

COMPOSITION AND ALECHE: NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION,
SCHOLARSHIP AND THE PEDAGOGY OF JOHN DEWEY

By

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Nathan Joseph Jenkins

December 2005

DEDICATION

To my grandfathers,
Leroy "Mo" Haas
And
Joseph Jenkins

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ABSTRACT

This thesis approaches the historical and contemporary education of Native Americans in order to analyze and combat the American academic system's failure to educate Native students. The chapters cover 1) boarding schools aims and student resistance, 2) problems still faced by Native American students, and 3) possible solutions to these problems. Chapters 1 and 2 give an overview of history and research done by educators and scholars. Chapter 3 is a combination of suggestions by educators of Native students and John Dewey. The first sections demonstrate problems and voids in academia, and the final section attempts to show practical and realistic methods for correcting institutional mistakes and/or ignorance which result in high attrition rates. Dewey's pedagogy succinctly breaks down and challenges academic ideology, while at the same time challenging educators with progressive methods.

The thesis challenges not only the error of conventional education, but also how education gets defined and placed upon Native students. Also recognized in this thesis, are those areas where an academic self-examination demonstrates difficult, or problematic, areas and situations, where the black and white, or binaries, of education, are not easily noticed, nor navigated by the student or the teacher. In general, the aim of the discussion is to further democratic methods in Native American education by literally bringing those students into consideration, and to look at what we do in academia in light of the past, present, and future, within an unbroken link of time and pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

“The oppressor knows full well that this intervention would not be to his interest”
(Freire 52).

Aleche is the Crow word for tribe or society to which one belongs (Crow 119). I do not speak Crow or know more than a couple of words, nor do I pretend to know more. To be honest, I would not have known *aleche* five minutes ago, before looking it up in a Crow/English dictionary. I have seen Native American writers and scholars use phrases and words from their tribes’ languages, and I like that. I like it when writers and speakers use whole phrases or even longer passages in their native tongue. It excludes me from the “inside,” but I am not really on the inside in any sense of the word. The significance of this usage of native language is that those who use the language immediately establish a rhetorical community, or *aleche*, as soon as those words are uttered or written.

Darrell Kipp runs the Piegan Institute, a Blackfoot immersion school in Browning, Montana. I went to a lecture he gave at Montana State University, and he began his talk by telling a joke in Piegan. I know it was a joke because he told us in English afterward: “I like to begin my lectures with a joke.” Everyone laughed because the real joke for us was that most of those in the room had to sit and wait for him to “begin” in English. A few in the room knew Piegan and laughed during the original joke telling. I looked over at one woman, and knew that she spoke the language. She was on the inside. The Piegan language community in that room was maybe five people. If I walk into a freshman composition course and say “pedagogy” or “heuristics,” I will have my own language community of one, even though I am speaking English. Communities

can be relative in that way. My point is that I can borrow a word like *aleche*, but I can only make a gesture towards a community with that word's use. My usage is more erudite than legitimate. "Composition," on the other hand, is a word more readily understood. Most people know the word and know what it can mean. Put the two words together: composition and *aleche*, a large community and a small community, "English and Crow," or "Non-native and Native."

My point, restated, is that community is created, retained, and thwarted by many means, and that within educational practices, communities' interactions or state of isolation matters, especially when considering student/teacher relationships, student/academic institution's relationships, even the teacher/student's home community. The list goes on. Moreover, composition and the language of academic prose matters because it is an area where the student has the ability or opportunity to use various knowledges of communities, again using the term broadly, in order to enter them. The teacher, as a paid member of the institutional community, is the representative of another community, but there is often a wide gap. The student can write toward the academic community (however that may be perceived), attempt to gain an original voice for his or her written work, or try to make both (the student and the teacher) happy. Depending on the instructor's expectations, the student will have varying degrees of success in that classroom with each varying pedagogy.

We must listen to how the white people use their language. They use their language sometimes with good meaning intended, but to follow its instruction is death. The few white people with whom we share our feelings of frustration realize that something is wrong with language—the voice and the heart are not working together. —Barney Bush (224)

This Essay's Segment Breakdown

Native Americans:

As I alluded to earlier, I am not part of a Native American community. I am, as Barney Bush describes it, one of the “few white people” who think something has gone wrong with language, and, for my purposes, the written language of academia. Issues regarding language use in schools lead me to my first introductory explanation: why I want to discuss Native American scholarship of education.

First and foremost, mainstream academia has failed. Native American students, on the whole, have not responded to higher education like their white counterparts. Even compared to other minority groups, Native Americans have a smaller degree of success. In some way, I would like my efforts to be beneficial to these students, even if not directly. I have researched many works discussing Native American students, mostly by Native American scholars. But the problem is that most teachers will have few, if any, Native American students in their classrooms. The near invisibility of these students has no doubt led to the scarcity of research, specifically within pedagogic anthologies and journals. The ignorance regarding the students from various tribes across the nation directly affects these students' experiences within academia.

On the other hand, I see a *benefit* to a mainstream scholarship approach. In response, I want to add a degree of depth to the academic perception of a student body. In addition, I hope to expand research and to incorporate more ideas that will enter into my own teaching practices. Both of these, perception and research goals, I see as democratic aims.

John Dewey:

The other half of the research and commentary is from John Dewey. Dewey's educational concepts are still progressive and important. When reading contemporary pedagogic theory, a strong Deweyan current runs through many of the ideas, whether or not Dewey receives credit for their inception. His works have influenced educators for most of the 20th Century, myself included. When I say I wish to create a more democratic research perspective, I use Dewey's sense of democracy—hearing as many voices as possible, the voices of scholars, students, and teachers.

Additionally, Dewey's ideas are potentially revolutionary. They have created a stir among educators for decades, and many of Dewey's ideas are not yet realized fully in the classroom. I am convinced that Dewey's ideas, mainly his views on authority, continuity of education, experiential education, and of course, democracy, will benefit Native American students and their teachers.

Method:

The method of the essay is as follows:

- 1) I will first outline a brief history of Native American students in America's educational system and examine how that system hoped to change or destroy student identity. Since Dewey does not deal with Native American challenges directly, the historical section contains only direct scholarship and research on the Native American issues.
- 2) The next section of this essay attempts to spell out the contemporary problems for Native American students, specifically those of community identity and how

various identities are at odds, resulting in failed educational outcomes for everyone involved. Dewey will be introduced in this section to help define and identify Native American pedagogical issues.

- 3) Solutions, or possible solutions, make up the third section. This is a mix of Native American scholars/educators and Dewey. In general, but most importantly in this section, I want to emphasize that my effort to put real, tangible problems to paper and theorize them is not done to place myself in a position of authority. The research I have encountered states problems, their possible causes, but little on solutions. Hopefully, my solution-theory section is less talking head theory, but instead something with potential, or something which can lead into further discussion and research, something which would be perfectly in line with Dewey's methods.

THEN: HISTORICAL EDUCATION

In order to address the problems facing Native American students, it is important to discuss historical factors that have contributed to educational problems (racist educational practices in the U.S., also known as “cultural genocide”) that have remained within the educational system in an invisible, coded manner. The history of educating Native American students is an underlying remnant that continues to create or perpetuate problems. Historically, U.S. education of indigenous populations sought to eliminate community involvement and community connection with Native American students. A strong example of the education establishment’s attempts to redirect the concept of the family community is that of the Hampton Institute, discussed by W. Roger Buffalohead and Paulette Fairbanks Molin. The Hampton Institute wished to create a “nucleus of civilization” by training couples in the ways of the mainstream, American families in the 1800’s. The students moved away from their home communities and “were expected to learn English, to adopt Christianity, and to relinquish the ways of their people” (60). As a result, successful (changed) students would then move back to their tribes in order to represent a newer, better, civilized life, acting as cultural missionaries. One goal of this education was that the nuclear family would replace the extended family structures of the tribe (64). The approach by the Hampton Institute, like many others, is interesting in that it attempted not only to physically and mentally alter the students’ perceptions of their places within family communities, but also to redefine what the family community meant, and should be, as culturally defined by the dominant white culture.

Eradication and Resistance:

David Wallace Adams' *Education for Extinction* depicts in great detail the rise and fall of early Native American education, focusing on the Hampton and Carlisle Institutes. Adams' interpretation of the entire system is that it was a manifestation of the government's desire for the tribal lands, dating back to Jefferson's "coincidence of interests" in 1803: "Jefferson observed that this ongoing process was in fact producing a 'coincidence of interests' between the races. Indians, having land in abundance, needed civilization; whites possessed civilization but needed land" (6). *Not* coincidentally, the English/tribal language conflict was and is a strong point of contention for Native American education, with the fallout of tribal languages remaining an area of concern for Native American educators to this day. The effects of language loss will be taken up in the next two sections of this essay, but for now, I want to make note of this topical thread of discussion in the histories of Indian education. English language use, or requirement for the students, found varying degrees of difficulty (never fully one of ease for educators) depending on locations of the early schools.

Off-reservation schools, of course, had several advantages over their counterparts. For one thing, they tended to be more intertribal in their composition, a factor that both contributed to the use of English as the common language and made the "no Indian" rule easier to enforce....Students at off-reservation schools also were thrown into much closer contact with white English-speaking communities. And perhaps, most importantly, off-reservation students were prevented from reverting back to their native speech during summer vacation. (142)

The further away children were from the tribal community, the more success schools had in attaining the goal of English instruction.

According to Adams, the creation of the schools found motivation (beneath the desire for land) in the goals of 1) valuing a white work ethic, 2) converting tribal identity of a student into that of individualism, 3) Christianizing the pagans, and 4) citizenship training, whereby “Indian youth needed to be taught the fundamental principles of democratic government, the institutional and political structure of American society, the rights of citizens under the Constitution, and the role and sanctity of law in a democratic society” (24).

Throughout these schools’ existence, never were the students educated for upward social mobility, much less equality with whites. Instead, schools exercised a push away from tribal/traditional ways and values. “While students were being taught how to earn a living, they also were being taught a host of values and virtues associated with the doctrine of possessive individualism: industry, perseverance, thrift, self-reliance, rugged individualism, and the idea of success” (154). Above and beyond these “virtues,” boarding school educators/reformers “believed that the school’s capacity to accomplish this transformation would determine the long-term fate of the Indian race, for if the doctrine of historical progress and the story of westward expansion taught anything, it was the incompatibility of white civilization and Indian savagism” (335), and an English language background was a foundation for the subtext of Americanization, with “American” defined by the schools, showcased to students and tribal elders as overwhelming might and progress—a better way. Manifest destiny.

Trains and industrial cities, for example, were used as proof of superiority over tribal life. But the students were not invited to join these industrial movements. Based on curriculum choices, what the schools hoped to develop were vocational classrooms.

“By the turn of the century, the balance between academics and industrial training was clearly shifting toward the latter” (153). By 1901, a vocational aim became the outright focus, and Adams argues that “although vocational training marked a definite shift in emphasis, it would be wrong to assume that these changes significantly altered the aims of Indian schooling. The simple truth is that industrial training had always constituted a large segment of the school program” (315). Of course, the stated shift made little difference on student experience. The schools simply removed the façade of a well-rounded, American education, and stated that Native Americans should be taught to fill the gaps in the laboring positions within society.

Adams acknowledges that students coming from reservations also had educational aims. It was not a clear-cut case of forced, white education, even if it began that way. Students and their parents, at times, wanted what the schools were offering. Student-based aims ranged from “racial survival” (257), to an escape from tribal life, where “poor food and clothing, an unhappy family situation (including the prospect of arranged marriage), the diminished expectations of reservation life, and even the oppressiveness of tribal tradition could induce children to prefer school over camp life” (260). Some, more simply, saw educational opportunities as adventurous. “Once the trauma of loss, separation, and homesickness faded (for some it never did), children could discover unexpected pleasures in their home away from home....Beyond the joy of learning, there was the sheer adventure of it all....students were introduced to endless new experiences—the wider world beyond the reservation” (261). Of course, contemporary students, from varying backgrounds, often find similar attractions in an education.

For those students who did not find education appealing, Adams notes forms of resistance. He argues that “probably the most pervasive type of resistance is the most difficult to document—passive resistance” (231). No doubt, educators everywhere can recognize this approach, and it is effective, albeit misplaced in the more voluntary setting of the contemporary classroom. Another form of resistance came from parents: “parents resented boarding schools, both reservation and off-reservation, because they severed the most fundamental of human ties: the parent-child bond” (215). But educators and Indian schools did not give the students’ and parents’ social cognitive abilities enough credit.

[R]esistance was in part political. For older students especially, it took little imagination to discern that the entire school program constituted an uncompromising hegemonic assault on their cultural identity....many Indian parents were quick to see boarding schools as yet another attempt to destroy Indian lifeways. Before leaving their homes, children were surely reminded of this fact. Moreover, once at school the day-to-day message only served to reaffirm parental fears: whether on the drill field or in the classroom, Indian children were expected to look and act like white people. In time, perhaps, they would come to *think* like whites, and for all practical purposes, *be* white. For some students, the curriculum of civilization constituted so much contested territory where textbook lessons on westward expansion and Wednesday night prayer meetings were regarded as invasions of their personal and cultural being. From this perspective, acquiescence was tantamount to racial betrayal. (223)

When students recognized that the cultural source of their education was at odds with their own tribal cultures, creating “cultural discontinuity” (to be discussed more fully in the next chapter), the students caught in that bind had a decision to make. The “individual may consciously or unconsciously attempt to ‘exclude’ the source of this discontinuity from his mind altogether. He might, in fact, choose the path of resistance” (224). Instead of attempting to keep a balance, some would opt for rejection, or resistance, of the intrusive culture.

