

## EDUCATING NATIVE AMERICANS

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Educating Native Americans. Those three words encapsulate a 500-year-old battle for power: first, the power to define what education is—the power to set its goals, define its policies, and enforce its practices—and second, the power to define who native people are and who they are not. European and American colonial governments, operating through denominations of the Christian Church, first defined “education” for Native Americans as the cleansing, uplifting, thoroughly aggressive and penetrating force that would Christianize, civilize, and individualize a heathen, barbaric, and tribal world (Axtell, 1981; Hoxie, 1984; Prucha, 1979, 1984; Szasz, 1988; Szasz & Ryan, 1988; Van Well, 1942).

In the last two centuries the U.S. colonial administration of Indian affairs has diligently built a bureaucracy dedicated to controlling every aspect of native lives (Biolsi, 1992; Castile & Bee, 1992; Hoxie, 1984; R. Nelson & Sheley, 1985). Rules and regulations have been promulgated to mandate schooling, control individual bank accounts, direct land use, and authorize mineral extraction—in short, to construct an edifice of federal surveillance that might astonish the average U.S. citizen secure in the image of a democratic nation. This chapter will lay bare the educational edifice designed largely by non-Indians to instruct American Indians, then elucidate the Indian response to that instruction, and Indian movements to design and control the education of their own children and communities. In this chapter I use the terms *Native American*, *Indian*, and *Indian education* to refer to all Indian people in the lower 48 states and to Alaska Natives. The federal government, however, maintains two separate listings of American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages.

The chapter begins with a discussion of tribal sovereignty, federal policy, and the special government-to-government relationship that exists between tribes and the United States. A brief overview of the demographic history and characteristics of the Indian population within the United States includes statistics on

educational participation, achievement, and degrees earned. The history of federal Indian policy began with colonial efforts to Christianize and civilize indigenous people, and continued through the establishment of mission and federal boarding schools. Boarding schools shaped thousands of Native American people, and their attitudes and responses to those institutions are discussed briefly.

The review of contemporary research on Indian education covers the topical literature on dropouts, learning styles, interactional styles in classrooms, theories of cultural congruence or discontinuity and their shortcomings, self-determination in Indian education, curriculum development, and language policy. After a discussion of current trends in educational research, the chapter concludes with an assessment of the past and implications for the future of Native American education.

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### TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

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Federal powers have devised an educational system wed-ding content and practice in order to reshape Native American people (Adams, 1988b; Haig-Brown, 1988; Littlefield, 1989, 1993; Lomawaima, 1993). Other arms of the federal bureaucracy have manufactured definitions of Indian-ness, tribal rolls, lists of recognized (versus unrecognized) tribes, and certificates of degree of Indian blood—all to control who has American Indian or Alaska Native status and who has not (Pascal, 1991; Weatherhead, 1980; National Archives, 1988a, 1988b). Native nations have creatively resisted the extension of federal powers even as they have had to adapt to those same powers (Nabokov, 1991; Olson & Wilson, 1984). The assertion of tribal power is and has always been the assertion of sovereignty: to retain and/or reclaim rights to self-government, self-definition, and self-

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education (Barsh & Henderson, 1980; Castile & Bee, 1992; Wilkinson, 1987). Indian education can only be understood against this historical, political, economic, and social battleground.

In the latter half of this century, the balance of power has shifted as tribes have struggled with changing definitions of self-government in an attempt to strengthen and expand tribal sovereignty (V. Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Fixico, 1986; Philp, 1986). The shift in power has not been uniform, or rapid, or uncontested; it has grown slowly from deep roots. It has significantly changed educational practice and policy but has by no means reformed schools to satisfy all the needs of Native American children, parents, and communities (Szasz, 1977).

The tug-of-war between tribal sovereignty and federal power has carved contours across the landscape of Indian education. Research into the character and quality of that education has at times illuminated those contours; at other times researchers have been so engulfed by the gullies carved by the contest they have not been able to see the horizon. It is the aim of this chapter to delineate the course of research on Indian education without losing sight of the larger political context, where Indian people patiently labor to check the erosion of their sovereign rights. We need the higher vantage point in order to imagine what Indian education should be and might become.

