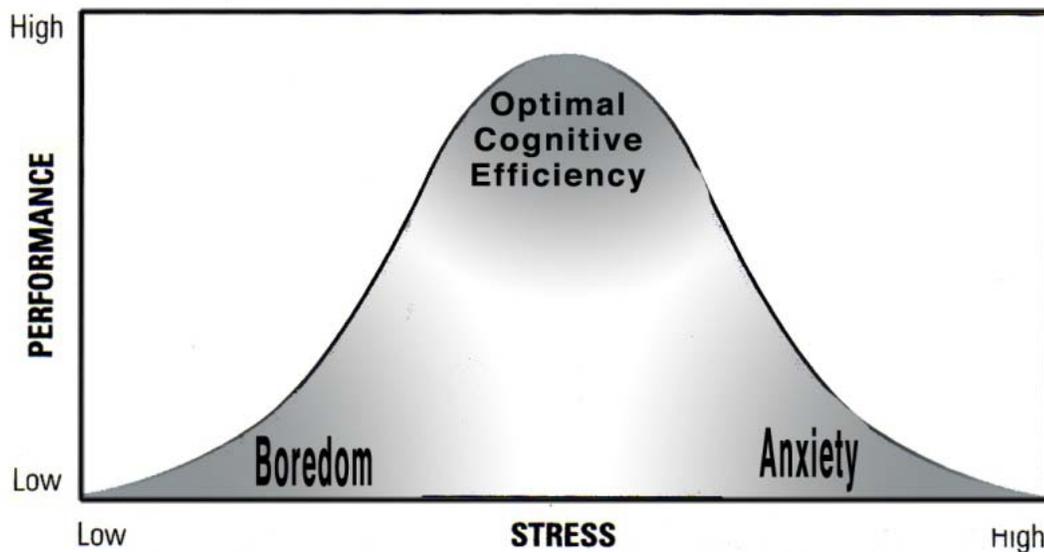


Figure 7: Goleman’s Zone of Optimal Cognitive Efficiency (2006, p 271).

Cognitive dysfunction occurs on either end of the spectrum when students experience too little pressure creating states of apathy or too much stress creating states

of high anxiety. Staying in the middle of this curve of performance is difficult for students, most especially students who already experience higher levels of external stress related to increased rates of traumatic death and injury, poverty, alcoholism and drug abuse, health disparities, and racial tensions. Prolonged stress of this type actually causes cortisol to attack neurons in the hippocampus which seriously impairs the brain's ability to learn; in fact severe depression or intense trauma can actually kill hippocampal neurons (Elizuya & Karin, 2005). When students are in these stressed states the brain is more focused on their emotions than on taking in information so the brain imprints upsetting events rather than the information being taught at the time.

When students enter an environment that is less stressful, they are able to repair some of this damage over time. Teachers who have strong social intelligence skills are better able to ground these students and help them find and protect their optimal zone of cognitive efficiency, because "emotions flow with special strength from the more socially dominant person to the less" (Goleman, 2006, p.275). Because of what are known as mirror neurons in the brain, emotions can actually be contagious. Teachers who have a positive emotional effect on students, who help raise their self-esteem, who convey acceptance, who believe in their worth, who respect their origins are much more likely to have students who do better in school and like school more. Goleman (2006) calls exchanges between students and emotionally intelligent teachers "high-quality exchanges" (p.276) where the student feels the teachers support, empathy, attention, and positivity. Conversely, Goleman (2006) says students who engage in "low-quality" exchanges with teachers of poor social intelligence often feel isolated and threatened.

Thus students who feel distanced and disconnected from their teachers do not have the teacher's positive emotional effect upon which to draw so they are less able to escape the effects of their own life stressors. One study found that "at-risk" students floundered academically if they had cold or controlling teachers even if those teachers followed exact guidelines for good pedagogy (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). As Goleman (2006) puts it, callousness "torpedoes cognitive efficiency" (p.276), while an emotionally connected teacher has the ability to help students "contain and recover from emotional distress" (p.276).

Some of this ability to "raise students up" is due to the fact that socially intelligent teachers also tend to be stable and secure people and this stability creates a secure base for students that allows them to focus better, set and work effectively toward goals, view obstacles as non-threatening and surmountable challenges, and move on to do effective work (Mikulincer, 2005). As was illustrated with the inverted U, when students are distressed, whether it be from in or out-of-class factors, their amygdala takes over and they are less able to think clearly and may even lose the desire to pursue goals, even when they are important to them (Mikulincer, 2005). Therefore as socially intelligent teachers teach with emotion as a central tool, they are actually able to mold their students' emotional responses in the classroom and thereby improve their cognitive abilities.

As has been illustrated by the focus group results, Native students felt teachers were more effective when they challenged them, taking them out of the low pressure zone. They also valued teachers who were accepting and inclusive, removing some of

the in-class stress students may feel when they fear they will be judged negatively by teachers or other classmates. They also felt teachers who engaged students in the material and in life were more effective. These teachers also used teaching methods that would likely fall into Intrator's (2003) "inspired" category of lessons that engaged students and were "fun." Teachers who understood their students' backgrounds, and subsequently had an idea of the stressors students were experiencing, were more effective. Students also found that stable and trusted teachers with a strong positive identity in the community were able to act as reliable bridges between academic and real life. And perhaps most importantly, effective teachers were able to talk and laugh in communion with their students, to enjoy life, and to avoid the undue stress resulting from taking life too seriously.

Schools today, and especially schools on the reservations, are in a strategic position to apply social intelligence because in many ways they act as substitute family, community, and social network while students spend the largest portion of their days away from home, at school in the learning environment. Therefore it is imperative that teachers get in sync by being fully present and engaged. Then teachers may begin to access the full array of social skills that allow them to sense how students feel and why, and to interact in emotionally positive ways that move students to make effective cognitive progress. In the end, there is no "magic recipe" as Goleman calls it (p.280), for what to do in every situation. If this were the case we would teach the recipe and the ingredients might still fall flat because social intelligence is something that flows out of the authenticity of effective teachers. As Goleman summarized, "Good teachers are like

good parents. By offering a secure base, a teacher creates an environment that lets students' brains function at their best. That base becomes a safe haven, a zone of strength from which they can venture forth to explore, to master something new, to achieve” (p.282). For students to get anything at all out of all our best methods, our best curriculum, our best programs and projects, there must first be an opportunity for students to experience effective cognition, thinking that occurs in the optimal zone of performance because it is scaffolded by emotional connection to socially intelligent teachers. Therefore, the best way to support our academic efforts to reform and improve education may be to improve the social intelligence of our teachers.

Analysis of collective case studies considered individual teaching philosophies/theories along with life history maps that collected critical moments and influences in each teacher's life. A rich description of each teaching context was interspersed with conscientization experienced by the researcher during the process of obtaining each interview. This was done to create a sense of immersion for the reader and to help the reader identify how conscientization happens, thereby increasing the reader's awareness of conscientization in his/her own daily experiences. As the interview data was analyzed it became clear that teaching philosophies and theories are not separate entities in the minds of teachers. Instead they are a melded group of foundational beliefs that provide justification and rationalization for teaching. This emergent idea is supported by Brookfield (2002) as he describes the belief many researchers have uncovered. Brookfield says,

practitioners develop their own contextually sensitive theories of practice rather than importing them from outside. Work on teachers' personal

theorizing (Ross, Cornett, and McCutcheon, 1992; Tann, 1993) describes how reflective teachers are engaged in a continual investigation and monitoring of their efforts. In Smyth's (1992) words, they "perceive themselves as 'active' learners, inquirers, and advocates of their own practices, critical theoreticians in their own teaching and the structures in which they are located" (p. 32).

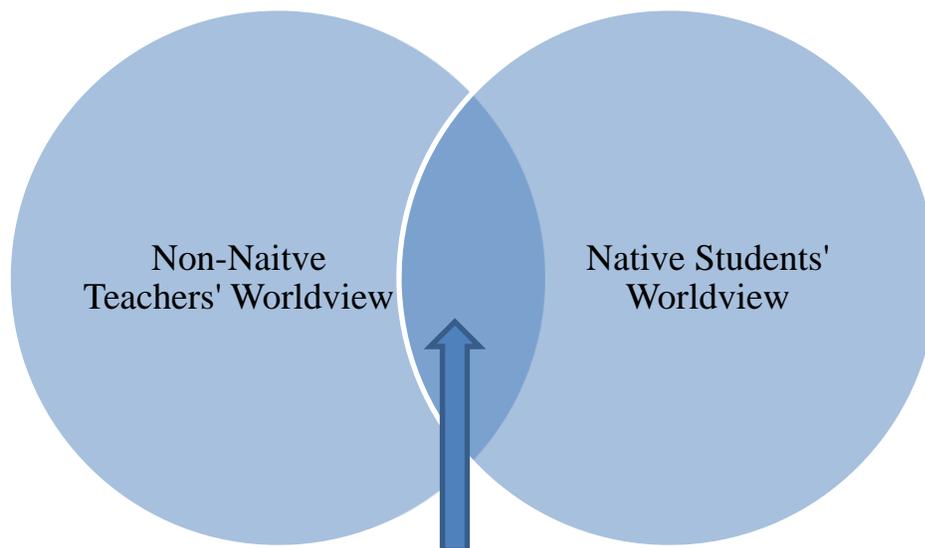
Indeed, the fact that these teachers are constructing their own theories within their own contexts is a testament to the acute awareness and security these teacher possess such that they are able to move away from the theories they learned in their respective institutions toward more practical theories personally developed through conscientization in the field. This implies that receiving a completely western educational perspective in pre-service education does not have to handicap or blind a teacher immersed in a cross-cultural setting because socially intelligent teachers can use conscientization to move their worldviews so that they come into alignment with cultural values and priorities within their specific contexts. Conscientization allows them to evaluate the dominant messages they have learned and to reform these so that they are respectful of historical and social influences that impact the power dynamic between colonizing and colonized cultures. Their social intelligence essentially allows them to adopt an attitude of cultural humility that keeps avenues for conscientization open, optimizing the amount of adaptation that can occur.