Adams notes this as a psychological battle for certain students. As for linguistic resistance, Adams mentions often that students took many pains to speak secretly using native languages and to keep oral histories and tales alive. In written English, disgruntled students wrote letters to administrators regarding their plight or desire to leave the school, and this written form of resistance had moments of success. But Adams takes little notice of this form of action, other than to give examples. After reading about Native American composition in boarding schools, I conclude that the written resistance had minimal success due to the students' subservient role. They could write requests to their superiors, hoping for a reprieve of some sorts, but the impetus for following through lay with those in charge, hardly a system that favored student wishes.

Outside the school setting, student education had a variety of effects on tribal communities, with the spectrum of responses coming from parents, elders, siblings still on the reservation, as well as some less tangible response from things like tribal family relationships, language use, and traditional values and ways. The struggle between competing communities never ceased to play a significant role. The original school form, the day school had one "major drawback...its proximity to the tribal community" (29), even though educators considered this proximity its main asset. The day school was changed to the off-reservation school, and that replaced by the boarding school. Any format that allowed students too much time with their home community became less and less appealing to the white educators as they attempted to become the sole influence on student identity. But having the student return to the tribe was not always the harmonious homecoming for which the tribe hoped. "Whereas the cultural clash between whites and Indians had once been fought on battlefields and in treaty councils, now it advanced to

parent-child disagreements over campfires and across kitchen tables—whether to farm or lease an allotment, whether to boil the dishwater, whether to offer prayer of thanks for a slain animal’s spirit” (277). Sometimes the child left the reservation permanently, for the newly-learned white lifestyle. Again, the student response was not always simple. Education, in these instances, was too successful.

Those students who returned and stayed on the reservation often faced social policing. “In some communities, ridicule and ostracization, traditional methods of social control in native society, were unmercifully employed to force returnees back into the tribal fold” (278). This pressure, combined with a lack of opportunity to use the new education, created new problems for returning students. On the reservation, few or no jobs could accommodate the newer, industrial knowledge. “Perhaps the greatest shock to returned students was the discovery that their industrial training was almost useless. Few reservation Indians had a crying need for tin spouts, hard-soled shoes, or tailored suits” (281).

In some ways, though, the influx of white education gave birth to a new, unforeseen generation of bicultural youths. Students indoctrinated into white ways “returned to their tribal homeland in the capacity of cultural brokers....and if the effect of their efforts was sometimes to facilitate the hegemonization of white ways, at other times it was to engineer pragmatic adaptations to changing circumstances” (301). The students returned as a go-between for the two worlds, a role necessitated by the permanent, white presence on Indian life in America. The reservation could never fully be an insular island, nor could the tribes ignore the outside world and hope that it would go away. These bicultural students knew the ropes more than those who had never left and

provided a source of knowledge about the foreign influences and, potentially, a better way in which to handle it.

Another benefit of education, specifically from the boarding school, was the development of a new approach to Indian identity. “Ironically, the very institution designed to extinguish Indian identity altogether may have in fact contributed to its very persistence in the form of twentieth-century pan-Indian consciousness” (336). To this day, the pan-Indian persists as an aid for the various tribes in coping with and doing business with the larger, political American realm. Although the tribes were unique nations, students who found themselves in an educational mix with tribes from across the country, found a common history with others, a history that would tie them, with good and bad commonalities, to each other. Where one tribe finds security and strength in its own history, the creation of the pan-Indian concept gave leverage to the multitudinous peoples that would otherwise be left to fend for themselves.

In “Literacy Practices at the Genoa Industrial Indian Schools,” Amy Goodburn reiterates what Adams has written about the boarding school experience, that the primary goals, stated or not, were those of assimilation to white standards of living and a vocational education. In connecting these educational aims to problems faced in the past (the boarding school) and in the present, Goodburn states that “scholars of American Indian education agree that the boarding school experience was and continues to be a seminal moment for generations of Indian families” (35). The schools created problems that lingered, and linger, “for generations,” not just for those students who attended boarding schools.

Goodburn focuses her research on the language issues occurring at Genoa. Like other schools of its time, Native American students were forced to lose their native tongue, with the English only policy backed by punishment. At Genoa, native speakers were sent to their rooms while those students who followed the rules were given treats and invited to get-togethers. This use of “peer pressure and rewards to divide students” (37) was effective in quickly weaning out native speakers. The atmosphere created an easier task for educators to teach “patriotism and civic duty” (37) while furthering the “assimilation of white values and rejection of an Indian identity” (38).

The classroom texts used for Genoa’s students taught them “the importance of controlling one’s outward negative responses upon returning home while remaining determined to transform such condition” (39). On the return to the reservation, students, “often ill-prepared” (39) for the old culture, were expected to stoically make changes in those communities. Ironically, through this education, “most Genoa Indian School students compared their positions as Indians to that of immigrants from other countries, saying that they need to work like other immigrants to gain access into white society” (43). The students felt like newcomers to America, desiring to earn their keep within the “superior” society, rather than recognizing the fact that the whites were unwilling to fit into any social structure other than the one with which they immigrated.

But, Goodburn notes, some students found within the new English language a way to “affirm, question, and sometimes oppose the educational goals” of the school rhetorically (42). As with Adams’ examples of this type of written resistance, the Native American students were only as successful as their superiors allowed. Goodburn cites examples from student writing in the forms of letters, requests to visit homes, and transfer

requests. In hindsight, it would appear that the Genoa school allowed students to express frustration as a form of catharsis. The students could challenge, in English of course, but the larger educational system remained in place. Goodburn claims that “these Genoa Indian School literacy artifacts depict a complex and contested contact zone of literacy, one in which students found spaces to assert their voices and to claim ownership in their education” (49), but the real issue was that the “contact zone” and the results for which the students desired were already defined by the reformers. Rhetorical strategies allowed by educators were simply pedagogical strategies for further assimilation, pedagogy that worked for the school’s benefit only.

The Active Remnants of the Boarding School:

Many examples of racist educational practices could be discussed here, but the important point to remember is that these practices are not merely contained in history, but instead have left their marks on education in the present. Indeed, isolating history lessons from the present is one effective way to shift blame and ignore an ideological legacy of contempt for Native American communities. Timothy E. Jester, in the essay “Healing the ‘Unhealthy Native’: Encounters with Standards-Based Education in Rural Alaska,” demonstrates through his involvement with the Tikishla School District that historical perceptions of students still exist, although the manifestation is now seen in the way standards are created and reinforced by the school system. The first step for educators was to remove students from the home community and place those students in boarding schools in order to “aid in their progress from savagism to civilization” (5).

Jester argues that when

a paradigm is institutionalized in schools, central aspects of the paradigm continue to flow through the system long after the innovation was developed and implemented. The underlying ideologies become infused within the culture of the system and define the norms and expectations that are seldom questioned and noticed. (7)

This is the key idea to Jester's essay, that assimilationist's goals shift only in wording but not in the underlying attempt to first isolate and then change the indigenous students.

The administrators of the past and of the present look at the Alaska native home communities as "laden with psychological and sociocultural conditions that included overwhelming despair, depression, alcoholism, and suicides" (10). As such, these communities are represented as "barriers to the children's achievement in school" (11). Instead of recognizing the historical effects on the native population, the school chooses to blame that population for student problems. The school district continues to be caught up in a circular logic of blaming others, rather than being self-critical. Jester posits that the school system, by blaming the native community, is able to divert attention away from its mainstream standards-based methods, and therefore is able to save its reputation as a good, successful school district (12). Students identified as potential failures, according to this system, are funneled into non-academic fields that are not represented in the paperwork used to judge the school's effectiveness. Adams describes historical instances where the Native American communities did something similar. The memoirs of Frank Mitchell, a Navajo student, reveal that "when Navajo policemen were looking for children, they consciously avoided taking the 'prime,' or those youths deemed valuable to the tribe's survival. Rather, 'they took those who were not so intelligent, those the People thought could be spared because of their physical conditions, and those

who were not well taken care of” (211). Both sides, native and non-native, practiced and practice education selectively in order to strengthen their own position. The Tikishla Schools recycle the civilized/savage dichotomy to fit contemporary language and pedagogies. The students, in turn, are taught this dichotomy about their own communities by the schools’ methods and vocalized perceptions about those communities’ failures. If the student fails, the student and his family are the cause, not the school.

Eventually, the policy of boarding schools gave way to the reliance on the public school systems, where native and non-native would be educated together, with the ensuing difficulties of racism and the intermingling of various student backgrounds within the classroom. The histories of Native American education echo the problems faced by Indian students today. Educational research done today repeats many themes of the boarding school experience, which should come as no surprise. The fact that too many similar problems still exist reveals that America, in general, has yet to learn how to educate Native American students.

NOW: CURRENT CONDITIONS

Understanding the historical precedent for contemporary educational practices is necessary in order to increase the visibility of history's results. Seeing the roots of Native educational failures, in turn, invites educators to further assess the problematic nature of education for these students. "The boarding school experience, which systematically removed generations of American Indian children from their homes and cultures while devaluing those cultures and families, left deeply traumatic emotional scars" (Robinson-Zanartu 49). The Hampton Institute, the Tikishla School District, and boarding school history in general demonstrate what can happen if a troubled history is ignored and then transmitted to the next generation—the true, or at least more democratic, history becomes harder to recognize because it is under layers of social and economic falsehoods. Echoing Jester's commentary on Tikishla's standards-based education, Jack D. Forbes writes in the essay "The New Assimilation Movement: Standards, Tests, and Anglo-American Supremacy," that the myth of "'manifest destiny' has not disappeared, nor has the idea that 'divine providence' favors the Anglo conquest of the country and even (for some) domination of the globe" (18). The Anglo dominance acquired by force and violence in the past is retained through institutional administration and policies, but the implications are the same—that native youth are not allowed the ability to determine their own education, their own standards for success, or even what a student's community should be to him or her. When the dominating society has the perceived right to control, the only option left is submission to that control or mainstream-sanctioned failure. Scott Lyons, in "Indians, Mixedbloods, and 'White' Academe," notes that the educational

goals put forth at boarding schools like Carlisle and Hampton are still in place, goals which educators of Native students still struggle to overcome. Lyons writes of the present environment, seconding what Adams said about historical educational aims, that “At our multicultural university, the Protestant epistemology still reigns supreme: Individual success is the desired outcome of individual competition and hard work, an ideology reflected in pedagogy....that many Indian students find alienating, although a little alluring as well” (98). The struggle is one to unearth and confront a deeply set concept of what “success” means in the university, and “Although the experiences of many American Indians have changed as circumstances and policies changed, historical factors and the process of acculturation remain as powerful influences on the lives of many Indian people faced with difficult choices about who they are and how they want to live” (Garrett 2). Lyons argues that acculturation is a desire of the “Euro-interpretive communities” and asks, “How far have we really come from that?” (94), referring to boarding school aims. The acknowledgement and discussion of historical forces needs to be the foundation and underlying anchor for addressing the problems that have developed as a result.

Disparate Communities:

Audre Lorde once wrote, “Without community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist” (99). For Native American youth, community can mean many things, and the term “community” can become many more things for a person. On

the surface, community has a connotation of being a unified body, with the members closely-knit, representing each other in that setting. “Community” also, on the surface, has a positive ring to it, but for marginalized peoples in the United States, the concept of a national, or mainstream, community means being left out, or challenged to fit into that community. In this way, we see that communities, intentionally or unintentionally, work against each other in order to sustain themselves against the “threat” of another group of people.

While the term “community” can imply a unified collective, keeping that term simplified creates problems within education. Too easily, academia, as its own community, can focus on “other” communities as problematic, ignoring that each school develops many communities within it. An administrator may rally listeners by describing the school or university as a community, and calling for support and unification, but who are they addressing? Paul Boyer, in *Native American Colleges: Progress and Prospects*, states that the “attrition rate among Indian students, at both the school and college levels, greatly exceeds the rate for white students” and that Native students have the lowest graduation rate of any student group, “trailing black, Hispanic, and Asian American students” (4). Obviously, when considering the Native attrition rate, the administrator’s community is not doing its job. Instead, the good feeling that the student body receives is the acceptance and reinforcement that they fit in, are doing the right kind of academic work, and have the right kind of goals in mind for education. The challenge for mainstream students is not that they might be inappropriate individuals for the school community, but instead the challenge is merely getting a good grade, achieving success academically by the professors’ standards.