Since the federal government turned its attention to the "problem" of civilizing Indians, its overt goal has been to educate Indians to be non-Indians (Hoxie, 1984; Szasz, 1988; Szasz & Ryan, 1988). Since the late 1800s, most federal policy has not equated the civilizing process with simple assimilation into U.S. society. Educational policies have been designed to prepare Indians as a working class, amenable to federal control, to provide domestic and manual labor to the U.S. economy (Adams, 1988b; Hoxie, 1984; Littlefield, 1993; Lomawaima, 1993; Trenert, 1988). Native Americans have challenged that model of Indian education by seeking access to Euro-American schools, and to academic and professional training. In the last century tribes and the courts have refined a theory of political rights that posits educational opportunity as a treaty right promised in partial exchange for the cession of huge tracts of land (see Deloria & Lytle, 1984, for "traditional Indians" view of treaty rights; see Biolsi, 1993, for a case study of Lakota interpretations of treaty rights; see Wilkinson, 1987, for changing judicial interpretations). As nations exercising limited sovereignty, tribes occupy a unique legal and political space within the United States. American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages are federally defined as entities with a special government-to-government relationship with the United States, and that status distinguishes them from all other ethnic or racial minorities.

Most Native Americans believe their right to education should not necessitate eradication of native language, culture, religion, or identity (Jaimes, 1983; Johnson, 1968). As Native American parents and communities have challenged and changed the working definition of Indian education, and created education for and by native people, the questions and solutions proposed by educational researchers (native and non-native) have also evolved.

One of the great challenges to research on Native Americans

is the exhilarating range of diversity among our cultures. The federal government currently recognizes 510 tribes, including more than 200 Alaska Native villages (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991). Federal officials have estimated there are as many as 250 native groups who are not recognized, that is, groups who do not have a special government-to-government relationship with the United States (Prucha, 1984, p. 1196). Each native community is distinguished by its own language, customs, religion, economy, historical circumstances, and environment. Native people are not all the same. A fluent member of a Cherokee Baptist congregation living in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, is different from an English-speaking, powwow-dancing Lakota born and raised in Oakland, California, who is different from a Hopi fluent in Hopi, English, Navajo, and Spanish who lives on the reservation and supports her family by selling "traditional" pottery in New York, Santa Fe, and Scottsdale galleries. The idea of being generically "Indian" really was a figment of Columbus's imagination.

It is a cornerstone of tribal sovereignty today that tribal governments set the criteria for their tribal membership; the criteria vary widely across the nations. Some tribes specify a "blood quantum" (often one quarter) for membership; others do not. Some tribes specify native language fluency as a condition for service in the tribal government; others do not. Despite tribal control of tribal membership, certain federal criteria for Native American identity still carry weight. The federal government, for instance, requires one-quarter blood quantum (proved by a federal "certificate of Indian blood" based on agency records) to qualify for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) college scholarships. Other federal agencies or programs—such as the census, or educational opportunity entitlement funds—rely on self-identification. An American Indian or Alaskan Native is someone who checks the right box on the right form.

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## POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

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The scholarly effort to piece together a demographic history of the Native American population has proved a difficult and depressing chore. There is no consensus on exactly how many native people lived on the North American continent prior to 1492 (see Ramenofsky, 1987, pp. 1–21, and Ubelaker, 1992, for an overview of the debate). We do know indigenous Americans were devastated by European expansion and newly introduced epidemic diseases, smallpox foremost among them (although pre-Columbian America was not a disease-free paradise; see Verano & Ubelaker, 1991). Although scholars do not agree on absolute native population numbers, they have slowly but surely revised Indian population numbers upward to current estimates for precontact native North America ranging from over 5 million in the present United States (Thornton, 1987, p. 2) to the highest estimate, 18 million north of Mexico (Dobyns, 1983, p. 289).

Native populations plummeted as much as 90 to 95% to their nadir of less than 250,000 at the beginning of this century. The U.S. Census Bureau first attempted a complete census of American Indians in 1890, when they counted 248,000. By 1900 that

number had shrunk to 237,000. The numbers have been climbing ever since, as populations recovered and as census methods changed: 357,000 in 1950, 524,000 in 1960 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988).

The numbers shot upward as the census allowed more citizens to self-identify, and altered the questions on race and ethnicity beginning in 1960: 793,000 Native Americans in 1970, 1.42 million in 1980, 2.06 million in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988, 1992). Self-identification has influenced the count, as "only about 40% of the difference between the 1970 and 1980 census counts of American Indians can be accounted for by natural increase" (Thornton, Sandefur, & Snipp, 1991, p. 365). Of the 1.37 million (not including Alaska Natives) enumerated in the 1980 census, "fewer than 900,000 were enrolled as members in federally recognized" tribes (p. 365).