As the case study results illustrated, the teachers shared many teaching philosophies/theories in common and there was also a striking amount of synchrony between these philosophies/theories and the preferred characteristics/qualities of the focus group. In an article from the *American Indian Journal of Higher Education* discussing the need for tribal colleges to construct their own knowledge base for

education majors, writers commented that “a problem with Native education is that non-Native teachers and Native students do not share a common culture within which to work and find mutual understanding” (Reyhner, Lee, & Gabbard, 1993, p.26). This research has allowed Native student voices paired with effective teaching experiences to bring this belief into question. Native students directly stated that non-Native teachers had the potential to reach them as well as Native teachers may. They eagerly nominated teachers, considering only their characteristics/qualities of effectiveness without attention to race or bias toward the politics of an indigenous pedagogy. Nine of their nominations were Native, 23 were non-Native. The final group of teachers involved in this study was completely non-Native. While this was not an expected result, it was clear that these admired teachers were in fact able to share a common culture with students where they did find mutual understanding and effective conditions in which to work and learn. As a white researcher, this may seem an inappropriate assertion to make, and I wholeheartedly endorse and support the need to train more Native teachers, however the data clearly show that non-Native teachers with good social intelligence are effective with American Indian students in a deeply relational way. Thus, while those growing numbers of Native teachers are moving through their college degrees, it is still possible for students to experience inspired learning.

This research appears to show that there is a special space of overlap where the non-Native teacher’s world crosses the borders of Native student culture. Here socially intelligent teachers have established common ground where Native students and their non-Native teachers have a mutually appreciative relationship that facilitates and supports

effective teaching and learning. In fact, because of this special zone of overlap, effective teachers bring something to the table that students find especially enriching; they bring their experience with a broader view of the world. Many of the focus group students noted their appreciation for teachers who pulled new ideas into the classroom that came from off the reservation. One student likened it to a “breath of fresh air”. When students step into this overlap both teachers and students are “border-crossing” (Aikenhead, 2001). In a socially attuned environment, crafted by a socially intelligent leader, the teacher, students can find a safe zone of discovery, where they can let down their guards and begin to build trusting relationships that lead to real mentorship (Aikenhead, 2001). This mentorship is important because it moves teachers out of a role where they are conveyors of subject matter and into a role of positive and lifelong influence of the kind the focus group emphasized.



Special zone of overlap where both teachers and students border-cross for a broader experience and a mentoring relationship.

Figure 8: Border-crossing creates a space for effective teaching/learning relationships.

In the past, researchers have supported the idea that cross-cultural teaching contexts create problems for minority students. Spindler (1987) suggested that the disproportionate school failure of ethnic and racial minorities in schools is based on cultural discontinuity between home and school, not on deficits in environment or cognition. Ogbu (1987) reported that racism in and out of the classroom is the deciding factor that aggravates this cultural discontinuity into educational failure. While discontinuity may produce educational failure, discontinuity is not a given just because the teacher and the student come from different cultures. Social intelligence is the bridge by which non-Native teachers are able to reconcile the differences between home and school that may cause students to stumble. Saying that the existence of discontinuity is a precursor to failure denies the fact that discontinuity is also a precursor to innovative teaching informed by the need to be reflective and experience conscientization. In fact discontinuity is a catalyst that may stimulate the recognition of the need to continuously form and reform adaptive responses for effective classroom dynamics. In many ways the label of discontinuity holds a limited outlook on what students and teachers are capable of accomplishing together.

Recognizing that discontinuity can be a catalyst that leads teachers toward philosophies, theories, and pedagogy that may be more synchronous with cultural values does not mean that these results assume that non-Native teachers will ever come into complete harmony with their cultural contexts. However, this research suggests that Native community members don't expect non-Native teachers to know the culture so well that they essentially become Indian. Instead they prefer to know that their children are

being cared for by people who care for them as they would their own children and who have enough social intelligence and cultural humility to remain open to reevaluating their preconceptions on an on-going basis. Conscientization is strategic to establishing this disposition in the community because conscientization is focused on recognizing and exposing contradictions within the worldview of teachers. It includes taking specific actions to combat oppressive elements in that worldview as part of the conscientization. In this way, the consciousness gained by teachers through this process helps to decolonize pedagogy.

Because the effective teachers in this study and others like them embody strong social intelligence and cultural humility, they have become revisionists. Like revisionist histories which advocate respect for an indigenous view of history, revisionist teachers are continuously revising and re-visioning their teaching roles to increase their effectiveness in the classroom through positive relationships that are not power driven. They intentionally remove the dominating overtones of western education, adopting relational strategies that elevate students as equals and partners in the learning experience and they do this because through engagement in the conscientization process, they have an awakened awareness to their relationships to everything that surrounds them: students, community, culture, history, politics, background experiences, the list could continue indefinitely. In doing this, they have achieved one of the central goals of conscientization which is to become liberated from the imitation of the powerful (Freire, 1976). They no longer have to teach as they were taught. Instead conscientized teachers can rely upon

strong social intelligence skills to construct relationships that mold new forms of responsive pedagogy.

A Model for Adaptive Teaching

At the beginning of this study Figure 1, Teacher Conscientization Process in Context, was comprised of four cyclic events including conscientization, modified living educational theories, refined teaching philosophies, and changed pedagogy. Now that this study has run its course, it has become apparent that one important component of the cyclic conscientization process was missing. When teachers experience conscientization it not only impacts their pedagogy, it also impacts their relationships to students, to the community, and to the other connections they have in their lives and this relational impact actually precedes and directly influences the responsiveness of the pedagogy. While the pedagogy may change as suggested in the original diagram, the manner in which it changes is specific, the pedagogy becomes more responsive to students and this is why the characteristics/qualities students preferred in teachers were directly related to factors of social intelligence.

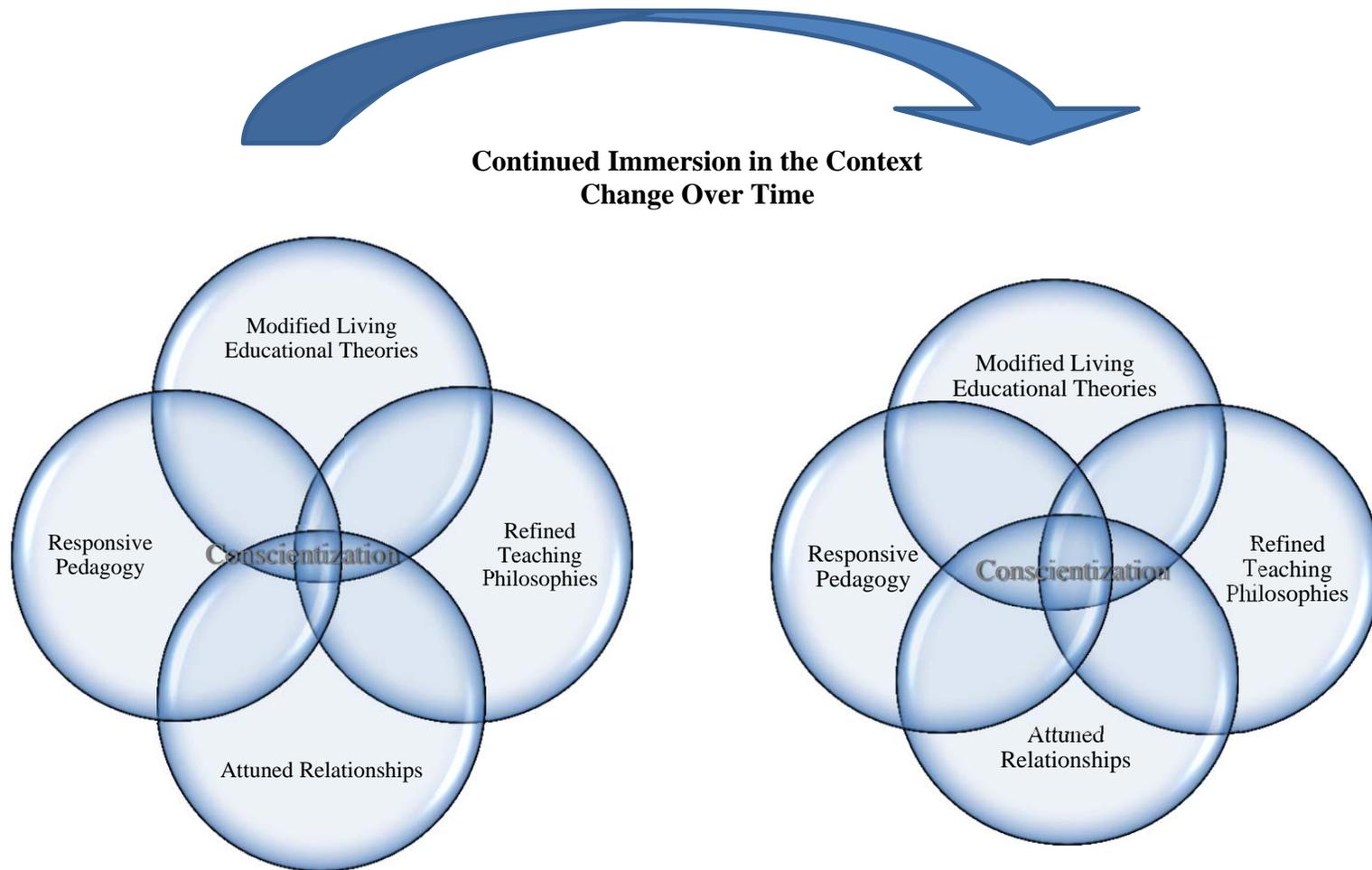


Figure 9: A Model for Adaptive Teaching Through Conscientization.