For the Native American student, as well as other non-mainstream students in the U.S., communities collide socially. I use community here to give a name to the core support system for the individual student, and the prototypical community for most individuals is the family. Beyond the family, the tribe represents the Native American students' place in society—politically, racially, socially, etc. Within the tribe, the unique aspects of that particular community form other, more specific communities. An example is that speakers of the native language could be considered a community. Richard E. Littlebear, in a look at Northern Cheyenne language, explains that America generally has difficulty in understanding why a sparse language community should be preserved. Littlebear, in response, argues that “American Indian languages transmit and strengthen our cultural and individual identities and any splintering of these abilities to transmit or to strengthen does irreparable harm to American Indian psyches” (80). The language community's strength is directly tied to the individual speaker's identity as a part of the community, and as belonging to that group.

Additionally, those who practice traditional ways (according to the tribe's standards of traditional ways) could be another community. This list could continue, but I use these two to illustrate the “cultural” community to which a student may or may not belong. Of course, many more communities exist for each individual: friends, occupational, etc. As noted earlier, the school often presents itself as a community, a supporting network of individuals, but for the Native American student, he or she may or may not regard the school as an authentic community, but rather a community created by and for another culture, the sometimes foreign society of “white” America. In all of these examples thus far, many differences exist between the individual, Native American

student and the mainstream student, and the underlying socio-historical contexts of communities are taken for granted by the mainstream society as to how communities actively interact with individuals, or do not. Subtly, dominant society establishes what is normal, and, as a result, what is abnormal. Forbes discusses the cultural application of American normalcy in the terms “America” and “American.” He writes that the

racist and ahistorical use of the term ‘America’ also allows the preparers to limit the very potent word ‘American’ primarily to Anglo-Americans or to those other groups which have been incorporated with Anglo-Americans...The terms ‘America’ and ‘American’ are extremely powerful, evocative and emotional terms. (13)

Forbes discusses how these terms delegate a sense of belonging to the national community, and how these terms ironically do not often include any indigenous groups from the U.S. Although the indigenous peoples do not come from another country, they are not seen as American, since “American” is used to define something other than location or citizenship. It is a term to appropriate cultural fluidity, with non-American ways or groups seen as antagonistic or challenging to the mainstream identity. Goodburn and Lyons make a similar argument when Goodburn discusses the treatment of Native students in boarding schools as immigrants, and Lyons refers to the students as “involuntary minorities incorporated against their will” (“Indians” 97). What Forbes does in his essay is useful in its discussion of how society manipulates terms and language ideologically, and he unearths the behind the scenes valuing or devaluing that takes place without much notice or commentary. One of the difficulties with discussing the complexities of societies is that there are so many examples, in individual words, body language, and on and on. My discussion of community will by no means be able to touch on the matrix of aspects that make up anyone’s sense of the word, but the attempt

to analyze the problems and possible solutions within the complexities is necessary. The problems that Native American students face are real, and the forces that created those problems are too often ignored, or defended as natural or right.

Identity Crisis:

The most intimate, and therefore damaging, effect on Native American students is the American, social challenge to personal and community identity. Taking away a sense of appropriateness of one's own family or heritage has been a historical tactic, as seen with the boarding schools, in order to shame or embarrass indigenous peoples away from their communities. And the standards that are in place now fundamentally do the same thing, only using different language and terms. Littlebear writes, "American Indians have been stereotyped to such an extent that even American Indians have begun to believe those stereotypes and may subconsciously reject their own heritages" (82). Greg Sarris, in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, describes this same dynamic. He warns that "Lest a teacher jump in too quickly with suggestions about how such a student might engage her personal experience, it should be remembered that the chasm here is likely to be protective. Teenage pregnancy, poor grades, obesity, which all signal failure in some way, are difficult enough to live with let alone discuss with a teacher or in a classroom of peers" (158). And Michelle Grijalva, in "Teaching American Indian Students: Interpreting the Rhetorics of Silence," ran into a problem with her curriculum ideas. The superintendent of her school informed her that her students would not read her texts, which were centered on the students' tribes. Grijalva explains the problem:

Underlying this sense of shame is a long and complex history. To understand the psychological, political, legal, and cultural dilemmas faced by many American Indians, one must understand the historical and contemporary consequences of conquest, subjugation, and colonialism, especially from an indigenous perspective—clearly a daunting task but a mandatory one. (42)

An additional result of stereotypes is that Native Americans allow the *more positive* or *less damaging* ones to remain in order to subvert the more negative and damaging, although all do some sort of damage by replacing a truly felt identity with a mainstream society, socially-constructed identity.

Native American students feel themselves being torn in two. The destruction of identity, and the development of an externally controlled identity, is a concern for Native American student success in schools. According to Terry Huffman, estranged students do not “possess the social-psychological means to explore the trappings of unfamiliar cultural surroundings. Their ability to actively engage in new cultural learning was seriously compromised by the concern of losing (or diluting) their cultural identity” (18), and native “cultural identity” has suffered as many setbacks already that the mainstream society can muster. Retaining this identity, then, is a key element in any positive Native American educational pursuits. Simon Ortiz, an Acoma Pueblo poet, discussing his connection to his tribe, writes that “my real interest and love of reading had to do with stories...they tied me into the communal body of my people and heritage....This quality of continuity or continuance I believe must be included and respected in every aspect of Native American life and outlook” (9). That Native American students often find themselves in limbo within the educational system is commonly referred to as discontinuity, the inability for the home and academic communities to coincide.

Huffman writes that “the cultural discontinuity hypothesis is certainly the more popular [theory] on cultural conflict found in the American Indian education literature” (3), and Susan Ledlow, in the essay “Is Cultural Discontinuity an Adequate Explanation for Dropping Out?” defines cultural discontinuity as the assumption “that culturally based differences in the communication styles of the minority students’ home and the Anglo culture of the school lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and, ultimately, failure for those students” (23).

Ledlow answers the question/title of her essay (Does discontinuity explain attrition?) with the answer “no.” She explains that the “unquestioning acceptance of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis by many educators, as a cause for dropping out of school, is misguided for two reasons.” First, research does not support it, and second, “the focus on cultural discontinuity precludes examination of macrostructural variables which may, in fact, be far more significant” (24). Huffman, in turn, defines the macrostructural as the assumption “that social/structural forces beyond the realm of the individual are the source of cultural conflict and, as such, are responsible for the lack of educational success among minorities” (3). In noting the two theories (discontinuity and macrostructural), it does make sense historically that the two cultures (assuming there are only two for the example’s sake) would not fit, and would be intentionally antagonistic to each other. But, also keeping with historical precedent, the discontinuity hypothesis reflects the blame that occurs between the school and the tribal community, as seen with the Alaskan school district that blames student failure on the native community. Ledlow argues against cultural discontinuity, despite its popularity in academic discussions because “to say that minority students experience failure merely due to cultural

differences between their homes and the school is to deny the historical and structural context in which those differences are embedded” (32). Of course, both theories need to be recognized for their merits, because discontinuity is real, and the history is real. They are not independent of each other, but the focus cannot be on one or the other. Education cannot change the past, or history, but educators can use it in an attempt to guide current academic methods and approaches.

Cultural discontinuity (cultural incompatibility which leads to student failure) is a manifestation of what can happen when the Anglo world and the Native American world cannot work together. More directly, it occurs when the Anglo world will not compromise itself enough to make room for Native American students. The line that Native American students are being asked to walk means that they will be attempting to live two lives, or to live in two worlds—that of their home community and that of the outside, mainstream community. Of course, for the average mainstream student, this bi-cultural world does not exist because the academic world simply reinforces the beliefs and methods that the student already possesses. For the Native American student, the task is not so simple, since the Anglo world first must be learned, accepted, and then acted upon. In addition, there is a real or perceived threat of losing a strong cultural identity when acquiescing to the mainstream expectations. From the mainstream, academic perspective, it has been argued that “a belief by educators in the fundamental sameness of all cultures is coupled with the assumption that when there are differences the Anglo-American way is best” (Coggins 4). The native student will sense this preferential treatment of the mainstream ways since the customs and ways of the native

community are simply not an option. Success comes with doing what is asked of the student by the administration, not the interweaving of native and Anglo approaches.

In “Two People: An American Indian Narrative of Bicultural Identity,” Michael Tlanusta Garrett describes the developmental process of forming a bicultural identity in stages. Garrett writes that “American Indian students are oftentimes faced with pressure to compromise their basic cultural values and behaviors in order to successfully meet the expectations and standards of that context” (4), and the pressure and subsequent effects on the individual student is as follows: 1) recognition of personal identity, 2) seeing that a choice must be made, 3) denial/confusion, 4) appreciation of the other culture or some aspect of it or what it can offer, and 5) integration (7). But Garrett reminds us that the stages of development are not as fluid as this list.

Progression through the various stages of bicultural identity development is neither unilinear nor smooth for persons who may experience their unique circumstances as “marginal people.” People enculturated in one culture, but required to function in another, experience a dual existence in two cultural realms, yet may not be completely accepting or accepted in either cultural realm. They are, however, in a unique position of either being able to or being forced to choose an identity. (7)

Two things to highlight here are that the Native American students may not be accepted or accepting of the culture to which they are being introduced. Additionally, an identity transformation is required for success in the mainstream community. Both of these problems are damaging, and the students feel a challenge to themselves and to their sense of a “natural” community—their family, tribe, or heritage.

Instead of growing in appreciation and knowledge of themselves, Native American students feel distanced from their tribal community. In Aaron P. Jackson and

Steven A. Smith's research done on educational/cultural transitions among the Navajo, one common fear that is vocalized is that the students being questioned

reported a strong connection to their homeland. They felt some uneasiness when away from home, even when in the company of their friends or family. They felt confused about the conflicting messages to (a) leave the reservation and be successful, and (b) maintain their traditional connection to the tribe, land, and culture. (41)

Many students, if not all, will feel "uneasiness" upon leaving what they know, but for the Native American student, taking leave of home is physical, but more importantly symbolic of leaving one's previous identity behind. The students feel that forsaking and/or rejecting the family/tribal community is what is being asked of them, and what has been asked of Native American students throughout their educational history. Are they allowed to have both? The issue could be that the binary of either tribe/or mainstream determines who will be successful in one or the other realm, depending on how "true" the individual can be to that realm's concept of success and/or belonging. John Ogbu, an anthropologist theorist, uses the term "castelike" to describe culturally subordinated minority groups, and when these groups feel the pressure of the bicultural world, they "actively resist achievement in school because achievement is associated with 'acting White' or accepting the culture of white middle class America while rejecting the minority culture. Students may feel that it is not possible to maintain their social relationships with peers and family members if they begin to 'act White'" (Ledlow 31). Again, as Ledlow notes, "All children experience discontinuity upon arrival at school" (31), but the difference is that the discontinuity is not a severance of history and family for those students already reassured within and by the mainstream academic culture. The mainstream student will most likely not see or experience much to challenge his or her

ideologies and beliefs because the school does not often say that the more mainstream beliefs are either wrong or unacceptable.

The Isolation of Education:

Mainstream institutions, or communities, and for educational purposes, mainstream schools, have their own sets of expectations for those who wish to be a part of those communities. Following those expectations, and applying those methods and approaches, is the way that the schools can evaluate student success. Schools contain within them ideologies not only about educational content and how that content is learned, but also about the culture surrounding the classroom experience with teachers and with other students. For the Native American student, the institutional expectations might be, and often are, different than what the student expects or is used to. To make matters worse, schools do not often adequately support their minority students. To fully support those students would entail learning about those cultures to the extent that support could be provided based on students' needs, but the school is far from doing that. Instead, economic concerns or ideological views on how education should function steers the course for the student body.

Dewey offers insight into how ideological education asserts itself. But before delving into his philosophy immediately, some key concept explication will help. One of Dewey's ideas addressed in the following is that of *continuity*. For Dewey, education should be continuous, not simply ceasing at the end of an academic semester or quarter. Dewey challenges instructors to provide students with content and methods that will foster an ongoing education away from the classroom. One aspect of this, for example, is

that the instructor should not and does not need to have all of the answers. Open-ended questions, in which the instructor is not looking for a specific answer, is one practice. The instructor asks a question, but the students are the ones with the answers. It is a challenge to the students to generate ideas of their own, with the assurance that the answers are not wrong.

The next key idea is Dewey's sense of education's connectedness to the outside, non-academic world. This sense of connection at first may appear like another Deweyan idea: connecting academic content to the students' personal experiences away from school. Connectedness to the outside world can be both positive and negative, but in this section of the essay, I am focusing on the negative. Because academia is in the midst of a society, it is subjected to that society's influences and desires. Sources of power and authority within the society, seemingly removed from the educational system, enact pressure, such as economic or nationalistic pressures, onto the schools. The administrators, the teachers, and even the parents, can exert this influence. All come from the overarching society, to some degree, and individuals carry with them certain subjective goals for the students, hidden agendas, so to speak, that they wish to see manifested within their students' newly acquired knowledge. Teaching about society can be a source for classroom content (discussions of pop culture, politics, etc.) and can also be a site for struggle. The struggle is to allow an education to more naturally develop within each student, not collectively put on them by outside forces.