Recommendations for Practice

Both the focus group and the case study results have produced a number of interesting findings that lend themselves to consideration for application to practice in the areas of research, professional development for in-service teachers, and strengthening pre-service teacher preparation.

Recommendations for Research

A primary goal of this research was to preserve the voice of the community members and teachers involved and to protect these voices from being overruled by more dominant opinions. At a number of points in the research process, suggestions were made to modify the study by adding data from various additional sources. The researcher evaluated these suggestions against the prevailing goal. Does the data from the community support this? If the suggestions seemed to privilege any other person or group above the community voice, they were rejected. For instance, it was expected that this study would generate a number of nominations of American Indian teachers. However, this did not prove to be the case. In order to address this gap, it was suggested that perhaps the research could include teachers who were nominated by the Montana Indian Education Association as Teacher of the Year. At first glance this seemed like an amenable option. However, after careful consideration the researcher came to the conclusion that the nomination of teachers in this manner would not fully represent community voice, but instead represent the voices of professionals who may have very

different perspectives on the qualities and skills of effective teachers. In research executed by researchers in mainstream institutions it is especially important that researchers front-load their research with specific plans to honor indigenous and minority people through their research and to protect their research from well-meaning advisors who may be more influenced than they realize by a culture counter to the research.

A second implication for cross-cultural research is grounded in the need for cultural humility and immersion in the context of study. Researchers who are not appropriately immersed in the culture run the risk of using their counter-culture to judge the data or the participants by standards contrary to the culture being studied. This does a disservice to the communities participating. When a researcher fails to place community voice in the position of first priority, she communicates to the community that the people and their expertise only have value as a prop for illumination of the dominant perspectives of the researcher and her culture. Instead the researcher must acknowledge at every stage of the research, the value these communities have in their own right. They do not need the results or the methods of mainstream research to prove that they have value. Thus, the researcher must approach cross-cultural explorations with a committed sense of the value and the humanity of the people she will work alongside. She must consider them experts in their own stories and see herself as the learner in the context rather than the evaluator. In this research, I, as the researcher, explored my own conscientization as I became immersed in the context because this served to show that I came into the context with a lot to learn rather than a lot to prove.

Professional Development for In-Service Teaching

This research seems to suggest that becoming aware of what conscientization is and how it happens is the best catalyst for initiating it. For practicing teachers, knowledge of conscientization paired with the opportunity to share experiences that have changed their thinking and pedagogy may prove to be a powerful way to recharge teacher's desire to examine how their pedagogy works toward or against any conscientization they may experience. It may also serve as a catalyst for continued conscientization and a heightened awareness of how our relationships with all things impact our teaching. In addition an awareness of what focus group students responded to and why they responded the way they did may help teachers better understand why some of their methods work and some do not work. Social intelligence in leadership and its impact on creating a zone for optimal cognitive development provides a theoretical yet tangible target for teachers when they think about how to get students to learning in their classrooms. In addition sharing the results of this study with in-service teachers may give them greater insight into the manner in which community members view the role and effect of teachers giving teacher a broader view of their role in the community and their relational responsibilities and expectations within it.

Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

In teacher education courses, professors often stress the importance of gaining rapport with students. However this rapport is often communicated more as an effort to get students to buy into a teacher's pedagogy, rather than as a truly symbiotic relationship

between equals who care about each other. In fact there is even a concern that teachers should not get too close to students. Teachers are not supposed to be students' friends and if they are not to be students' friends, how much of a stretch is it to conceive of students being family? Through effective use of social intelligence skills, effective teachers of American Indian students have rejected the don't-smile-until-Christmas advice and are able to care like family and teach like mentors. Perhaps educators of teachers have taught pre-service teachers that distance in the exchange of teacher/student rapport should be maintained because we do not know how to effectively bridge the distance without losing what we perceive to be our power.

One strategic question we must ask ourselves as educators and teachers of educators is do authentic relationships that span all facets of community life and involvement between students and teachers reduce the control teachers have over students? If they do not, upon what is our reluctance to engage in authentic relationships based? And if they do, is sharing control an acceptable alternative? There are doubtless a number of conclusions that may be drawn in response to these questions, but because of the nature of cross-cultural experiences, like those had by the teachers in this study, it is not possible to answer these questions with more than conjecture unless the one answering is, himself immersed in the cross-cultural conscientization process. This is because any judgment made is likely to proceed from unconscientized and preconceived beliefs about the nature of student/teacher relationships out of context.

Therefore, we, as teachers of teachers, must instill in our students an early awareness of the influence all things have on their teaching. One way to do this may be

to use a life history exercise alongside a teaching philosophy construction assignment to allow students to reflect on how their beliefs about teaching are impacted by critical moments and events in their lives. This may also give students the same opportunity research participants had to see the broader pictures of their lives as they relate to their teaching. In addition, engaging students in opportunities to examine their own social intelligence and to consider ways to improve it may also strengthen their abilities to adapt to new teaching contexts. We should also explain to them that what we teach them in pre-service courses is a base of knowledge that should be used not as the rock upon which to base all thought, but as a support for innovative and malleable thinking within their own specific contexts. This may be best achieved by sharing teachers' stories of conscientization because these *baleiichiweé* serve to teach each listener a personal lesson and also awaken their awareness of opportunities to break down mythologies they will bring with them to their future contexts. One of the critical differences between conscientization and critical reflection is that conscientization happens through dialog and according to a sense of commitment to an oppressed community. It is not a wholly internal process. Instead, in order for the impact of reflection to create significant social change, awareness must be shared. Thus, if we bring the stories of conscientization to pre-service teachers by inviting effective teachers to talk to them about these experiences, they have the opportunity to vicariously consider how conscientization in context impacts theory, philosophy, and pedagogy. Through reflection and dialogue, pre-service teachers will be able to see how conscientized teachers are reaching new levels of awareness and effectiveness as well as refining their practice with cultural humility. This will allow pre-

service teachers, themselves, to become part of the change process. Finally we need to help pre-serve teachers understand who they are through a more sophisticated and critical lens because the more aware teachers are of everything that influences them, the more they are able to bring to the conscientization experiences they will have as teachers. The depth of the experiences as well as their certainty within the adjustments they will make as a result of them are directly tied to what their life histories and contexts can add to their reflection.

Recommendations for Further Study

A teacher's ability to be fluent in both social awareness and social facility is essential to teaching students effectively as has been demonstrated by the comments and definitions of the focus group members. This points to some interesting areas for further research as to the elements that contribute to being an effective teacher. For instance research that examines the difference in social intelligence scores for teachers who are considered "good" and those who are considered "poor" may be able to expand the findings of this study. Similarly examining the significance of social intelligence in varied cultural contexts may be able to explain whether this emphasis on social intelligence also applies to other cultures. Studies exploring ways in which teachers and teacher candidates may improve their social intelligence has the potential to improve schooling experiences for American Indian students and possibly other student groups as well. The answers to these questions are surely both interesting and valuable. Because this study finds so much emphasis on social intelligence skills, one must ask why these

skills are so important to effective teaching. Much of the answer to this question may be based surprisingly on what is happening in the human brain as teachers teach.

Another important area of further study lies in testing the above proposed model to determine its effect on pre-service teachers. Researchers might explore the impact this model may have on teachers' feelings of competency in cross-cultural contexts.

Additionally, application of this model to explore its effect on the adaptation of new teachers to their teaching contexts may provide further insight into ways teachers can be better prepared to enter diverse teaching contexts. The manner in which teachers evaluate their pedagogy and their relationships with students as they progress through their careers may also be an area where research involving this model can be applied.

This model might also be tested on teachers currently in the field to see if awareness of this model and professional development related to conscientization and social intelligence improved student behavior and/or student achievement. In addition the foundations of proposed interventions for "failing" schools could be compared to the proposed model as a means of providing insight regarding program components and methods of implementation.

Other extensions of these ideas should include further study involving elementary teachers and American Indian teachers as this study contained primarily secondary non-Native teachers. This was due to the design of the study and the population of American Indian students who participated in the nomination process. On the whole these students could be considered "successful" because they were all college students. Other studies may include struggling students or students who have dropped out of school in the

nomination process. These populations may have significantly different perspectives on effective teaching. Further studies using other avenues of community nomination are valuable as comparisons to these results or in and of themselves. Regardless of how these studies are undertaken, one of the seminal guides for the research must be immersion in the context being studied. If an appropriate level of immersion in the context is not respected the study runs the risk of taking on judgmental undertones grounded in what becomes a counter-context.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. Participants will be recruited through one mass email to all American Indian students attending MSU utilizing the listserv maintained by the Native American Studies Department. Posters will also be posted in areas popularly frequented by American Indian students at MSU. The text for both the email and the posters will read:
Give Us a Piece of Your Mind! Date/Location/Time. You are invited to participate in a focus group discussion about K-12 teachers who you think are effective with American Indian students. You can speak from your own experience as a student or if you have children, you are welcome to talk about their experiences as well. You will be able to voice your opinions about what makes a good teacher for kids from your community and who you think are some of the best teachers out there for American Indian kids. If you think there is an extraordinary teacher out there who deserves recognition, you will be able to nominate him/her during this discussion. Dinner will be served. Please reply to this email (or RSVP for poster info) so that we know how many people need to eat. Thank you for helping us with this discussion.