The last Deweyan concept is that of individual experience, which is at odds with the isolation of education from the outside world. Each student (and teacher) brings into the classroom a series of unique experiences. These experiences cannot be changed,

despite education's influence. Dewey proposes throughout his career that personal experience is an asset. Rather than attempting to sway students away from a particular understanding, personal experience can be used to broaden interpretations of class content when shared amongst a group, aiding a democratic classroom environment. The opposite would be the imposition of one interpretation or experience, that of the teacher's, onto the students. Arguably, the biggest challenge that comes with the democratic classroom and any academic discussion is that the school should not be seen as a place stockpiled with things to be learned, where all of the knowledge and answers are contained within the syllabus' content or the teachers' lectures. The "things to be learnt" method relies upon isolating subject matter from student experience. Isolation distances school from community, putting the student in academic/cultural limbo, and the student has trouble seeing how what he or she is learning is connected to what has been previously experienced. Academia, as a result, becomes its own form of knowledge and experience that is only useful when in school.

The concept of isolation has been broached in the context of the boarding school and how those schools wished to distance themselves (and the students) from the reservation. In that way, the students were isolated. In a different way, although similar, the academic content of the schools became isolated from the students' home lives. Interaction or clashing of communities—conflict—that will challenge and expand student knowledge or understanding would be a natural result of education, but isolation, rather than allowing for interaction, creates a transmission of artificial knowledge that perpetuates an academic state where the student does not practice continuity. Instead, the isolation of the "two worlds" (from the Native students' perspective) simply creates an

awkward, new body of academic knowledge that does not have clear roots or effects in social conditions.

Education is intentionally isolated from the rest of the world for training purposes, but educators have to recognize schools' roles in Native societies in order to see in which direction education is heading, and where educators might like to see it go. Repeatedly, claiming the superiority of one method or culture over another has been the procedure for mainstream education when dealing with Native American students, and, as Dewey writes,

there is a natural tendency for every social institution, like every habit in the individual, to become set in a particular form, and having crystallized, to go on following its own traditions, its own routine in an isolated way, without sufficient regard to the conditions and the workings of other social institutions at that time. There is a tendency for the school to become an isolated institution, for being looked upon as having its own peculiar interests and methods and both those in the school and outside of the school tend to conceive of the school from that special point of view, instead of looking upon it as simply one among a number of social instrumentalities needing to be judged from the standpoint of its interactions, its flexible response to the other institutions. (70)

If education's ideas do not or cannot connect with the Native students' perceptions of their world, then those students and their educators function outside of that world. The issue then becomes about this separation, and where we can regain a concrete social connection for education. Dewey writes that when school and instruction remain disconnected from "outside life," socially and psychologically, "the school experience becomes a thing in itself; the child learns to live in two spheres of experience, in two worlds, more or less, and he passes at certain times out of one into another, and vice versa" (*Lectures* 81). Today, the Native student still functions in two different worlds, as much of the research already notes.

The crystallization of knowledge can readily be seen throughout Native education, and Dewey argues that the school

selects or reduces the complexity of the forces operating outside...It selects in such a way as to purify them, in such a way as to idealize them...It endeavors to arrange them so that they shall harmonize, so that they shall be generalized and unified in a way in which they are not in the everyday process of growth. There comes a time in the development of society when it is too complex to be the most effective or the most healthful instrument for the education of the child...In its complexity, society, being upon the whole adapted to the needs of the adult, has gone too far away from the child. In primitive society the education of necessity occupied a larger place because the plane of society was nearer the child. Every advance in education marks to some extent the introduction of a greater gap between the organized plane of society as a whole and the standpoint of the child. (*Lectures 66*)

When set apart from indigenous societies, education functions apart from what the Native communities see around them, or considers normal conduct. Social involvement with a reservation is contradictory to academic aims on a fundamental level. No matter what the assignment or exam may be asking for, the Native student would be hard pressed to see that assignment as connected to his or her own identity. And if and when the student graduates, he or she leaves the school and returns to a world that is different than the academic world. Education, despite this criticism, can provide new relationships between students and educators or new concepts and angles from which to have a new understanding on a variety of issues. And overall, Dewey believed that the “most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning” (*Experience 48*). He uses the word “attitude,” and this distinguishes between what education *does* and the *approach* that it can inspire. It is a place where tools for thought are created and the older tools that we bring to the experience are sharpened or made more complete than before the process had begun.

Native Student Isolation Versus Mainstream Pervasion:

What Forbes has argued, regarding standards-based education (read *specific world view*), is that the “push for ‘standards’ is actually an attempt to destroy multiculturalism, pluralism, and non-Anglo ethnic-specific curriculum” by using content approved and “controlled by white people” (7). The standards-based education creates its own “testing culture” (8) in order to contrast and dominate other cultures which may vie for academic visibility, creating waves or progressive ideas that might not agree with the status quo. Again, when I use the term “standards-based,” I am not only referring to a set system, as seen in the Tikishla school district. Instead, I refer to the hidden standards of the mainstream educational system: attendance, format, grade scale, etc.—things that seem neutral on the surface, but are created and enacted in a culturally created system of education. These ideals are not “pure,” to borrow from Dewey, but instead are merely the dominant method.

Students who come from a non-dominant culture are not conditioned beforehand to accept mainstream pedagogy. Huffman notices from her research that “the [academic] institution itself began to be regarded with suspicion (due to a growing perception that it was simply an agent of assimilation)” (8), and this argument, as seen already, is founded in history. Jester argues that not only is the school an agent of assimilation, but also that the methods and standards placed on top of historical realities attempt to cover over racist and assimilationist ideals. There is a little Hampton Institute in much of what academics takes for granted as a natural learning culture. The standards and the ethnocentric pedagogy in the academic community directly pose a barrier for the relationships

between Native American students and the surrounding academic community. Huffman's research participants "reported positive and negative experience in terms of their relationships with faculty" (38), and Robinson-Zanartu writes, "Within traditional (American Indian) world views, passing on the culture to the next generation is a given responsibility; any institution which seeks to disrupt or to discount that natural transmission of the culture disrupts learning" (46). So, the problematic issue is not only the lack of support for Native American students from academic institutions, but instead is that the history of those institutions is engaged in the attempt to thwart and isolate minority students from their home communities in order to create the more unified, pure, American community. Within the traditional communities, the "natural transmission" that creates learning is actively halted by the institution's desire to keep the two cultures separate, and not equal. On the other hand, the majority/mainstream students (those who make up the dominant economic and social percentages) do not need the same type or amount of specific individual support since the entire structure is a support system.

The dominant culture is pervasive, which makes it mainstream. Starting at a young age, all members of American society receive an experiential education about how the existing social structure functions and perpetuates itself. Dewey calls this pervasiveness by the dominant society "corporateness," and I call this "mainstreaming," where society depends on its members to reaffirm how that society has been built with a particular brand of ideas and ideals. Dewey's corporateness theory is not like the Native sense of community or communal education. The approach to keep in mind is that the Native student often represents, more so than the non-native student, a specific, unique nation and that nation's culture. Corporateness is more akin to a blanketing system.

Dewey's individualism allows for customized education in each student, regardless of the corporate or communal influences. On the other hand, the Native communities provide identity and stability. In light of historical education of Native America, the simplification or one-dimensional nature of American knowledge aids the corporate/mainstream process, providing culturally sanctioned methods and ideas for the next generation. However we may define "American ideology," an ideology, when shared by a group is a construction of power and the ability to retain that power, and Dewey, in "United States, Incorporated," writes that "the United States has steadily moved from an earlier pioneer individualism to a condition of dominant corporateness" (*Individualism* 36). And, in "The Crisis in Culture," he argues that the thing which "prevents the schools from doing their educational work freely is precisely the pressure—for the most part indirect, to be sure—of domination by the money-motif of our economic regime" (*Individualism* 127). Despite the corporate climate, the people of the U.S. retain a pioneering ideal, which is now merely American mythology. Americans hold on to an individualistic ideal as a way to ward off "corporateness," or the mainstreaming tendencies of a corporate society. The members of society find value in the *idea* that everyone is a unique individual. Educating toward the unique individual is what Dewey's pedagogy encourages, but with mass marketing and entertainment, we see a decline in unique cultural aspects within the tribal nations and America overall. Explaining or simplifying how a society is *made* or *perpetuated* is impossible. Because of the impossibility to fully grasp "American culture" as a thing in itself, the students and educators attempt to create a more simple, *unified* culture. Various societies, tribal or mainstream, "police" differences that might threaten unification, and Dewey argues that

“Blame is most readily averted by being so much like everybody else that one passes unnoticed” (*Human* 4). Regarding the policing of Native American students returning to the home community, the perceived threat to unification is justifiable, even if the student’s newly acquired knowledge could be used to benefit the tribe because historical precedent does not have a good track record.

When education interacts with or isolates itself from a Native society, it creates an atmosphere of external expectations for the student. The student’s tribe or family is commonly seen as “natural” and is often seen as internal, stemming from the student’s own personal identity. Many times in class, the student differentiates between social pressure and family or tribal values, seeing them as disparate things. One obvious question is: “Do you *not* see your family as a part of society?” But, historically, the tribe is set apart. It is a sovereign nation, and even if the tribe is its own cultural product, it is a product created apart from the currently dominant society. Continued on a larger scale, formation of student ideology comes from his or her tribe/family’s set of traditions and ways. For Dewey, he describes the relation as thus:

[T]here is no contact with things excepting through the medium of people. The things themselves are saturated with the particular values which are put into them, not only by what people say about them, but more by what they do about them, and the way that they show that they feel about them and with them. While of course there is a certain convenience in classifying studies as those which have to do with people and those which have to do with things, when this is made anything more than a convenience in arranging experience, a dualism is introduced, a fixed gulf for which there is no justification whatsoever. (*Lectures* 47)

When educational learning experiences do not act in social and personal ways with the student, the student crystallizes and classifies differing or opposing views so that the new, and often foreign, views can be more easily assimilated or disregarded. Classifying

complicated concepts creates an either/or scenario. Something is simply good or bad, important or trivial, depending on how a student sees it in relation to previous experience or knowledge.

An educational motivation for the inclusion of new ideas, or challenging ideas, in the classroom content is to counteract or “complement” the students’ perceptions about their world. Dewey, in “Progressive Organization of Subject-Matter,” writes,

We are told that our schools, old and new, are failing in the main task. They do not develop, it is said, the capacity for critical discrimination and the ability to reason. The ability to think is smothered, we are told, by accumulation of miscellaneous ill-digested information, and by the attempt to acquire forms of skill which will be immediately useful in the business and commercial world. (*Experience* 85)

Dewey touches on a couple of points here that should be highlighted. First, Native students come to the university with views and beliefs about American and tribal culture, and it can be an arduous task to get students to reconsider what seems normal and right, even if reconsidering will only strengthen previously held beliefs. Second, many of the students want skills that they have been told will be useful at a later time. Student beliefs and their desired skills are often political and economical in nature, areas where education suffers from an imposition of the larger social, Americanized world and its need for like-mindedness.

I want to reiterate, before moving on to the next section of the essay, that Native American educational problems come from a mix of historical precedent and the inability to work with individual, Native students. Dewey writes that the “institutions and customs that exist in the present and that give rise to present social ills and dislocations did not arise overnight. They have a long history behind them.” Dealing with these problems

then, strictly in the present and disregarding how issues are historically produced, “in the end will only render existing problems more acute and more difficult to solve” (*Experience* 77). Instead of seeing cultural products as “absolute revelations,” where simplification merely leads to more firmly entrenched social ills, we benefit from acknowledging the mix through educational awareness of a complicated history. Dewey repeats here what others have argued, that the underlying historical forces of Native education have resulted in problems for those students, and only by deciphering how and where these problems have retained a foothold will education be able to work toward new pedagogies and an improved educational experience for Native students.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS: FORGING NEW PATHS

I included the word “possible” for this section’s title because pedagogy toward social justice is always ongoing. Working toward the improvement of Native American education involves the past, present, and future. Therefore, we can know that education has improved, but educators also know that the future must be better. The “conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind” (Dewey *Democracy* 97). Possible solutions to the problems being faced by Native American students are a strengthening of identity, academic communities and methods being formed for support, and family/tribal support of the students. The identity issue is significant in that the communities in which Native American students take part outside of their home communities have been established and reinforced by omitting pluralized aspects of how the tribal communities function. And many times the dominant culture outright rejects the minority students’ sense of community and belonging, and therefore rejects their identities. For example, Forbes writes that the “USA became a place where being able to speak a second language was not a virtue, but a sign of cultural inferiority or subversion” (12). The language issue recurs in other areas as well, such as the field of English as a Second Language, where students desire to take part in an English Only-type format in order to find success and acceptance. To fail at the language means the student does not try hard enough, is intellectually inferior, or just does not desire “America” enough. Identity formation is a challenge from the outside community and not seen as a natural or productive process for Native American students. Kipp argues that language contains identity, or heritage, for

any person. The English language, therefore, contains culturally significant aspects for its speakers, whether they recognize it or not. Using the same idea, Kipp argues specifically that the loss of an indigenous language is a huge loss to identity when those communities see that language fall out of favor and subsequently out of use. Language is not simply one item on a list of things that make up a heritage. In many ways, language is the heritage, and when it is lost, that heritage cannot be fully recovered (Kipp lecture).

English language use, with its tainted history for Native education, can be in the form of forced, spoken usage and also in the written form, discussed briefly as a questionable tool for resistance in boarding schools. In “Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing,” Lyons argues that the “forced replacement of one identity for another, a cultural violence enabled in part through acts of physical violence, was in so many ways located at the scene of writing” (449). For Kipp, it is language use (or non-use), but Lyons’ ideas on English composition need some more explanation here because they complement Dewey’s concept of democratic classrooms. The complement is that Lyons’ argument is for autonomous community rights in order to gain the more democratic classroom because the Native version of sovereignty challenges educators to unpack their own concepts or definitions of sovereignty, and how that functions within public manifestations of personal pedagogy. Lyons writes, “For indigenous people everywhere, sovereignty is an ideal principle, the beacon by which we seek the paths to agency and power and community renewal.” He continues, “Rhetorical sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (449,50). Lyons reminds educators

that students should be sovereign in their educational pursuits, and it is a mistake to assume that students already function that way. The easy mistake is to see the student majority as the norm, a norm that “naturally” blends itself with mainstream expectations. In addition, instructors need to be reminded that Native American students are not immigrants, but instead “a fellow nation in the community of sovereigns” (452). Sovereignty may *seem* the norm in the classrooms, but “the rhetorics of sovereignty advanced by both Indian and non-Indian people often claim to be talking about the same thing, when actually they differ considerably” (453).

Strength in Community:

The Native version of sovereignty, as described by Lyons, is that the “sovereignty of individuals and the privileging of procedure are less important in the logic of a nation-people, which takes as its supreme charge the sovereignty of the group through a privileging of its traditions and culture and continuity” (455). The argument, often repeated by researchers and educators, is that Native students need sovereignty, not for themselves, but for their community. Lyons argues that multiculturalism that focuses on individuals, and not the nation, does not honor Indian sovereignty (457). Instead, individualistic sovereignty merely reinforces what feels to be the common, and therefore normal or right, concept of self-governance. The American pioneering ideal must be recognized for what it truly is, a myth. Lyons’ focus in this argument centers around his experience with Native students in composition classrooms, hence is “rhetorical sovereignty.” “As the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in the pursuit of self-determination, rhetorical

sovereignty requires above all the presence of an Indian voice, speaking or writing in an ongoing context of colonization and setting at least some of the terms of debate.” Again, Lyons stresses the importance of acknowledging and working through historical colonization, and he continues, asserting that Native American rhetorical sovereignty would, “ideally...often employ a Native language” (462). Lyons does not delve into the indigenous language issues at play in education, but, for my purposes, a brief look at language within education is also necessary in a discussion on community and identity.

Kipp, directly using Native language for education, focuses his educational goals for students around their acquisition and perpetuation of the native language. The Piegan Institute retains its autonomy by distancing itself from the tribal council and tribal politics. As a result, Kipp and his fellow educators are able to offer the students seclusion, at least partly, from outside influences. Of course, the students and the school cannot be fully removed from American life, but rules are in place to make sure that the tribal language and school’s pedagogy function as smoothly as possible. It is an interesting, counter-mainstream approach, and the seclusion acts in some ways as a direct counterassault on the seclusion of the early day schools—all English and Americanization at school and back to tribal life at night. Kipp’s isolationist methods attempt to fix some of the problems created by and perpetuated by mainstream education. The Piegan institute takes Lyons’ idea of “setting at least some terms of debate” to a different extreme by defining most, if not all, of the terms (and in this case, educational methods). Interestingly, pedagogy at the immersion school is isolationist, but it isolates in a different way than that form of isolation which Dewey argues against—the isolation of knowledge from experience. By isolating the school and the students from the

dominant society through Native language use, the school is able to teach its students academic content with, literally, the tribal tradition of its language. Students do not separate school from life, but instead are interweaving a strong sense of themselves in relation to their community with studies like science and history.

As an immersion school, where students are immersed in the native language, the various fields of study are performed in Piegan. The subtext in this setting is the tribal traditions and values. Kipp explains,

We use the analogy that our language is our grandparents, and we tell others, 'If you were walking down the road, and your grandparents were sitting alongside the road, would you walk past them? And, if you do walk past them, then you are truly a brutal person, brutal as the rest of the world.' We don't want to be like that. We want to remain the ones that stop and care for the grandparent. (67)

Also, Kipp explains, "we're desperate to keep certain influences away from us. We ask, 'Could you leave us alone for just a little while? Just give us a break. Just leave us alone until we can get our health back, until we can get our strength back, until we can get our own vision back.' There are times when the strongest language is silence" (65). The fear expressed by Kipp is that the only way to gain educational sovereignty is by removal from the mainstream, strengthening tribal identity before releasing students into mainstream, public education.

Language immersion's unique pedagogy challenges its teachers in ways that most schools would not outwardly espouse. "If educators do not constantly seek to define and fine tune their teaching abilities so they teach at their optimal level, they are a disgrace to their profession" (Kipp 63). On the other hand, when teachers are not challenged to grow and learn, the education that is given to students can be stagnant, only further isolating

students who do not see or understand in the same manner as the teachers. Another seemingly anti-American (or anti-individualistic) approach offered at the school is the desire to remove competitive attitudes among the students. Kipp writes, “One of the most destructive elements you can have in a school is competitiveness. Competitiveness really destroys our sense of community. It destroys a family and it destroys cohesion. One of the things that Indian people, and particularly my tribe, suffer from is a great deal of *fragmentation*” (64), and Kipp’s ideas on competition reflect Lyons’ complaint stemming from his own classroom in the state university. Lyons writes that “the competitive, individualistic ethos of those classrooms is at odds with the communitarian impulses of many students” (98). The immersion school desires a more communal approach in an attempt to replace the remnants of boarding school aims, aims that desired to distance students from the tribal value of community. The anti-competitive, isolationist pedagogy developed in this school is interesting and challenging, in light of how these teaching practices could function in a standard classroom. A public education cannot offer the same experience, but the immersion school may have some ideas to offer educators concerned with helping Native American students reach their potential in the academic setting.

Growth from Experience:

Being able to strengthen identity means that the Native American students have more of an anchor and evaluative strength when confronting other ideologies and communities. Looking again at the language issue, David H. Dejong, in the essay “Is Immersion the Key to Language Renewal?” recognizes that restoring “language is a

difficult task under the best of circumstances and requires the cooperation and dedication of not only the families and parents within the local community, but also the support of the Indian nation itself” (34). What DeJong articulates here is that if the tribal community desires mainstream success for its students, it must be willing to make the effort to create strong, culturally secure students before sending them off into an antagonistic society. Historically, Native American students were subjected to “language submersion, designed to exterminate their traditional language and separate the children linguistically and socially from their parents and community” (DeJong 36). Educators of the past were aware of language’s strengths and abilities and used submersion of indigenous languages as part of the cultural genocide that was taking place. Why don’t contemporary educators recognize that same strength? Some do, but the language issue appears to have slipped into an ideological invisibility, coming back to the surface in academic discussions due to the fear of language extinction. Huffman and others have argued that instead of heritage being a weakness, as mainstream culture would believe, retaining and using Native traditions is a strength. Transcultured students (those who have been successful in mainstream communities and the traditional ones) “make maximum use of their American Indian heritage as a source of strength, confidence, and identity” (Huffman 15), and, as Coggins notes, create, “a strong cultural sense of self [which] allows for exploration of other cultures without threatening a basic American Indian identity” (13). Taking away identity is a tool for assimilation, and it is effective because it removes strength and confidence in a student’s personal experience and tribal community.

Identity replacement (or displacement) is partly due to the disparate communities at play with Native and dominant cultures. Additionally, the academic experience is set apart from the natural development of personal identity since education becomes a “place” where students go in order to grow. Dewey addresses the problem of seeing education as a fixed moment, rather than a continuous, complementary experience (offering continuity):

The remaking of experience is just as good at one point as it is at any other. It is not a remaking which is to be finished up at a certain point, either when the student leaves the grade school, the high school, or the college, or when he has finished his profession. The person should be remaking his experience anywhere and everywhere all along the line, and in so far as that remaking, that growth of added value and of added power is got at any point in the career; there education has reached its end, not its terminus, but it has reached its goal, its ideal. The fundamental significance of the idea of reconstruction is the elimination of the idea of preparation as the essence of an education process. (114)

Dewey’s idea of “reconstruction” is that experience and reflection on that experience creates knowledge. He warns against conceptualizing preparation for some other life that the student has yet to experience, an educational concept where the academic experiences are fixed and isolated.

Unmasking the American Dream:

A recurring problem with the Native student’s view of preparation is the myth of the American Dream, an ideal that is a reality for a few but a disappointment for the majority. Adams discusses this in the frustration that students felt when returning to the reservation and attempting to find a use for their new vocational education. Success in academic pursuits tells the student receiving a diploma that “the world is your oyster,”

and the student believes that *anything* can be achieved. When achievement is marked with symbols of material wealth, or the appearance of wealth, the student is being told that “poor” conditions can be rectified by rising “above” the tribal community, having things that the average person cannot afford, and this version of achievement creates social conditions that lead to the desire for society’s goods. And, in *Political Writings*, Dewey warns against the perceptions of American success:

The assumption is—or was—that we are living in a free economic society in which every individual has an equal chance to exercise his initiative and his other abilities, and that the legal and political order is designed and calculated to further this equal liberty on the part of all individuals. No grosser myth ever received general currency. Economic freedom has been either non-existent or precarious for large masses of the population. (125)

Believing that society exists to support individual goals is still a common idea, but the legal and political systems still neglect many people. Many tribes in the U.S. do not receive attention from those in power, the decision-making positions in society, nor do those in power expect much from marginalized communities. Getting through high school is one accomplishment, and getting a college degree is another, but the college degree does not guarantee that the Native student will be able to do whatever they want and achieve economic/social success. Some students do attain a version of American success right away, and some successful students have the opportunity and keys to open the doors to power and money, but more often, the Native student is simply challenged ideologically to reject or attempt to change tribal values in order to mesh with the dominant society’s ideals.

Education, pursued toward established economic and political systems of power, fails to restructure any of the complicated social problems from which a Native person

might come, leaving the problems intact, but now only in the background. Unless education looks at those problems, they remain invisible during the race toward monetary goals. In *The School and Society*, Dewey asserts that “Though there should be organic connection between the school and business life, it is not meant that the school is to prepare the child for any particular business, but that there should be a natural connection of the everyday life of the child with the business environment about him” (76). With “organic connection” as an essential part of education, myths like the American Dream cannot exist because they occur somewhere other than the student’s actual environment. They are myths simply because they are something “out there,” and not in the present, and not stemming from a tribal sense of accomplishment. More simply put, the tribe did not create the common concept of “America” and what that country deems valuable. Preparation for a contrived future means that the student is aiming to restructure experiences to fit with the language and attitudes of those already in possession of power.

Two problems with a sense of preparation for the “other,” non-native world are the concepts of “the future” and “specialization.” “In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality,” *but* Dewey argues that “it is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired” (*Experience* 47). This quote can be read in a couple of ways. First, the acquisition of skills takes place in a particular setting, whether that is the everyday setting of life experiences or the school, and these skills cannot easily be applied to something disconnected to the original, learning environment. Second, the school is not the

American business world or the tribe's reservation, and the methods that show success in the classroom are not the same methods used in these two worlds. Later, Dewey warns, "When preparation is made the controlling end, then the potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a *suppositious future* [emphasis mine]. When this happens, the actual preparation for the future is missed or distorted. The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself" (*Experience* 49). The present and the future are not independent of each other, as if stages of life end and begin at some fixed point, as if the past, present, and future can be worn and discarded like a set of clothing.

Respecting Heritage:

Despite what the motivation may be, tangible conditions can affect whether or not students and teachers can achieve academic goals, and the often rural or secluded reservation schools have given rise to educators' concerns. Obstructing factors can include the distances between homes and schools, state funding, new teacher recruitment (and revolving door pedagogy as a result), or just different educational aims from the local community. These tribal students, presumably more isolated than those students from the mainstream society, may not wish to leave their family or tribal environment, "setting off" in search of the American Dream. In *Freedom and Culture*, Dewey discusses how in the past, a society's cultural conditions seemed "natural," stating that the culture "acted almost like physiological conditions as far as deliberate intention was concerned," and change in these conditions seemed "unnatural" (21). When Native students come from a more isolated background, the barrage of new, and often contradictory, information can seem much more confrontational for the student.

Tradition and traditional views surface for possibly the first time in a combative way in response to the new conflict, and in “The Lost Individual,” Dewey analyzes how tradition can function:

Stability of individuality is dependent upon stable objects to which allegiance firmly attaches itself. There are, of course, those who are still militantly fundamentalist in religious and social creed. But their very clamor is evidence that the tide is set against them. For the others, traditional objects of loyalty have become hollow or are openly repudiated, and they drift without sure anchorage. Individuals vibrate between a past that is intellectually too empty to give stability and a present that is too diversely crowded and chaotic to afford balance or direction to ideas and emotion. (*Individualism* 52,3)

Responding to cultural challenges, the student may defend his or her traditions more forcefully, and those students who become unsure of traditional views in the presence of newer, academically created ideas, are now looking for new “anchorage,” or stability. Because the dominant society has been successful in furthering itself, mainstream ideals may appear more appealing than tribal ideals, the vocalized aim of the boarding schools, and the often hidden agenda of present education.