2. Tables at the focus group event will be arranged for seating for no more than 10 people per table. Tables will be set for dinner and will also have paper and markers for writing and consent forms and pens for signing. Each table will also have a tape recorder and a colored piece of paper that says, *“Think about the teachers you know that are teaching or who have taught in grades Kindergarten through 12th who are the most effective at teaching American Indian students. The ones you learned best from, the ones you learned the most from, the ones who seemed to understand your community’s educational values. What are their characteristics, their strengths, their assets, their talents, their expertise, their abilities, etc.? Please talk about these and use the scratch paper to keep your ideas on if you want to.”* One large screen or board for collecting participant responses will be placed at the front of the room.

3. When participants have been seated and it appears that most people have arrived, the researcher will read this welcome:
Welcome to this focus group discussion. I am so glad all of you were able to take time out of your busy schedules to enjoy a meal together and give your thoughts about good teachers. I am a doctoral student in Education Curriculum and Instruction. Shane Doyle is my husband and we have three kids. Florence is 7, Ruby is 3, and Lilian is 18 months. Shane and I have both been teachers in the Kindergarten through high school system. He taught in Hardin and Lodge Grass and I taught in Lodge Grass. One of the things we both really care a lot about and that I know is a concern for you guys too, is good education for kids. Education that is healthy, and that makes them happy while they are being

educated but also that helps them find happiness in their futures too, is what is important. We all know the history of education for Indian people hasn't always been that good and there are still problems with what happens with our kids in school today, but there are also some teachers out there who are really good teachers of American Indian kids and when I was thinking about how I could use my degree to make things better, I thought it would be a good idea to look at teachers who are really good at what they do and why they are really good. Then when I started to look into this idea I saw that there were a lot of people studying good teachers, but no one seemed to be asking parents and students what they thought. So that is why I thought I would come to all of you and ask you what you think. I want to ask you about what you think makes a good teacher in your experience and specific teachers from your communities that are really good at connecting with students and helping them to be successful. Then I want to use this information to build an idea from your perspective of how to better train teachers so that they have the qualities you are seeing that effective teachers of American Indian students need to have. Most teachers are using a western model of education to guide their teaching, but if there are teachers out there using better methods or who have a better perspective on the purpose of education, then I want to know about these. I do want to tape record this discussion and use your ideas in my study because I think this study should be about the American Indian parent and student voice instead of the experts thinking they already have it pegged. This means I need your permission to make the recording and to discuss your ideas in my research paper. If you are willing to let me do this, I need you to sign one of the consent forms at your table. You do not have to be a part of this if you don't want to and you are welcome to stop participating any time during this meeting if you want to. The opinions and thoughts you share with me today will not be used in any other research studies and they will not have a negative impact on your grades or classes at MSU. Again I am very thankful for your willingness to share your opinions and experiences with me and I also want to let you know that this great dinner was provided by Hopa Mountain and I am very thankful for Bonnie's support. As you all probably know, Hopa Mountain is very interested in helping Indian people network and find effective solutions for work they want to do in their communities. With that said, I think the best way to begin is this: We'll start with a prayer and then you can all go get a plate. After everyone from your table is sitting down, if you could read the question on the colored piece of paper, then you can all discuss your ideas and jot down thoughts on the scratch paper if you want to. After everyone has had some time to talk about the question and you've been able to eat a little, I'll ask you to throw out your ideas and we will post them up here. In the end I'd like to have a list of the 10 things you think are most important about teachers who are effective with American Indian students. After I have these ideas recorded up here, then we can talk about exceptional teachers you would like to nominate as the best teachers of American Indian kids. I'll give you about 10 minutes to talk in your small groups about these teachers and then anyone who wants to can throw out a suggestion. When

you nominate a teacher try to give me some examples or some of the qualities you think they have that explain why they are such good teachers. My plan is to take your suggestions and contact these teachers so they can provide some advice and expertise that may be able to change the way teachers teach for the better. So if someone taught you in a way that you think others should be teaching or if someone is teaching kids you know in a good way, these are the people I want to recognize as good teachers of Indian kids and I want other people to know that these are the people your communities respect and value because of the way they teach. Now I'll turn it over to (elder) for a prayer and then we can eat.

4. Following the prayer, give the elder 4 gifts and thank them for the prayer.
5. Walk among the tables to be sure everyone is clear on how to begin and start all tape recorders.
6. Allow participants approximately 20 minutes to discuss the question on the colored piece of paper. Allow more time if participants are not tapering the discussion after 20 minutes.
7. After this discussion, from the front of the room ask members of the small groups to share some of their ideas about teacher qualities. After each suggestion, repeat what the participant said and then write it on the board/screen. Allow as many participants to comment as want to.
8. When the list reaches a point of saturation ask participants to view the list and say which of the qualities they view as most important in an effective teacher of American Indian students. Let them know you would like to compile a list of about 10 of the most important. Circle each quality from the list as it is suggested. See if there is consensus in the group. Make adjustments as needed. For instance if 11 are needed to validate each participant's position, allow for this flexibility.
9. Following this activity, invite participants to get a second plate of food and to spend about 10 minutes discussion teachers they may want to nominate as exceptional teachers of American Indian students. Remind them to think of some examples or reasons these people are great. Circulate around the room to judge time needed for discussion and clarity of the request to discuss.
10. After 10 minutes, from the front of the room, ask participants to begin nominating teachers and talking about their qualities. Take as many nominations as are offered and record each name, the community they are from, and the reasons on the board/screen.
11. After all nominations have been received thank participants for coming and sharing their ideas and experiences. Let them know that when you finish your report you will email a copy to the group. They may also contact you at any time if they have questions or concerns at doyle@montana.edu. Invite participants to take a plate home before they leave if there are any leftovers.
12. Following the focus group event, record field notes and make reflective observations.
13. Transcribe discussions. Ask one person from each small group to review the transcript for clarity and intent.

SEMI-STRUCTURED CASE STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Contact purposeful sample of focus group nominees. Introduce yourself. Make sure it is a good time talk or schedule a better time to call. *“You were nominated by a group of students and parents at MSU as someone who is really effective in teaching American Indian students. There were x people who were nominated I am interviewing teachers from that group who have taught American Indian students in grades K-12 for three or more years. Have you been teaching Indian students for three or more years?” “Do you or did you teach any of the grades between Kindergarten and 12th grade?”*

If the answer is no to either question, *“Thank you for talking to me and if I have time to interview people who taught American Indian students for fewer than three years OR who taught outside of the k-12 system, I may contact you again, but I want you to know that the people who nominated you really appreciated the way you taught. When you were nominated they praised your _____ (use focus group nomination notes). I appreciate your time and I hope you have a great day.”*

If the answer is yes to both questions, *“The parents and students who nominated you were from the American Indian community at MSU and they participated in a discussion about what qualities teachers have who are effective with American Indian students. They nominated you as one of the best in this area and I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to let me talk to you about your theories about education and your teaching philosophies for my dissertation research. I am trying to learn from the life stories of teachers of who have been effective in teaching American Indian students. I was a high school teacher in Lodge Grass for a while and I have three Indian children of my own and I am hoping that I can pass your wisdom on to teachers teaching now and future teachers so that our kids can get a good education that makes them happy and gives them a good future. Do you think this is something you might be interested in doing?”*

If no, *“Ok. Thank you so much for your time. I want you to know that the people who nominated you really appreciated the way you taught. When you were nominated they praised your _____ (use focus group nomination notes). Your students are lucky to have a teacher like you. I hope you have a great day.”*

If yes or maybe answer any questions asked and then say, *“I can meet you anywhere that is convenient for you and I think if I could have about two hours of your time, we could get the whole interview done in one shot. I mainly want to ask you about your theories about teaching and about the experiences and events in your life that have sort of led you to these ideas or the understandings that you*

have about teaching. If you want to give me your contact information now I can call you or email you and we can set up a place and time for the interview. Or we could just set something up now.”

2. Schedule date, time, and place for interview and email or mail a consent form and interview questions in advance of the meeting.
3. Meet participant at a location they select. Observe and compensate for any disruptions that may occur.
4. Introduce yourself and engage in appropriate community talk.
5. Ask the participant for permission to being the interview.
6. Give the participant a copy of the consent form, make sure the process is clear, answer any questions, remind them that they can withdraw at any time and then ask the participant to sign the form.
7. Ask the participant for permission to record the interview. If the participant declines to be recorded ask for permission to take notes so as not to forget anything valuable.
8. Collect demographic information: Record name of interviewee. *What grades do you teach? Where do you teach? Where have you taught? How long have you been teaching? What subjects do you teach? Are you American Indian/tribe? How much of your teaching experience has involved teaching American Indian students?*
9. Begin the interview with the following question: *When you think about your successes with American Indian students and about what you feel has been effective, what are the guiding theories that you have developed over time that have contributed to your overall teaching philosophy?*
10. As the participant replies to this question the researcher will list the guiding theories mentioned by the interviewee on a sheet of paper.
11. The researcher will then show each interviewee a timeline, illustrating the participant’s life from birth to the present and say, *“Next I would like to document on this timeline the events and experiences in your life that you feel have contributed to the theories you talked about.”* The researcher will ask the interviewee, *“For your theory about X, what things from your life history developed your thoughts in this area? This could be experiences, significant events, things someone taught you, traditional stories or beliefs that guide what you think....”* As the interviewee contributes events, the researcher will work with the participant to record the points on the timeline when each event occurred.
12. After discussing each theory and documenting significant events and experiences on the timeline, the researcher will ask the participant to briefly reflect on his/her philosophy of teaching to see if there is anything from his/her teaching philosophy that is not represented in the theories and events that were discussed. The participant will then be allowed to elaborate if necessary.
13. After completing the interview, the researcher will thank the interviewee and give him/her a braid of sweetgrass, a blanket, some tobacco, and a yard of fabric, saying, *“I appreciate what you taught me today.”*

14. The researcher will explain that the interview will be transcribed and sent to the interviewee for review. If there is anything misleading or unclear, the participant should let the researcher know and changes or additions can be made before the information is used in the research.
15. Take field notes and reflective observations immediately following the interview.
16. Transcribe interviews and send to participant for review. Make any necessary changes.
17. When the study is completed, mail the final report to each teacher participant with a personal thank you note.