Classroom content can attempt to discredit or challenge that which the student feels natural or “right.” A student’s background and its traditions may provide some security, and for the student, his or her background is legitimate. Educators often see the surfacing of many traditional views in Native student work, and the use of these backgrounds creates a better understanding of and encouragement for democracy. When education begins to have a better sense of Native students’ backgrounds and those student’s educational histories, educators can get to know students more intimately, and the students *let educators* get to know them.

The Importance of Tribal Colleges:

Naturally, native schools and students more easily offer a knowledge of one another, and one educational concept that has been very successful in the past 30 years is the Tribal College system. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), with mission statements for the preservation and teaching of unique, Native American tribes' heritages, are a support community for their students before those students enter into the mainstream academic community, if the student so desires. Similar to Kipp's desire for temporary isolation, the TCU can offer communal/identity-based education. These tribal, academic communities are structured for and around the tribes' students, in sharp contrast to the goals and expectations students receive from mainstream universities. Donna Brown explains that "Tribal colleges were developed in response to the lack of access to higher education for American Indian people, and the low rate of success American Indians were experiencing in mainstream institutions" (36). When TCUs were being established, the Native dropout rate in mainstream universities consistently stayed around 75% overall, and around 90% at many individual schools (Boyer 25). To say the least, Native Americans did not respond to the mainstream educational system. TCUs, on the other hand, are perceived as culturally safer places for Native American students; the schools are closer to their homes, and, in contrast to much of the mainstream faculty, TCU faculty "often play key roles in students' success. Students at tribal colleges experience high levels of support from faculty, which ultimately enhances retention" (Brown 42), and retention is significant for academic success. The education is continuous and not isolated, physically or mentally from the tribal community.

Tribal colleges support their students better than mainstream institutions, and Annmaria Rousey and Erich Longie discuss how TCUs take care of the student community with daycares, health services support, etc. In addition, by being on the reservation, the college “enables students to remain within the context of a supportive family, community, and cultural network” (1500). Because the TCUs have an understanding of the tribe’s culture or concerns, the pressure is off of the student and the faculty member regarding discrepancies that one or the other might feel elsewhere, away from that community. As a result, the student does not sense a cultural challenge to his or her identity, whereas the student may be asked in the mainstream institution to reject his or her own culture or to rebel against the system—the lose/lose situation that many of the students feel to be the only two viable options for education.

At a TCU, students do not have to choose a loyalty to one culture or another. For example, reading through Native American Tribal Colleges’ mission statements shows distinct differences from mainstream academic institutions. The latter part of the mission statement for Little Big Horn College reads:

The college is committed to the preservation, perpetuation and protection of Crow culture and language. Little Big Horn College respects the distinct bilingual and bi-cultural aspects of the Crow Indian Reservation community, aspects that are foundations of strength for the Crow and American Indian community. Little Big Horn College is committed to the advancement of the Crow Indian family through understanding and knowledge of pertinent issues and participation in community building. Little Big Horn College vitalizes Crow and American Indian Scholarship, thus strengthening the unique, self-governing Crow Tribe of Indians. (Stein 35)

Many other tribal colleges have similar but distinct community-based mission statements. The Crow community, with a unique background and history, has different needs than the

average educational system, and different needs than any other tribe. Due to oppressive conditions and an endangered heritage and culture, the Crow developed as part of their education the preservation of certain cultural aspects that are not shared outside of the Crow community. Even within the Crow tribe, each student will have a personal reason for pursuing an education, and the academic preparation that a student desires does not have to become narrow or distanced from the past and present toward an unknown, mythical future. It is important to remember that no matter what the student motivation, education cannot create a gap between the past, present, and the future.

The system of TCUs is not perfect, but the schools are in place for a reason: to take care of Native American students because they are not being cared for elsewhere. Also, because of the location of these schools (on the reservation), they become subject to tribal politics and culture that might not be conducive to the school's aims or methods of instruction. Kathryn D. Manuelito illustrates in "Building a Native Teaching Force: Important Considerations" that "too often Indian communities proclaim the ideals of language and culture maintenance as an integral aspect of Native education but in practice do not support inclusion" (3). The tribe may not support its own teachers for one reason or another, but the end result effects the students, hence Kipp's desire to distance the immersion school from tribal politics. Manuelito describes this internal lack of support as "effects of colonization" (4), in that the tribal community is unsure of what is best for the students and how to do it. This refers to the dilemma of tribal communities encouraging or discouraging their youth to leave the community, physically or culturally. That the tribe feels its own heritage as a potential weakness in education is an effect of

colonization—a mainstream, historical current that still runs beneath discussions about Native education.

Incorporating Families:

Tribal colleges function somewhat like a surrogate family, at least culturally. The actual families, as support communities, are the core of the individual student's sense of coming from a particular, valuable place, and for that reason, families can significantly affect the success or failure of the student. Some effects of colonization can make family support difficult at times, and students may feel "considerable pressure from their families to either perform academically or to stay close to home. For some students these [are] simultaneous pressures" (Jackson 32). The nuances of family relationships are never simple, so how a family supports its students will vary depending on the situation. But, in general, what is desired is that the youth of these communities are strong and successful in what they attempt to do. The heritage of the tribes is reliant on strong generations to come, so success must mean that the students are strong in their heritage and their identity. We are in a time when many students in the universities are the first in their families to pursue higher education. Despite that, studies show that "family support, family problems, and family financial concerns are strongly related to postsecondary persistence" (Jackson 43). The universities may vary, and within those universities, access and support for Native American students will cover the spectrum, but the one constant for the individual is the home community, and specifically the family.

Due to the centrality of the family for the students, education must find a way, or develop one, so that the faculty or those directly involved with the students are in a

position to understand from where the student comes and what the family/tribe has to teach the instructors. The concept of educating instructors with potentially non-academic, “uneducated” input contradicts the mainstream perception of who is in charge and who is sanctioned to disseminate knowledge. Deborah L. McLean, in “Rural Alaska Native Perceptions of Cultural Transmission: Implications for Education,” explains that “parental perceptions can add an important element to the educator’s understanding of a differing culture. Empowering families to be active participants in the learning environment is one goal toward improving Native education services” (25). Robinson-Zanartu seconds this, writing that “this is a time when there should be readiness to listen to the parents and elders.... Parents and parenting community voices provide a source of new and important data from which to create and to evaluate educational interventions” (35). Blaming parents and families for student failure has continued for too long, and the arguments here are for a change of attitude regarding how education and educators think about and react with those who send their children away to schools.

Creating Relevance for Education:

Dewey’s approach to education also calls for active cooperation between tribal and academic life, notably “continuity” (briefly discussed already) and “interaction.” For Dewey, these two ideas are “fundamental in the constitution of experience” (*Experience* 51). He defines interaction as that which “assigns equal rights to both factors in experience—objective and internal conditions. Any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions” (42). The objective conditions are the things that make up the surrounding environment, presumably those things over which a person has little to

no control. Some conditions can never be truly objective in places like education, where the environments are social constructions, created by people. The “internal conditions” for Dewey are the student’s trait, ideas, and history brought to the educational experience.

Continuity is a concept that Dewey applies to pedagogy, morals, and any area where internal conditions interact with objective conditions. Flexibility and change are not only necessary but are also unavoidable when interacting with society and its structures. Dewey explains that:

The theory of evolution has made familiar the idea of adaptation to a fixed environment. But environment is really not a fixed, hard thing, and adaptation means, therefore, conformity to an ever changing environment. The environment in the process of growth is being adapted just as much as the organism. It is the adaptation of both the organic structure and the environment to the need of life. The two function together; both are changed (40-1).

Any environment is in constant change, however small or invisible, and therefore Native students inside that environment are required to change in some ways. Schools want the students to change, not the institution. *Not* changing means maladjustment or unpreparedness for changing conditions, as in accommodating Native students. Holding onto fixed methods and approaches within education creates a struggle, where fixed methods assume that education should not change, despite the changing populace and student needs. The power struggle is to see which one is going to persevere—the changing student demographics or the academic traditions, and until now, the mainstream institutions have held their ground, alienating and failing its different, minority students. Any and all experience has an effect on persons and conditions, and when new pedagogies and traditional ones conflict, the nature of these two methods are changed. The combatants become restructured or reorganized because the ideas are now

responding to an external threat—the “other” ideal. Later, Dewey argues that “Adaptation is always dynamic, not static. It is not any predestined, fixed goal to which the individual must be lifted up, or which he must be stamped with. The process of adaptation modifies existing social forms as well as biological environment” (41). The modification of “social forms” occurs with institutional education when, for example, a change in admission requirements is an adaptation in response to the perceived influx of “unqualified students,” and institutional adaptation can be seen when a school changes its mission statement in order to appeal to changing student demographics. As Dewey notes, “adaptation is always dynamic” and cannot be static, where nothing is changed.

The myth of a fixed, stable environment is the basis for convention and outdated education. The problem with the *feeling* of fixity is that academia feels that its methods are out of its control, “fixed” on a path. One implication of fixity, institutionally, is that those with power in mainstream education thwart the individual experience and growth of Native students. These students perceive experiences as “natural,” but the experiences are institutionally constructed.

The theory that human nature is unchangeable is thus the most depressing and pessimistic of all possible doctrines. If it were carried out logically, it would mean a doctrine of predestination from birth that would outdo the most rigid of theological doctrines. For according to it, persons are what they are at birth and nothing can be done about it. (Dewey *Problems* 191)

Here, Dewey argues that the logic of fixed human nature is more influential than a religious, god-ordained predestination, as seen with the social construction and acceptance of manifest destiny. Fixity creates an environment where free will is not a choice for the individual. Another way to see what appears fixed is by recognizing habits, or learned functions, discussed by Dewey as “a fixed way of doing things” that

“covers the formation of attitudes, attitudes that are emotional and intellectual” (*Experience* 35). Individuality and individuals’ experiences create change within institutions and vice versa—institutions influence and affect individuals. It is a reciprocal relationship that exists in continuity and adaptation, and the ideology of fixed methods and traditions conflicts with the nature of interaction, pretending that nothing is supposed to change, rather than realizing that nothing is *allowed* to change.

The task for a Deweyan education is to incorporate methods that reflect and aid continuity and interaction. Since the Native students and teachers are adapting constantly in response to internal and external conditions, it makes sense that education should act more naturally or fluidly in response. To pretend that education can be or should be a fixed thing leads to a larger issue where education is functioning outside of students’ and educators’ lived experiences. For Dewey,

continuity and interaction in their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience. The immediate and direct concern for the educator is then with the situations in which interaction takes place. The individual, who enters as a factor into it, is what he is at a given time. (*Experience* 44-5)

The Native student consists of the experiences and conditions of his or her life, and the student cannot be anyone other than who he or she is “at a given time,” and pervasive, culturally sanctioned “civilization” is an evaluation of how close a Native person has come to a final, fully developed stage of life.

Students as Assets:

Now, how can teachers nurture a Native student's powers in educational practices? To start, Dewey challenges good-intentioned pedagogies to put the ideal of valuing students into action.

[I]nformation cannot facilitate growth excepting as it enters into some direct and living relationship to what the child already has. It is a common thing to condemn the process of pouring into the child, of filling him up with novelties, but it is not so easy to get away from the practice as to condemn it in theory. Education is still controlled by the amount of knowledge necessary to make a well-informed person, and the curriculum is largely laid out for the purpose of having the individual attain this information, and actual growth is a secondary consideration. (57)

In other words, easier said than done. Some educators still feel that a certain "amount of knowledge" is *necessary*, where student needs and desires are secondary to the information held by the teacher. Education claims to seek an ideal of social progress and development, as defined by American ideals, but academic content is largely a product of forward thinking, groundbreaking scientists and philosophers who reshaped what educators now consider necessary knowledge for students. The dilemma is that education attempts to be an isolated place of learning, and the difficulty is in seeing pedagogy and knowledge as unstable and subjective. Isolating knowledge as a thing contained within itself further separates academia and academic methods from tribal communities and families, and even progressive pedagogy can become dogmatic and hegemonic when isolated. Instead of continuity, crystallizing a particular pedagogy or knowledge leads the Native student to take sides with one approach over another—the either/or binary—leading students to merely respond to pedagogy and knowledge that is more like his or her own views.

In Dewey's philosophy, the move toward democratic interaction is a necessity, and he repeats this theme throughout *Democracy and Education*. Dewey writes that students learn from each other through intercommunication in the classroom. "They tell of their experiences and of the experiences which, in turn, have been told them. In so far as one is interested or concerned in these communications, their matter becomes a part of one's own experience" (186). Lyons came to a similar conclusion when discussing Native American issues amongst students from various tribes. Dewey argues that any and all experience leads to changes, even if the experience is a classroom discussion. It is an important, and sometimes difficult thing to get students to share openly, especially if and when what the student is sharing is not the more common or socially accepted experience, or if the students feel that their stories are not valued or will be outright rejected. Obviously, the policing of differences and/or disinterested fellow classmates can create more difficulties for democratic education. Sharing and exchanging ideas, especially antagonistic or new ideas, allows for a better understanding of others' concepts and viewpoints, and this democratic experience can be encouraged or discouraged by the teacher.

For Dewey, there are many practices that can obstruct growth or "deflect it into wrong lines" (*Experience* 30). To illustrate how obstacles appear educationally, Dewey discusses three sources: the student, the teacher, and the academic institution. Dealing with the student, Dewey explains that the "wider or larger self which means inclusion instead of denial of relationships is identical with a self which enlarges in order to assume previously unforeseen ties." He continues, explaining the difficulty with adaptation to new experience: "In such crises of readjustment...there may be a transitional conflict of

‘principle’ with ‘interest.’ It is the nature of a readjusting of habit to involve an effort which disagreeable—something to which a man has deliberately to hold himself” (*Democracy* 352-3). Dewey writes that “aversion” is a result of principles conflicting with interests. Native students, confronted with new experiences or modes of interaction, may or may not act within a situation simply because the experience or knowledge being presented is different than the students’ previous experiences, and therefore adaptation is more difficult because the new ideas or methods are not habitual and therefore can be a “disagreeable” experience for the student, resulting in discontinuity for these students. The teacher, on the authoritative end, presents academic content from an adult and often mainstream perspective, exposing a difference in experience and understanding from that of the students. Dewey writes that for those students who are “growing slowly toward maturity,” a teacher’s methods can be foreign to the student and “beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. Consequently, they must be imposed; even though good teachers will use devices of art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obviously brutal features” (*Experience* 18-19). In other words, if the teacher desires that the students see assigned material the same way that he or she does, then that perspective must be forced onto the students since the perspective comes from a different range of experiences and understanding.

Devaluing the Academic Institution:

The third obstacle to democratic aims is the academic institution, which has often become cumbersome and slow to change. The institution does not have a coherent way of incorporating new educational practices and content into the simultaneously

functioning older ways. In “Educational Values,” Dewey writes that the “new studies, representing the new interests, have not been used to transform the method and aim of all instruction; they have been injected and added on. The result is a conglomerate.” The result is that the “variety of interests which should mark any rich and balanced experience have been torn asunder and deposited in separate institutions with diverse and independent purposes and methods” (*Democracy* 247). The appropriation of new techniques by the institution makes things “easier” and simplified. As seen with the effort to create a mainstream, American culture, the academic experience is pressured to become more mainstream also.

Like-mindedness conflicts with individual experience, which can never fully conform to all of the external influences in academia and society, much less any influence stemming from any particular tribe. The administrative benefit to a unified experience is that students who go through the educational system will be more like-minded and make decisions that are more akin to the older generation, or those already in power, thereby keeping the status quo more stable. Succumbing to democratic obstacles, Dewey warns, can create a “mis-educative” experience, and “any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience” (*Experience* 25). Sometimes educators try to counteract perceived mis-educative experiences, and sometimes teachers may only be adding to problem. The various educational methods, old and new, interact with each other, so unless pedagogy is rethought *collectively* by academia, democratic aims may only be swimming against the stream. Where one class inspires and encourages student growth, another class, an hour later, may be undoing what the previous teacher tried to accomplish. If an

institutionalized system cannot be overcome, then what is lost within that system is the individual's claim to freedom, or sovereignty. It is difficult to see where the educational system is working toward the stated goals of American culture (liberty, self-determination, democracy) and where it works against those things. The nature of the American system implies that while participating in that system, Native peoples are more or less still subjected to or ruled by the external forces that shape the educational environment.

Logically, if America's ideals were attainable, then we would see an increase in freedom of action, expectations, and understanding. In "Philosophies of Freedom," Dewey explains that "freedom consists in a trend of conduct that causes choices to be more diversified and flexible" (*Political* 136), so educators may pause to ask: Did my interaction with students and the class content create more or less freedom for the students? Did I expand the students' experiences and worldviews so that they will continue to grow, or did I create further restrictions and inhibitions? Arguably, the more common experience is the latter, that the Native students become more and more inculcated to academic formats and expectations. Indeed, much of being at the university is a quest for understanding and grappling with a new environment, with its own set of rules and regulations. Few Native students will attain diplomas with the idea that the world as they know it has shifted into something else, and that education is not a fixed thing. What happens is that students learn "tools" with which they can be successful in a educational environment. Students know how to get a degree but do not necessarily know how to be engaged participants in a true democracy. Students desire the "power of varied and flexible growth...that springs from intelligent choice" (*Political* 139), and not

to be mere cogs in a system. Until Native populations see options for *action* and *movement* in society, there is no variety or flexibility for the individual and his or her mind. Having keys for “American success” can seem like freedom and opportunity, but students are only recognizing that they now have the chance to become a part of a fixed society. From a fixed perspective, progressive methods do not seem natural to educators, and the older, more established forms seem natural and right. The difficulty of following through with democratic education is that habits will be formed regardless of what educators do, so the task is to develop habits that are going to be generative and continuous. Educational aims should create exponentially more space and freedom of movement—habits that remain open-ended.

The problems facing Native American students are not simple, and the issues are not easily addressed. The solutions are complicated too, involving the minutiae within histories, heritages, and identities. Because of the complications, the solutions will be a network of forces working together for the improvement and betterment of education, and as a result, the mental and cultural health of the students. The main thing that education needs to see happen is the willingness and ability for mainstream academia to compromise its own set of beliefs and customs for the improvement of education overall by the inclusion of diverse student backgrounds, needs, and desires. “American Indian/Alaska Native children have languages, value sets, customs, spiritual convictions, and childrearing patterns that differ from the majority of society; they need assessment materials and procedures that reflect their rich heritage” (Banks 39). Often, the differences between cultures are recognized and outwardly appreciated, but the

mainstream institutions rarely incorporate those differences into their methods. Lyons writes of a new goal:

The vision I seek now is of a post-community forged out of conflict. We need to understand in better ways the mixedblood literacies Native American students bring with them to academe, and respond in kind with pedagogies of conflict and contact that privilege student desire for community, while creating space for dissent toward discourses both internal (Indian”) and external (“white”). We should encourage students not to “compose identities”—they do that on their own—but rather to create space where they can examine the histories, power relations, and rhetorical play of Indian and non-Indian discourses, relationships, comminglings, and conflicts in what is already a mixedblood world (albeit one that thinks itself a “fullblood”). (“Indians” 107)

Perhaps the universities feel that simply giving voice to differences will alleviate criticism of a desire for homogeneous/fullblood environment, while leaving the minority students to fend for themselves and navigate the dominating community.

Rethinking “Authority”:

I consider the issue of authority when dealing with Native education fragile since in most instances, throughout history, authoritative measures are a big part of the ongoing problem faced by students. The abuse of authority, or authority toward greedy or selfish, euro-centric ends is the reason why Native students have problems within education. Authority exists in the classroom, so what do we do with it? That question has to be answered in order to understand the teacher’s role in student success, however that is defined. Despite what educators wish to do, the school system requires that teachers assign a grade for the student, and this grade in turn becomes a part of the system of grade point averages and academic placement. The authority figure represents the mainstream cultural contexts of the school, since the teacher is also a product of society.

As a result, the teacher is a combination of cultural aspects. In “The Teacher and His World,” Dewey writes that teachers “are strengthening one set of forces or the other. The question is whether they are doing so blindly, evasively, or intelligently and courageously” (*Problems* 71). Inevitably, the teacher represents and encourages “one set of forces or the other,” and if the teacher is unaware of what he or she is promoting, then the teacher must first recognize the direction of his or her pedagogy and biases in order to determine what type of authority figure is working with the students.

Authority and authoritative evaluation can be misused or misguided, and in “Intelligence and Morals,” Dewey expresses a concern with authority’s abuse. He argues that removing “methods for holding men responsible for their concrete use of powers and conditions...has done more than brute love of power to establish inequality and injustice among men” (*Political* 76). Teachers can be those “men” who abuse power and those who need be held responsible. By using the terms “inequality and injustice,” Dewey speaks to something with which Native education is concerned, the greater good of Native American life, and not merely academic success. Dewey challenges educators to recognize their role and place as social products and as subjective influences, and the challenge calls for self-examination. Dewey warns that “an educational philosophy which professes to be based on the idea of freedom may become as dogmatic as...the traditional education which is reacted against. For any theory and set of practices is dogmatic which is not based upon critical examination of its own underlying principles” (*Experience* 22). What this means for educators is that being vocal about social justice and freedom for Native Americans is inadequate. Instead, educators need to see where

and how they developed their views, the methods used to attain goals, and what specifically those goals are.

One way to aide free cooperation between cultures that are at odds is Dewey's concept of "imitation," where the "value of the model or the copy which the [instructor] sets is not to serve as a copy or a model, but rather to help bring the [student] to the consciousness of his own powers and of the best way of handling his own powers" (*Lectures* 49-50). By imitating the teacher, the student retains some autonomy while not being asked to completely succumb to the teacher's intentions or instruction, with student submission manifesting what Paulo Freire refers to as the "'banking' concept of education" (72) where "the goal becomes to heap it up and display it when called for" (Dewey *Democracy* 158). As Dewey notes, Native student abilities or "powers" are not simply to be brought to the surface but also encouraged, strengthened, and ultimately preserved. Imitation creates a naturally selective atmosphere in the classroom because ideas that do not "fit" into classroom discussion or approach create a classroom pressure to conform. The word "conform" connotates that the student is being pressured to assimilate. Conforming, instead, references the attempt to keep classroom discussion and methods working toward a cooperative atmosphere, with resulting democracy. Dewey is not asking that a student's ideas or beliefs conform to others' views. Imitation is "the product of conscious instruction and of the selective influence exercised by the unconscious confirmations and ratifications of those with whom one associates" (*Democracy* 35). The teacher retains the authority to create a democratic atmosphere in the classroom and what purpose that setting might serve, but the teacher is not the sole

authority. With the involvement of students and student communities, each person shares authority. Conformity then becomes a response to the whole, democratic class.

Additionally, the authoritative use of suggestion, for Dewey, is a more direct application of authority by the teacher. Institutional expectations requires the teacher to produce a class curriculum, syllabus, and some sort of academic production, as in a written composition. Again, self-examination as to methods and ends is needed here, and, for Dewey, this occurs through suggestion. It is important that the teacher does not require of Native students a fixed *way* of responding to an assignment. In disciplines like math fixity could pose a problem, where the answer is often absolute, and because answers may require fixity in some cases, I use the word “way” when discussing a student’s response. Having studied math, I do know that there are different ways to get at one answer, and the student might be better suited to use one method over another.

Dewey explains suggestion as thus: “Suggestion not only indefinitely widens the number and variety of influences which can be brought to bear upon the child, but as already stated, it enlarges his own freedom. That is, more and more is left to the makeup of the child’s own individuality, taste, and preference, in determining the exact mode and character of response” (54). For Dewey, the student’s preferences play an important role in class structure, thereby preventing a teacher’s authority from dominating the class.

Authoritative imitation and suggestion imply that the teacher will need to know each student in order to be most helpful, and this intimate knowledge would be difficult if not impossible due to contemporary class sizes and student expectations. Again, in “Criteria of Experience,” Dewey contends that the “educator is responsible for a knowledge of individuals” and “the responsibility for understanding the needs and

capacities of the individuals who are learning at a given time” (*Experience* 45-6). In most classrooms, the instructor gets to know some, and maybe the majority of students, but not *all*, or at least not all of the students well enough to know specific nuances of the individual student in order to aide educational progress. Lyons discusses many of his individual students, who they are, how they think about native issues, and how they interact. This knowledge determined every day how classroom discussion would go, and how Lyons would prepare for class and think about their communal experiences after the semester was over.

Knowing students is rare or impossible in the contemporary classroom. Class size often hinders the student from voicing personal, academic needs and concerns. The conflict with this pedagogy is between the individuality of the student and the attempt by the academic institution to have as many students as possible go through the academic system with limited resources, economic and human. In response Dewey argues that there “comes a practical limit beyond which increase in numbers simply means that the whole method of conducting the work has to be routine and mechanical in order to do the piece of work in the time allotted.” With large classes, “it is impossible to get the social side developed” (*Lectures* 179). Educators can set up meetings, hold office hours, change the classroom environment, have student-led discussion, and/or have discussions in a circle (“a symbol of the collective life of mankind in general” (*Democracy* 58)). Even if the teacher can do these things, the student must be motivated to meet the educator’s efforts somewhere in the middle. When Native students do not make the effort to become cooperatively involved with the class or instructor, or do not feel comfortable in the classroom, pupils come and go without fully being known.

If and when the educational process functions democratically, and the teacher and students work cooperatively toward *each others'* benefit, hegemonic dogma and authoritative forcefulness no longer have a place in classroom, as they have historically. Again, authority cannot go away completely, nor should it. "The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities" (*Experience* 59). Being a "leader of group activities" is the ideal, and what educators should attempt to become if possible. Educators first need the self-examination and flexibility in the classroom that democratic methods allow. Dewey discusses this flexibility in his philosophy of education as "working ideas," where the fixed, undemocratic approach leads to "barren and one-sided" investigations into the educational experience (*Sources* 54-5). The democratic approach is flexible and allows for variations in academic results, differences that are necessary since no two students or classrooms will be alike. In "Value and Thought," Dewey illustrates the implications of flexibility, or, as I call it, "shifting pedagogy." "Change the interest or end, and the selected material...changes, and the point of view from which it is regarded...changes also" (*Problems* 226). In the hierarchy of educational systems, the conflict can be between two authority figures, the teacher and the department, the department and the institution, or any combination of these. Conflicting aims can become a problem in academia, so the challenge is to navigate a democratic conception of authority through the external forces of the institution.