APPENDIX B

IRB CONSENT FORMS

**SUBJECT CONSENT FORM
FOR
PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH AT
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Investigator: Megkian Doyle

Name of Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jayne Downey

Date: 2/2/2012

1. What you should know about this study:

- You are being asked to join a research study.
- This consent form explains the research study and your part in the study.
- Please read it carefully and take as much time as you need.
- Please ask questions at any time about anything you do not understand.
- You are a volunteer. If you join the study, you can change your mind later. You can decide not to take part or you can quit at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you decide to quit the study. If you are a student, participation or non-participation will not affect your grade or class standing.

2. Why is this research being done?

This research is being done to understand the shared values of American Indian students and parents at Montana State University regarding what makes a good teacher and who good teachers are. You were selected to be invited to take part in this study because your name is on an email listserv of all American Indian students attending Montana State University. All American Indian students at MSU and their spouses and/or other adult relatives may join the study. Approximately 50 people may participate in this study.

3. What will happen if you join this study?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

1. Attend one free dinner paid for by Hopa Mountain. (The researcher is not affiliated with Hopa Mountain and none of the research is affiliated with Hopa Mountain or sponsored by Hopa Mountain or any other business or organization.)
2. Engage in one focus group discussion with the researcher for approximately one-hour. This interview discussion will take place in small groups of no more than 10 of your peers. In your small groups you will be asked to talk about what makes a good teacher for American Indian students. You will be asked to share your small group ideas with the larger group. You will also be asked to nominate exemplary K-12 teachers of American Indian students. The researcher will use these nominations as recommendations for teachers the researcher may engage in a study about their beliefs about education.
3. With your permission we will tape record this interview for more accurate analysis. This tape will be destroyed following the transcription of the material contained on it.
4. A few people will be asked to review the transcripts of the discussion to confirm that they are accurate.

5. The results of this study will be shared with you if you request a copy of the research paper.

4. What are the risks or discomforts of the study?

There are very few risks associated with participation in this research. While the identity of each interviewee will be kept confidential, because of the relatively small and close-knit group of American Indian students attending MSU, the primary risk is the loss of confidentiality of information which you may consider sensitive. The primary inconvenience of this study that you may experience is that of the use of valuable time. There may be side effects and discomforts that are not yet known.

5. Are there benefits to being in the study?

There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study. However, if you take part in this study, you may help direct the work of others in the area of education.

6. What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?

You do not have to join this study. If you do not join, you will not experience any negative consequences.

7. Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

No.

8. Will you be paid if you join this study?

No.

9. Can you leave the study early?

- You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later.
- If you wish to stop, please tell us right away.

10. How will your privacy be protected?

Only the researcher, the transcriber, and the sponsoring faculty, and other focus group participants will know that you are in the research study and will see or hear your information. However, there are a few exceptions that are listed later in this section of the consent form.

We cannot do this study without your permission to use your information. You do not have to give us this permission. If you do not, then you may not join this study.

We will use and disclose your information only as described in this form. We try to make sure that your information remains confidential – but we cannot guarantee this.

The use of your information has no time limit. You can cancel your permission to use and disclose your information at any time by calling Megkian Doyle or sending a letter to:

Megkian Doyle
P.O. Box 5103

Bozeman, MT 59717
(406)209-0109
doyle@montana.edu

Your cancellation would not affect information already collected in this study.

- 11. What does a conflict of interest mean to you as a participant in this study?**
When a person or an organization has a financial or other interest large enough to seem as if it could affect their judgment, we call this a conflict of interest. The investigator in this study has a conflict of interest in connection with this study and the following sentence tells you about it:
The researcher has a vested interest in the results of the study as a parent of American Indian children and as a teacher.
- 12. What other things should you know about this research study?**
 - a. What should you do if you have questions about the study?**
Call the investigator, Megkian Doyle at (406)209-0109. If you cannot reach the investigator or wish to talk to someone else, call Mark Quinn, IRB chair, at (406) 994-4707.

For one's own participation:

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I, _____ (*name of subject*), agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed: _____

Witness: _____ (optional)

Investigator: _____

Date: _____

**SUBJECT CONSENT FORM
FOR
PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH AT
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Investigator: Megkian Doyle

Name of Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jayne Downey

Date: 2/2/2012

13. What you should know about this study:

- You are being asked to join a research study.
- This consent form explains the research study and your part in the study.
- Please read it carefully and take as much time as you need.
- Please ask questions at any time about anything you do not understand.
- You are a volunteer. If you join the study, you can change your mind later. You can decide not to take part or you can quit at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you decide to quit the study. If you are a student, participation or non-participation will not affect your grade or class standing.

14. Why is this research being done?

This research is being done to understand the living educational theories and educational philosophies of effective teachers of American Indian students. You were selected to take part in this study because you were nominated by members of a focus group made up of American Indian students and parents attending Montana State University. All American Indian students at MSU and their spouses and/or other adult relatives were invited to participate in the focus group. Approximately 3-5 teachers may participate in this study.

15. What will happen if you join this study?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Schedule an interview time, date, and location convenient to you with the researcher and attend this interview.
- Engage in one interview discussion with the researcher for approximately 1-2 hours. This interview discussion will take place at a time and location convenient for you. During this interview, you will be asked to talk about your living educational theories, your teaching philosophies, and the experiences and events in your life that have contributed to the formation of these theories and philosophy. You will also be asked to work with the researcher during this interview to document important events on a timeline. The researcher will use the information you provide to look at how effective teachers of American Indian students experience conscientization that leads to their theories. In this study, teachers are experiencing conscientization as they develop their personal theories about education. The creation of these theories then leads to the process of creating a teaching philosophy that is influenced by history, environment, and culture. Teachers then reflect on this philosophy which brings about

changes in the way a teacher teaches. These changes in turn impact the effectiveness of the teacher. As the teacher continues to remain immersed in his/her teaching context conscientization processes continue to occur further refining living educational theories, teaching philosophies, and teaching practice.

- With your permission we will tape record this interview for more accurate analysis. This tape will be destroyed following the transcription of the material contained on it.
- You will be asked to review the transcripts of the discussion to confirm that they are accurate. You will be able to clarify anything in the transcript that seems inaccurate or misleading.
- The results of this study will be shared with you if you request a copy of the research paper.

16. What are the risks or discomforts of the study?

There are very few risks associated with participation in this research. While the identity of each interviewee will be kept confidential, because of the relatively small and close-knit group of American Indians in Montana and participating as students attending MSU, the primary risk is the loss of confidentiality of information which you may consider sensitive. The primary inconvenience of this study that you may experience is that of the use of valuable time. There may be side effects and discomforts that are not yet known.

17. Are there benefits to being in the study?

There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study.

However, if you take part in this study, you may help direct the work of others in this area of education.

18. What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?

You do not have to join this study. If you do not join, you will not experience any negative consequences.

19. Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

No.

20. Will you be paid if you join this study?

No.

21. Can you leave the study early?

- You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later.
 - If you wish to stop, please tell us right away.

22. How will your privacy be protected?

Only the researcher, the transcriber, and the sponsoring faculty, will know that you are in the research study and will see or hear your information. However, there are a few exceptions that are listed later in this section of the consent form.

We cannot do this study without your permission to use your information. You do not have to give us this permission. If you do not, then you may not join this study.

We will use and disclose your information only as described in this form. We try to make sure that your information remains confidential – but we cannot guarantee this.

The use of your information has no time limit. You can cancel your permission to use and disclose your information at any time by calling Megkian Doyle or sending a letter to:

Megkian Doyle
P.O. Box 5103
Bozeman, MT 59717
(406)209-0109
doyle@montana.edu

Your cancellation would not affect information already collected in this study.

23. What does a conflict of interest mean to you as a participant in this study?

When a person or an organization has a financial or other interest large enough to seem as if it could affect their judgment, we call this a conflict of interest. The investigator in this study has a conflict of interest in connection with this study and the following sentence tells you about it:

The researcher has a vested interest in the results of the study as a parent of American Indian children and as a teacher.

24. What other things should you know about this research study?

a. What should you do if you have questions about the study?

Call the investigator, Megkian Doyle at (406)209-0109. If you cannot reach the investigator or wish to talk to someone else, call Mark Quinn, IRB chair, at (406) 994-4707.

For one's own participation:

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I, _____ (*name of subject*), agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed: _____

Witness: _____ (optional)

Investigator: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

COMPARISON OF INDIGENOUS TEACHING
TO WESTERN UBD MODEL

According to Wiggins & McTighe (1998), preK-12 curriculum needs to address ideas and concepts that have lasting importance to people over time and across cultures. In their Understanding by Design approach, they present alternative strategies of planning and organization that challenge traditional linear models of curriculum planning. The following is a description of the ways in which this western educational model may fit within Indigenous educational paradigms.

What is Understanding by Design (UbD)?

Understanding by Design is a theoretical framework whereby curriculum designers (specialists and/or teachers) can create opportunities for understanding through effective use of curriculum and assessment design. UbD is not a prescribed curriculum that teachers and schools can implement; instead it is a methodology for designing or redesigning curriculum so that teachers can be more certain that true understanding is being developed in students through the content of the curriculum and the manner in which it is presented. Numerous successful educational programs have been shown to be highly compatible with UbD, illustrating that a transition away from traditional teaching norms and toward a philosophy incorporating the principles of backward design is both purposeful and rewarding for students and educators (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Among the programs that have successfully applied UbD are problem-based learning (Stepien & Gallagher, 1997), the Socratic seminar, 4-MAT (McCarthy, 1981), and Project Zero (Wiske, 1997). In Montana specifically, the Montana Office of Public Instruction has adopted the UbD format as its template for lesson plan design, particularly as it relates to work done on behalf of the Indian Education for All initiative, an endeavor that can be characterized as an effort to increase culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies in Montana's public schools.

The principal philosophy of UbD centers around two primary terms that are essentially the jargon of lesson planning. “Curriculum” and “assessment” are so often thrown into educational discussions in both appropriate and inappropriate manners that it is necessary to clearly define what Wiggins and McTighe mean when ideas about curriculum and assessment design are discussed with respect to UbD. For this discourse it can be assumed that “curriculum” refers to “a specific blueprint for learning that is derived from content and performance standards. Curriculum takes content and shapes it into a plan for effective teaching and learning...it is a specific plan with identified lessons in an appropriate form and sequence for directing teaching” (p.4). In addition it should be clear that, unlike traditional curriculum, UbD curricula define what the learner will do, rather than what the teacher will do and are also written from a perspective that considers both the student’s point of view and the achievements that are desired. When Wiggins and McTighe apply the term “assessment” to their theory, they mean, “the act of determining the extent to which the curricular goals are being or have been achieved...[assessment] is the deliberate use of many methods to gather evidence to indicate that students are meeting standards” (p.4). UbD supports the belief that multiple methods of assessment must be applied throughout the course of the lesson in order to properly develop understanding because an acceptable amount of “evidence of understanding” can only be amassed through a varied compiling of information from both formal and informal assessments (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Since the goal of both curriculum and assessment design is to produce and measure understanding, understanding what it means to understand (no pun intended)

according to the six facets of understanding is the focal point of UbD. Wiggins and McTighe argue that understanding is not a single concept as we may often view it. Instead it is a series of six interrelated abilities or “facets” that should be developed as a result of good curriculum and assessment design. Thus curriculum should be developed to explore and deepen understanding with respect to all six facets by actively engaging the student in the content, and assessment’s primary function should be to reveal the extent of understanding in all six areas as it is developed through each lesson’s experience (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Because understanding according to the six facets (which we will discuss at length later) is the desired result of teaching and learning, Wiggins and McTighe adopted a backward design curriculum model which requires the educator to first decide what the desired result of learning will be (What is worth understanding? What’s the big or enduring idea, the essential question?). Second, the planner must decide what would be acceptable (amount and type) evidence of this understanding (What forms of evidence of understanding are reliable, valid, authentic, and accessible to the student?). Then, and only then, can the third step lay out the learning experiences and related instruction (What experiences and instruction will foster interest, intrinsically motivated and engaged work, and understanding?) (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Traditionally curriculum design has promoted an emphasis on what the teacher will do instructionally to get students to produce an end desired result. While this method may get us through the day or the test (“coverage”), Wiggins and McTighe argue that it causes teachers to focus on the best way to cover the material rather than on how students will come to

understand the content (“uncoverage”). While backward design is not a new concept (it was explored by Ralph Tyler almost sixty years ago in 1949) and actually proceeds in a way most people see as logical and straightforward, it is considered backwards because it proceeds in a direction opposite conventional habit.

Wiggins and McTighe have developed UbD to further clarify the benefits of using a backward design process focused on student understanding to combat a universal problem with teachers’ uses of curriculum in the classroom. Wiggins and McTighe have gone to great length to discuss and define what real understanding is because so many of our educational methods and processes (rote learning, high-stakes testing, grading, etc.) are appeased by signs of apparent understanding (being able to produce the right word, definition, or formula) rather than real understanding. In order to help teachers conceptualize what understanding as a learner outcome should look like, Wiggins and McTighe developed a multifaceted, six-sided view of what they consider comprises mature understanding. While each facet will be discussed as a separate entity, the reader should understand that “there are many different ways of understanding (six in this case), overlapping but not reducible to one another and, correspondingly, many different ways of teaching to understand” (Passmore, 1982, p.210).

As the six facets of understanding are discussed in the section below, an explanation will be given of each facet, followed by an analysis of how this facet might be applied to a model indigenous curriculum, a curriculum ultimately intended for Indian students specifically. It should be noted that the use of the term “indigenous curriculum” differs from the concepts related to “culturally responsive curriculum” in that an

indigenous curriculum refers specifically to a curriculum designed for use by Indian students and created from a foundation of indigenous values, epistemology, and pedagogy, whereas culturally responsive curriculum maintains a Euro-American premise while making accommodations for culture within the learning of what is considered pertinent content to American standards. This, however, does not imply that an indigenous curriculum cannot or does not teach standards required according to mainstream education. In fact Lipka argues that in a Yup'ik indigenous curriculum "The elders' storytelling through dance, storyknifing and drumming is intimately related to Western forms of literacy, and elders' environmental knowledge is directly related to Western science and mathematics" (1995, p.199). In the following discussion of Wiggins and McTighe's six facets of understanding, application of these facets will be made specifically to the construction of a model indigenous curriculum.

Facet 1: Explanation – "sophisticated and apt explanations and theories, which provide knowledgeable and justified accounts of events, actions, and ideas" (p.45).

According to Wiggins and McTighe, we know that a student has gained understanding in relation to facet 1 when she is able to explain the right or wrongness of an answer, make an argument with appropriated evidence to support a particular view, provide defense of a view, or "show her work". Therefore if we are to design a lesson that achieves this kind of understanding, we must construct our lessons around essential questions, issues, or problems that require a student to construct independent explanations or theories. Obviously, if lessons are constructed to produce this type of understanding in relation to a specific essential question, assessments must ask students

to explain and not just reform. Students should be able to link the facts they observe to larger principles of knowledge and provide justification for a variety of connections they are able to make. At the simplest level students should always be able to show their work and not be allowed to just give an answer.

It is interesting that the best phrases in most Indian languages for the term “education” are either “coming to understand” or “coming to know”. Indian languages do not contain words for education or science or art or any of the compartmental disciplines over which Western education has spent a great deal of time and effort defining, arguing, and philosophizing. Instead all things are learned through the process of “coming to know” that is pursued as a journey or a path on which a student may progress through any means available (Cajete, 2000). [As a side note, even though traditional Native knowledge is not divided according to disciplines, coming to know within a Native system does require the use of teachers or elders who have the same responsibilities as mainstream scientists – to develop specialized knowledge (Deloria, 1995)]. Traditionally, rather than finding a formula or a theory or an answer, students are taught to seek an explanation or find a balance by using culturally available concepts such as “harmony, compassion, hunting, planting, technology, spirit, song, dance, color, number, cycle, balance, death, and renewal” (p.80). Thus Cajete summarizes that even though understanding is gained by Indian people in a very different manner, their coming to know process is still very systematic. As an example from science Cajete suggests that Indigenous coming to know requires systematically ordered steps, much as a Western experiment would, however, coming to know is the goal in Indigenous learning whereas

Western science has a different goal. Furthermore, the psychologies of thinking and related learning approaches are different. From a western perspective, arriving at point B after leaving point A is a linear process, while Indigenous patterns of discovery cause the arrival at point B to be the result of establishing a sense of meaning and relationship, a sense of territory or domain, and a sense of the contextual breadth of the issue (Cajete, 2000). In light of this facet 1, explanation, is very compatible with the forms of understanding sought by Indigenous people.

As an example consider a lesson about calculating the area of a variety of one-dimensional shapes i.e. circle, square, triangle. Our traditional Western approach is to introduce students to geometrical formulas which allow students to compare the areas of different shapes by comparing the answers obtained through metric measurement of a shape with a subsequent application of these numbers to the appropriate, and memorized, geometrical formula. Wiggins and McTighe would argue that this form of learning does not allow students to come to a real understanding that would make them more able to explain the relationships between shapes, numbers, and theories. Similarly, when this lesson is constructed from an indigenous foundation, understanding is gained differently than it is in the Western example, but in a way that would appeal to the strategies suggested by Wiggins and McTighe. Cajete praises, “As we enter the first decade of a new millennium, Native and Western cultures and their seemingly irreconcilably different ways of knowing and relating to the natural world are finding common ground...” To select an example of a lesson of which both Wiggins and McTighe and Cajete would approve, consider if students wanted to understand the relationship of a

shape's area to circumference and also to the area of other shapes. The lesson might begin with the manner in which the dimensions of a tipi ring are obtained. Students could physically construct the ring, recognize its shape as a circle, and estimate the area by seeing how many people the tipi could sleep. If the circumference of the ring is measured with a string students might then turn the ring into a square shape and then observe how the area of the square changes as shape changes. Now fewer people can fit in the shape. Finally students use the same string to form a triangle shape and then observe that even fewer people are accommodated by this shape. Through this lesson, students are able to work cooperatively to understand the mathematical theory that even when circumference stays the same, area changes with shape and the number of sides of the shape has predict the directional change in the area of the shape. While students have not yet even considered a formula that would illustrate this point, they have discovered the very core of the principles of geometry related to area and can explain the changes that shape produces on circumference and area, a task very few of the students educated in the Western example would be able to do. In addition students taught in this manner can apply this understanding in fields outside of Western limits. Western educated students will arrive at a single answer that is dependent upon a base-10 system and will believe that this answer is an absolute. However, they will not recognize their inability to work within other systems. Students who have been taught according to the indigenous curriculum will be able to apply their theoretical understanding of principles not only to their traditional designs and the Western system, but also to other systems such as the Yup'ik system of numerology which is a base-20 rather than a base-10 system (Lipka,

1995). They will understand and be able to explain that changing the system does not change the principle. This example illustrates Jarrett Week's explanation of why Western and indigenous math and science perspectives are inherently different. "While measuring is Western science's most powerful method, recognizing relationships is Native science's. Rather than using measurement to predict and control, the priority of Native science is to make meaningful relationships and to understand one's responsibility within them" (2003, p.4). In addition to being a valid way to understand, it is my personal opinion that allowing Indian students to discover that their culture is as scientifically and mathematically able as Western culture is very empowering. While many indigenous scholars have proved this to be true (Cajete, 2000; Lipka, 1995; Kawagley, 2006; Peat, 2002; and many others) our dominant educational methods fail to acknowledge this.