But the navigation of authority is not only between the educator and others; it is also an internal conflict for teachers. Dewey warns that abusing authority can "force the activity of the young into channels which express the teacher's purpose rather than that of

the pupils” (*Experience* 71). In addition, the teacher can misrepresent academic methods as democratic when the methods are not. It “is quite possible to have preparatory planning by the teacher done in such a rigid and intellectually inflexible fashion that it does result in adult imposition, which is none the less external because executed with tact and the semblance of respect for individual freedom” (*Experience* 57). Tactful misrepresentation of methods exists in cases where the teacher is vocally or externally in favor of a democratic classroom, but cannot get beyond his or her own view of how things should go and/or what the students’ products should look like.

The problem that arises from a need for authority is an “ever-mounting tragedy...due to the fact that the need has been repeatedly betrayed by the very institutions that claimed to satisfy it” (103). Whether this institution is the school, family, tribe, or anything else to which students will turn for guidance, the authority figures involved have the decision and ability to act in certain ways that will either aid or harm students. Dewey believes that the educator has a special place among the many varieties of authority figures within a society. While many professions result in temporary accomplishments, the “educator more than the member of any other profession is concerned to have a long look ahead” (*Experience* 75). Education can continue to accomplish things long into the future, and is therefore more responsible for the present. Democratic methods ask for recognition and criticism of subjective means and ends in the classroom and challenge education to use its authority to create autonomy for the students, establishing an environment where authority can be relinquished. From Dewey’s perspective, “the *basis*, intellectual and moral, for a new social order is a sufficiently novel and inspiring ideal to arouse a new spirit in the teaching profession and

to give direction to radically changed effort” (*Political* 128). A “radically changed effort” will lead to a radically changed society, which would happen as a result of a true democracy. Educators cannot know if goals or aims are attainable or possible, and a teacher may never see what happens as a result of his or her pedagogy, but if academics cannot or will not be inspired by what *can be done*, then education is in danger of abusing or mishandling the authority with which it has been entrusted.

Reciprocal Trust:

At the heart of many problems faced by Native students is the level of trust the student has in education, and whether or not the institution or instructor truly desires a positive outcome for the student and his or her tribal community. The academic issue is that trust is a relinquishment of authority by the teacher. Trust within education, specifically in the classroom relationship and expectations between student and teacher, involves some complications with the conception of domination and power, and the perception of threats to an authority’s power. A threat to power results in combativeness or protection of the classroom instructor’s perceived rights to authority, and distrust results in a “students versus the teacher” environment.

Dewey addresses a duality of human nature, explaining that we “send nurses and physicians to the battlefield and provide hospital facilities as ‘naturally’ as we change bayonets and discharge machine guns” (*Problems* 187). In the classroom, this duality can be seen in the way that society sends teachers to classrooms with the explicit intention to help students, but the classroom becomes an “it’s either me or them” dynamic as to who will win the struggle for control. When academics hope to create

independent thinking and the exchange of ideas, power struggles are often the very types of things that educators fight against. The conflict is between explicit claims for democracy and the implicit desire to gain or retain power. “Democracy is an absurdity where faith in the individual as individual is impossible” (*Political* 69), and the teacher, in a democratic environment, cannot be the absolute authority. “The substitution, for *a priori* truth and deduction, of fluent doubt and inquiry meant trust in human nature in the concrete; in individual honesty, curiosity and sympathy” (69). *A priori* truth in education is the body of knowledge that a student is expected to digest at the university. Doubt and challenges by the teacher against the students is antithetical to what Dewey describes as trust, honesty, curiosity, and sympathy. Open trust of the Native students is one of the ways that democracy can be generated now, and will create a precedent for the future of academia and the future education of Native Americans. Trusting asks that educators put themselves on the same level as the student, for honest interactions and for development of the individuals, teachers included. In “Aims in Education,” Dewey argues that educators are too involved with administrative details to “let his mind come to close quarters with the pupil’s mind and the subject matter” (*Democracy* 109), and this barrier between the teacher and the student is a manifestation of distrusting student desires as a result of the teacher’s “trust” in the administration or institution. Trusting is an anti-dogmatic method and is therefore at odds with a traditional approach to the classroom, where the students are expected to glean as much as possible from the teacher (banking concept) in order to successfully acquire the knowledge needed to move on to the next academic level.

To attain the trust required for a democratic classroom, what I see to be unavoidable is an evaluative process on the teacher's part. This evaluation is a stage *before* trust and is in this way not a pure, unconditional trust in the students. Ideally, unconditional trust is offered at the beginning. Within this ideal, students and teachers are equally engaged toward the same ends, with the same goals, thereby making trust necessary and a foundational part of the cooperative goal if it is to be achieved. In the context of the university, individual teachers and students cannot and do not have the same goals in mind. Dewey, in "The Nature of Freedom," argues that "there is no intellectual growth without some reconstruction, some remaking, of impulses and desires in the form in which they first show themselves" (*Experience* 64). The "impulses and desires" are those student impulses that are not conducive to "intellectual growth," and discerning which impulses and desire are inappropriate is the teacher's task. Dewey explains that the teacher not only needs to learn the students' expectations and goals for the class but also must reconstruct and remake student goals toward a *cooperation* before allowing a classroom atmosphere of trust to take shape. The teacher's task here is the aforementioned evaluation taking place in the classroom. Dewey further explains, "The crucial educational *problem* [emphasis mine] is that of procuring the postponement of immediate action upon desire until observation and judgment have intervened" (69). First, Dewey argues for the need to postpone classroom action until knowledge of student aims is attained. Again, this does not allow for trust to come first, nor does that seem possible with Dewey's approach. Second, connected to Dewey's methods for authority (imitation, suggestion, etc.), this evaluation is an authoritative move, and is a manifestation of the hierarchical nature of the educational system.

As stated earlier, trust is a difficult concept for educators and one that has conditions attached to it, as Dewey notes. Often, what is at stake is institutional pedagogy. When academia relinquishes authority, educators may find themselves struggling against what teachers are expected to do in a classroom and what the students might expect of educators, either in classroom conduct or methods. In addition, educators may conflict with the student's personal desire for instruction that will make the student subjectively "better" or smarter by administrative standards. If allowing trust, the educator opens lines of communication and interaction that are unusual for the university. Dewey notes, in *How We Think*, that "[g]enuine communication involves contagion; its name should not be taken in vain by terming communication that which produces no community of thought and purpose between the child and the race of which he is the heir" (224). Dewey warns that communication can be presented to the students in such a way that academic discourse "produces no community" between the student and the student's society. If trust does not come into play, what happens is a one-sided communication of the teacher addressing the student, and one-sided communication is how problems arose originally for Native students. Hegemonic communication is the way in which most Native students understand education, demonstrated generationally through previous experiences. When the development of the individual student is a concern, distrust stunts some aspect of the student's progress. The teacher may perceive the students or the students might perceive themselves as "still a child" incapable of holding an adult relationship with an authority figure. How students feel about themselves and their place within the mainstream is another determining factor, and trust encourages Native students to grow into active and productive educational

communication. The line where trust can happen is fine and subject to individual classrooms and relationships, and therefore cannot be defined absolutely in such a way as to create an academic template for how trust is created.

Another angle to the discussion is that if and when unconditional trust can be created in the classroom, that trust comes into conflict with administrative desires for standardized instruction. To illustrate, academic institutions have long relied on standardized tests, grades, and results, and the system requires that students undergo an evaluative process of some sort by the teacher. A teacher may wish to do away with the external influence of grades, hoping to eliminate the institutional reward and punishment, but the elimination of grades would disrupt the common grading system. Grades act as a way to determine authority and, by implication, power. Students who have made good grades are permitted to move up the academic ladder, potentially taking over the seats of power in education, or elsewhere, and the capitalistic approach, with the ideals of meritocracy and opportunity, influences how administrators determine student success. In “Liberty and Social Control,” Dewey writes that

The present ado in behalf of liberty by the managers and beneficiaries [traditional educational authority] of the existing economic system is immediately explicable if one views it as a demand for preservation of the powers they already possess. Since it is the existing system that gives them these powers, liberty is thus inevitably identified with the perpetuation of that system. Translate the present hullabaloo about liberty into struggle to retain powers already possessed, and it has a meaning. (*Political* 158)

Institutions, administrators, and teachers are groups of “managers and beneficiaries” in American society. The cry for liberty by authority figures is the clamor for those in power to “retain powers already possessed.” Administrators proclaim that access is

available the students by the students' movement through the academic system, eventually moving toward positions of authority within that system. As a result, the control and retention of power is threatened by a system that can give power. Distrust pervades administrative power structures, and institutionally, educators demonstrate a fear of unmerited hands gaining power and usurping the old, or a fear that the system will be flooded with unworthy contenders, contenders for power and for a voice in academic restructuring.

Distrust is a tool used for perpetuation of ongoing systems. Dewey argues that the "development of political democracy came about through substitution of the method of mutual consultation and voluntary agreement for the method of subordination of the many to the few enforced from above" (*Problems* 58). "Political democracy" is not a true democracy because "mutual consultation," or honest *communication*, and "voluntary agreement," or *trust*, are replaced by subordinating the majority of people to the powerful minority. Dewey continues, arguing that subordination is accomplished by not only physical coercion but also through "psychological and moral" methods:

Others who are supposed to be wiser and who in any case have more power decide the question for [others] and also decide the methods and means by which subjects may arrive at the enjoyment of what is good for them. This form of coercion and suppression is subtler and more effective than is overt intimidation and restraint. When it is habitual and embodied in social institutions, it seems the normal and natural state of affairs. The mass usually become unaware that they have a claim to a development of their own powers. Their experience is so restricted that they are not conscious of restriction. (59)

And in education, Native students see the dominant society's power as authority because the dominant society has the power. The logic is circular, but it is effective for the perpetuation of the system. Restricting and inhibiting Native students perpetuates the

status quo, rather than allowing these students to see the relations of power, how power is created, and that institutional power structures are not natural conditions.

For Dewey, restriction and inhibition imply different things. His authoritative method of “organized intelligence” is an acceptable inhibition for Dewey, but he argues “mere inhibition is valueless” (*Political* 106). To inhibit without consideration is to “abort” student powers by failing “to permit sufficient opportunity for exercise” (106). Instead of wholesale inhibiting practices, the Deweyan approach calls for self-examining, critical practices by teachers where excess authority is shed for the more democratic, trusting environment. Democratic methods could mean that the teacher loses some habitual “benefits” of authority—authoritative voice in the classroom as one obvious example. Instead, Dewey argues that through the teacher’s *loss* of some power and authority, students *gain* a sense of power and potential. The give and take of authority is a tricky area for Dewey and for any educator that wants to trust students. Educators have difficulty trusting student abilities and trusting the students’ purposes for getting an education. On a small scale, instructors often distrust whether or not the students will complete an assignment unless there is a reward and/or the threat of punishment (i.e. grades). Many more examples of distrust can be imagined, but what the examples show is that pure, democratic trust is unattainable in the contemporary educational system. The teacher’s and the Native students’ mental assumptions—about academia, education, and each participant’s role—enter into a classroom environment before any personal interaction actually begins because those assumptions are formed inside from historical precedent. The classroom can, if the teacher desires, counteract *some* of the cultural

baggage, but not all. Pure trust is extremely revolutionary, and the current academic system is not revolutionary, nor does it have revolutionary aims in mind.

The future of education is unknown, and the advancements may be small or slow, but a fundamental change must take place to ensure that Native American students perceive the opportunities available to them and are able to achieve. Forbes writes, “Perhaps the truth is that if a child is healthy, self-confident, and in a supportive environment almost any method will work, but if the child is ill-fed, psychologically oppressed, depressed, and lacking in self-esteem, then perhaps no gimmick will work in the long run” (24). Universities, as bastions of higher learning and progressive ideas and ideals for society, are responsible for much of the damage being done, as well as the refusal to repair those damages. As representatives of the dominant society, the American school systems are in a position of power, whether they use that power for perpetuation of injustice and inequality or for healthy, self-confident students, and the students can no longer be victims of misuse, abuse, or apathy by academia. As is, there are many problems facing Native American students, often outnumbering the solutions. Native and good intentioned non-native educators know this when analyzing the lack of success for Native American students. Lyons asks, “Is there a space for Indians at the university? What would that mean? What would be lost in the pursuit of education, of literacy? What would be gained” (“Indians” 105). Until now, mainstream society has ignored these students because these populations are reminders of how American social structures and communities were built in the first place. Mainstream education will need to turn from euro-centric which overlook the seemingly small, or isolated concerns, and into an inclusive, reciprocal approach. Rethinking education is daunting, but the benefits

will not be small or isolated. Successful, Native-American education will be dramatic, but so is true democracy.

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