In considering how best to construct an indigenous curriculum that supports Indian ways of knowing, the above example illustrates how structuring lessons around an enduring idea, an essential question, can fulfill the goals of educational standards while allowing for a teaching foundation rooted in indigenous ways of coming to know. (One of the important results of the research I have proposed related to this question will be knowledge gained about what Indian stakeholders feel are the essential questions and enduring ideas Indian students need to master while in school.) Students should be given problems that arise from their everyday cultural lives, and they should be allowed to pursue understanding by manipulating the physical environment in order that they may make conclusions leading to the construction of understanding that is evidenced by an

ability to explain, justify, support, and see the validity of conclusions made on their own terms, in their own languages, and from their own perspectives.

Facet 2: Interpretation – “interpretations, narratives, and translations that provide meaning” (p.48).

According to Wiggins and McTigue, the way we know that students have gained the second facet of understanding is by their abilities to show why or how an event is significant or an idea is important. They should also be able to provide an interpretation that causes common recognition or resonates with others. Understanding of this type requires the implementation of skills in both interpretation and translation because it expects students to construct meaning from what has been given to them. This means that teachers will need to assess students by asking them to take a story, translate it, interpret it, make sense of it, show how it is significant, and make it meaningful. It is important within this process that teachers recognize that because this process asks students to move between the text and their own experiences and because all interpretations are determined by personal, cultural, social and historical context, teachers can't expect to test a single interpretation or try to advocate a single point of view as being “the right answer”. According to UbD, it serves no purpose for students to be “given” a story's significance to analyze; instead they need to think through the problem so that they can find interpretations that their own intellectualism will support as valid and that have through process become the answer to “Why is this story important to me?” (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

In general Wiggins and McTigue consider text, literature, and textbook materials to be the source of stories or narratives that can be implemented in gaining this facet of knowledge; however, the premise of using stories or narratives to achieve this facet of understanding is very compatible with indigenous methods of teaching and knowing, despite the fact that their sources are for the most part oral rather than written. A great deal of emphasis and respect is committed to the art of storytelling in Indian communities and children are raised with the understanding that a story is never just a story. Instead of getting chastised, your grandmother tells you a story and you know what she means even more clearly than if she had given you a scolding instead. You can interpret the story and you know its connotation and implications for your own life. If you are an Indian child, you probably also understand that there may be several different versions of the same story, each told from a particular perspective, and for a specific reason. These different versions do not invoke the need to call one, some or all competing versions fraudulent, they merely illustrate that life holds a great deal of mystery and each individual is given the gift of perception of this mystery from a different vantage point; this is acceptable. This is understanding according to the second facet and it grows up from the very roots of Indian patterns of communication, of teaching, and of knowing. Cajete says, ‘Ultimately, science is storytelling for understanding of the natural world...The purpose of ritual, myth, and story is to tell of important aspects of the continuity and flow of life, that is, a particular people’s life and history’ (2000, p.80).

As an example of how understanding gained through story can be incorporated in an indigenous curriculum, consider this event that occurred among Yup’ik elders and

preschool children as observed by Jerry Lipka. A group of Yup'ik women, representing several generations, demonstrated the art of making Suguag (dolls) and then proceeded to use the dolls to improvise a story to tell the children participating. The story communicated Yup'ik values and customs and Lipka observed that it immediately became a lively way for the women to use role play to tease and teach children about Yup'ik values and customs. In mainstream schools we spend a fair amount of classroom time and effort leading children to improve upon their emotional intelligences. We tell them, "this is nice to say, but that is not", "this is the behavior you should show", etc. While this is one way to learn about correct social relationships, it does not produce the type of understanding Wiggins and McTighe are addressing with facet 2 because children, especially young ones, are limited in how far they can contextualize the instruction when it is only based on a prescribed list of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Wiggins and McTighe are suggesting that the use of story can help children to gain real understanding because a story requires students to translate, interpret, and make their own meaning within a context (1998). The emotionality of the experience of the story stays connected to its meaning so that understanding is rooted outside of the abstract. This is exactly what stories have done for centuries for Indian people. Iris HeavyRunner explained,

Our culture is rich with ways to teach children our world view philosophy or the good way of life. These include using our traditional languages, ceremonies, dances, blood/clan systems, music/arts, medicine, foods, clothing, and more. Our children's cultural strength or resilience can also be fostered by the oral tradition of storytelling. Children learn to listen with patience and respect. Our stories can be told over and over; they are developmental. At every step we learn something new. In essence we grow up with our stories. They are protective factors that convey

culturally specific high expectations, caring, support, and opportunities for participation. - HeavyRunner & Morris, 2006, p.2

Teaching students to understand through interpretation reinforces indigenous foundations and validates the culture for the community and also according to mainstream standards because it proves that telling stories is an acceptable way to gain true understanding of essential content. To this end Lipka states, “Not only do we want the elders to share their knowledge with us, but we want to show the larger community – particularly the next generation – that the elders’ knowledge “counts,” that their language holds wisdom, and that their stories teach values, science and literacy” (Lipka, p.201).

Facet 3: Application – “ability to use knowledge effectively in new situations and diverse contexts” (p.51).

Wiggins and McTigue derived the third facet of understanding, application, directly from Gardner’s definition of understanding. “By understanding I mean simply a sufficient grasp of concepts, principles, or skills so that one can bring them to bear on new problems and situations, deciding which ways one’s present competencies can suffice and in which ways one may require new skills or knowledge” (Gardner, 1991, p.18). According to this facet students should be able to show their understanding by using, adapting, and customizing the content to fit new contexts with new boundaries, purposes, and people. Manipulating the content in this way shows performance-based understanding and competency. Thus, teachers must provide students with new problems and new situations in order to assess this understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

One of the ways that indigenous curriculum has encouraged application as a form of understanding is by immersing young people in their environment. Lessons practiced

in a classroom tend to prescribe for students an environment that can only produce a limited number of new situations and problems. Therefore care should be taken in designing an indigenous curriculum to link the internal classroom environment to challenging exterior environments. Other activities such as role playing and improvisational stories may also hone students abilities to apply knowledge to new and varied experiences. Basso adds that according to the Apache, a prerequisite for something to qualify as knowledge is that it must be useful and knowledge is useful to the extent that it can be swiftly recalled and turned effortlessly to a practical end, or to the extent that it can be applied (2000). Thus indigenous conceptions of wisdom align with Wiggins and McTighe's third facet by asserting that knowledge that cannot be applied does not generate real or important understanding.

Facet 4: Perspective – “critical and insightful points of view” (p.53).

According to Wiggins and McTighe, understanding gained with respect to facet 4, perspective, is important because it means that students have the ability to consider problems in multiple ways and also to approach these problems from a variety of perspectives, thus creating a greater likelihood that they will understand the content in a broader and deeper context, which may lead to new insight in the area studied or in new areas. Therefore, curriculum should be designed to include opportunities for student to confront alternative world views and diverse thoughts (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

From an indigenous perspective, a manner of designing curriculum that favors teaching multiple perspectives encourages a discourse of inclusion and acceptance that provides “space and place in which indigenous teachers can explore the politics of

schooling, the adverse effects of colonial education, and obstacles to including local knowledge and instruction” (Lipka, 1995). Once a place where only the dominant view was represented, Wiggins and McTighe’s promotion of understanding through perspective allows the school to become a place where revisionist histories can give voice to other significant competing forces in the formation of our nation – namely the influence of its minority people on the history and contemporary issues of America and the world. Thus teaching for an understanding through multiple perspectives also allows education to fulfill the current mandate of the State of Montana and the Indian Education for All Act to ensure that every student learns about the distinct and unique cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians. Lipka also recognized that education for this facet of understanding was important to the Yup’ik community because it demonstrates to the community, itself, that their history, their culture, and their language “count” (1995). After a long history of being subjugated by dominant education and Euro-American lessons, educating for perspective has at last afforded indigenous people a place in coming to know.

In applying the facet of perspective to the design of indigenous curriculum, it is appropriate to expect that content should begin with an indigenous perspective on various events or concepts. This communicates that indigenous world views are as valid as the dominant perspective and allows students to progress from a point of identity connection to other orientations involving other perspectives. Having said this, after helping students to see and know their own cultural positions in relation to a specific concept, it is very important to then move on to helping students learn methods for processing alternate

views that have historically not favored the image of the Indian in America. Students need to be taught to combat hurtful alternative views with insight, circumventing the need to engage in protective or coping strategies that interrupt the learning process. Teaching in this way allows students to learn from their own points of resiliency because it helps to establish who they are in relationship to the content before they must progress to the person they feel others believe them to be.

Facet 5: Empathy – “the ability to get inside another person’s feelings and worldview” (p.55).

Wiggins and McTighe make their argument for the importance of empathy as a facet of education by beginning on the premise that the ability to empathize with others is learned and not innate. They also explain that empathy differs from perspective because empathy occurs in close quarters without allowing students to distance themselves and view content critically from a more objective standpoint. Empathy essentially requires students to take their thinking beyond what might seem odd or strange about what others believe and to come to understand the meaning others find in a particular idea. Therefore teachers must design curriculum that allows students to encounter experiences where opinions and beliefs differ and must then follow up with assessment that illustrates whether or not students are overcoming their egocentrism, ethnocentrism, and/or pre-centered orientation.

One way that indigenous cultures are oriented toward understanding through empathy is through their inclusion of the spiritual in the whole learning process. While Western education tends to view content of a spiritual nature as outside the realm of

educational disciplines, except perhaps theology, indigenous cultures believe that the spiritual nature of everything cannot be denied or separated from life's learning experiences. Because of this, the ceremonial life of indigenous people is embraced by those who are considered elders or teachers, and the lessons learned through ceremony teach empathy almost without its qualities ever being directly defined. Instead ceremony offers an opportunity for empathy to be modeled consistently, and the effects of this modeling have immediate and far-reaching effects giving credence to the importance of this facet of understanding in indigenous culture.

As examples consider the effect of prayers said in school, or a trip to understand the history and science of the Medicine Wheel, or a sweat held for basketball players before a big game. It is common practice in Indian schools to say a prayer at assemblies or other important events. School staff and administrators show little concern about the denomination of the person praying and generally a large variety of backgrounds and beliefs are reflected in the prayers. What matters is that the person praying is an elder who has had some experience in life and who is able to apply wisdom in prayer for the benefit of others. This act of asking an elder to pray and then showing the elder's words appropriate respect brings students into a number of experiences where their own beliefs may not be represented, but where appreciation for the empathy modeled through prayer is expected and understood. Similar experiences are exhibited during sweats, but sweats by their nature are much more intimate experiences where students voluntarily enter into an experience that requires suffering in common with others. In the midst of the sweat experience which is physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging students share in

their empathy for one another by recognizing their own weakness, praying from this state of weakness, and accepting the humility brought about by the challenging and spiritual nature of the sweat. As a third example, I am reminded of a field trip I took with high school-aged students to the Medicine Wheel. The site contains both historical and scientific lessons about the innovation of Indian people, but it is also profoundly spiritual. As a point of archaeological interest, the site contains evidence of a very long history of use by a number of tribes, and it holds scientific value as an example of one of the first analog computers ever invented (Giese, 1996). When we left for the trip, I was annoyed by the students' rowdy and ungrateful behavior. They complained about the bus, they complained about the food, and I felt that not a one appreciated the opportunity. Once we arrived at the Medicine Wheel an elder escorted the students down the trail to the cliffs on which the wheel had been made. The elder then said a prayer to initiate the experience as is customarily expected and I observed an instant transformation in the students, one I believe was initiated through the modeling of empathy in prayer. Students quieted themselves, they became sincere about immersing themselves in the experience, and they began to show appreciation and respect where they had failed to do so before. Upon returning to school and engaging in further discussion and work on the subject, assessment of what students produced in relation to their learning was profound and did show that they had overcome their egocentrism and present-centered orientations. If it had not been for the indigenous acceptance of the spiritual within the academic, I do not believe understanding through empathy would have been achieved to the degree that it was that day.

Outside of ceremony, indigenous cultures also teach and learn empathetically by grounding their approaches in culturally mediated relationships, and community and ecological orientations. Because the self is defined by one's relationship to others around, the nature of defining one's self necessitates understanding the positions of those in the environment. This is true in both the community and the ecological sense. The American Indian world view is rooted in the survival of the community rather than the success of the individual and the survival of the community is also recognized to be contingent upon the health of the surrounding ecological system. This world view results in students seeing mountains as grandmothers, and cousins as sisters or brothers, in addition to other connections that bring the individual much closer to other people and the ecology (Basso, 2000). Therefore the need to possess an empathetic understanding of the world is even more essential to indigenous cultures than it may be to mainstream culture. Because students may not be able to gain the objectivity needed for a less intimate evaluation of relationship and circumstance, Indian students need to be exceptionally versed in understanding through empathy.

These cultural orientations make it clear that a model indigenous curriculum should provide opportunities for students to navigate within a multigenerational community context on a consistent basis. In addition the content should make room for ceremony and also for a connection to seeing the spiritual aspects within the academic content. In addition the community and ecological nature of indigenous beliefs should be assessed as essential learning within the content.

Facet 6: Self-knowledge – “the wisdom to know one’s ignorance and how one’s patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding” (p.57).

To indigenous cultures an awareness of one’s self in the midst of living is a skill that requires a great deal of consistent development. High esteem is afforded to those who have a consistent command over the self in all situations. Individuals who show mastery of this skill are highly regarded as elders, thus illustrating that acquiring this skill requires a substantial period of time and reflexive effort. Individuals who exhibit pride, egocentrism, selfishness, or foolish haste are seen as people who have not yet mastered a firm and centered sense of self. Basso calls this type of understanding “steadiness of mind” (2000, p.133). The Apache use a narrative to illustrate the importance of the sixth facet of understanding, or wisdom, as they would call it (Basso, 2000). While it is a prime illustration of how wisdom with respect to knowing one’s self produces specific results, the story is also another example of teaching that promotes understanding through a story that must be translated, interpreted, and applied, a practice implemented to achieve Wiggins and McTighe’s second facet – interpretation.

Paraphrasing the story, the Apache say that a long time ago just before the corn came up a huge black cloud of grasshoppers was seen by an old man. The grasshoppers began to eat all of the corn shoots and the old man became worried that the grasshoppers would eat all of the corn and the people would starve. He was a wise old man with a “smooth” mind and he understood the danger so he decided that all of the medicine men should work together to solve the problem. He sent someone to tell the first medicine man, and that medicine man decided he could take care of the problem on his own. He

planned to bring a great rain to get rid of the grasshoppers, but after two days of dancing and praying he couldn't make it rain. One of the other medicine men offered to work with him, but the first medicine man wanted to continue working alone since the people had come to him first. He spent two more days trying to bring rain and was still unsuccessful and all the while the corn was being consumed by the grasshoppers. Finally four other medicine men, realizing that the old man was right, decided that the first medicine man was too proud and that his mind was not "smooth" because he thought only of himself. So they got together and sang and prayed all night. By morning it was raining hard and it continued to rain for four days and nights. When the rain finally stopped an old woman went out and looked around and there was a long pile of dead grasshoppers that went from one side of the fields to the other. She said the grasshoppers were "piled up across." The old woman went back and told the people that the four medicine men had worked together well, but that the grasshoppers had eaten almost everything so it would be a hard season and they would all suffer because of the pride of one man. Now they call that place "Grasshoppers Piled Up Across". (Basso, p.136-138).

Self-knowledge is essential understanding within an indigenous curriculum because it is highly correlated to strong identity formation which has been documented as vital to the enduring success of Indian students (Mainor, 2001). Stories like the one told above are considered catalysts for self-reflexive activities that the Apache call "working on one's mind." This type of reflexivity helps to first establish Indian identity from within the culture and then helps students to navigate themselves outside of familiar constructs, specifically experiences in mainstream education. In addition to illustrating

how Indian people teach to achieve the sixth facet, self- knowledge, the grasshopper story also illustrates another indigenous form of understanding that is not included in Wiggins and McTighe's six facets of understanding. This component is what I choose to call a sense of place.

Facet 7: A Sense of Place

In the story above, a place is given a name as a reminder of wisdom associated with it. There are innumerable narratives from indigenous cultures that contain vast amounts of wisdom communicated in the few words of a place name. Once the story above is told and understood by its listeners, one need only invoke the name "Grasshoppers Piled Up Across" and others will recall the story, understand its significance, and engage in self-reflexive activities. In addition, just the act of being in proximity to this place or recalling the area can bring to the forefront of one's mind the importance of the lesson learned and cause one to again engage in the act of "working on one's mind" (Basso, 2000). Because of the importance of this facet of understanding when teaching from an indigenous world view, I have added "sense of place" as a 7th facet of understanding.

It is essential that indigenous curriculum assesses this component of understanding because a sense of place provides so much in the way of cultural context and parameter, which is vital for students to respond to the advice of elders and to continue communicating the cultural constructs of their tribes. A sense of place is an intriguing construct within the indigenous world view because beyond communicating the physical location of an individual, it also determines a person's spiritual and mental states as well.

This is because physical place carries with it an association to prescribed action and culturally appropriate developmental expectations. A model indigenous curriculum should include specific learning about the land and the names given to the land by indigenous people because herein lies the foundation of healthy culture guided by the wisdom of those who were before.

While the contemporary place names given to most places reflect the names of people, the Bridger Ridge (Jim Bridger), Lewistown (Capt. Merriweather Lewis), etc.; the original names tribes gave these places reflect events that explain where learning happened and where it can continue to happen. By choosing to teach about these places and their original names, we also teach the lessons associated with them in a powerful, connected, and reflexive way that invites students to revisit lessons again and again until they have gained their own senses of mastery. Thus lessons about place that began outside the student become internal initiations of learning to refine understanding through explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge.

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