By 1980 approximately half of the Native American population lived in the West; approximately half of the total lived on or near reservations, and the rest lived in or near urban areas. The 1980 census counted over 270 identified reservations and tribal trust lands, and over 200 Alaska Native villages (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984).

In 1980 the 1.42 million Native Americans (American Indians and Alaska Natives) enumerated by the census constituted 0.6% of the total U.S. population of 226.5 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984). In 1990, 2,065,000 Native Americans constituted 0.8% of the national population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992, p. 17). Since the early 1970s Native American students have constituted 0.7 to 0.9% of the enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools—the native population has been statistically younger than the U.S. norm (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992, p. 18). Roughly 76% of the native students in 1980 attended public or private schools, and the remaining 24% attended schools operated by the BIA or by tribes (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988, p. 10). In the 1990–1991 school year, the BIA funded 180 educational facilities for Indian children, including 48 day schools, 39 on-reservation boarding

schools, 5 off-reservation boarding schools, and 8 dormitories attached to public schools. In the same year, contracting tribes received BIA funds to run 62 day schools, 11 on-reservation boarding schools, 1 off-reservation boarding school, and 6 dormitories. In addition, federal funds to public schools supported about 225,870 Indian students enrolled in those schools (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991). In 1980 Native American students made up 0.7% of the total enrollment in institutions of higher education. They have been awarded 0.4% of the bachelor's degrees, 0.3 to 0.4% of the master's degrees, and 0.3 to 0.4% of the doctoral degrees throughout the decade of the 1980s (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1981, 1985–86, 1990a).

These figures reflect the fact that Indian children and young adults have not gone on to higher education at rates close to national norms. In 1980, 8% of the native population completed four years of college, half the national rate of 16% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988, p. 5). Narrowing the focus to natives in Alaska reveals a sharper disparity. In 1980, 3% of Alaska natives completed four years of college, compared to the state rate of 21% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988, p. 18). See Table 19–1 for a graphic representation of Native American participation in U.S. schooling and degrees awarded. The higher in education and awarded degrees one looks, the more serious the underrepresentation of native people.

Closer examination of degrees awarded, especially graduate degrees, reveals that Native Americans have concentrated their studies in a few fields and disciplines, particularly education. In 1989–1990, for example, 14% (598) of the bachelor's degrees, 37% (405) of the master's degrees, and 37% (38) of the doctoral degrees earned by native people were in education. In that same academic year, Native Americans earned only 5 Ph.D.'s in the physical sciences and 4 Ph.D.'s in the life sciences (NCES, 1992, pp. 273–280). Table 19–2 shows the number of doctorates earned by Native Americans from 1975 to 1991, and the percentages of those degrees earned in education. This table

TABLE 19–1. Native American Students and Degrees, 1978–1990

	(numbers rounded to nearest thousand)				
	1978	1980	1986	1988	1990
Number of Native Americans enrolled in public schools (K–12)	329	306	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Percent of totals (all races)	0.8	0.8	0.9		
Number of Native Americans enrolled in higher education	77.9	83.9	N.A.	92.5	102.6
Percent of totals (all races)	0.7	0.7		0.7	0.8

Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Earned by Native Americans

	1976–77	1984–85	1989–90
Bachelor's degrees	3,326	4,246	4,338
Percent of total (all races)	0.4	0.4	0.4
Master's degrees	967	1,256	1,108
Percent of total (all races)	0.3	0.4	0.3

Sources: Based on data from: *Digest of Education Statistics*, National Center for Education Statistics, 1981, 1985–86, 1990, 1992; Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities* [Summary Report], National Research Council, 1991, Washington DC: National Academy Press.

TABLE 19-2. Doctorates Earned by Native Americans:  
Disparate Statistics

	NRC-SR Data <sup>a</sup>		NRC 1991 Data <sup>b</sup>	DES Data <sup>c</sup>	MSGE Data <sup>d</sup>
	U.S.	A.I.	A.I.	A.I.	A.I.
1975	27,009	143	36		
			34% (% of A.I. doctorates earned in education)		
1976	27,195	148	40		148
					35%
1977	26,007	220	65	95	
					31%
1978	25,186	174	60		
					32%
1979	25,369	165	81	104	
					39%
1980	25,108	106	75		
					50%
1981	24,990	89	85	130	89
					47%
1982	24,309	77	77		
					38%
1983	24,292	81	81		
					54%
1984	23,951	74	74		
					43%
1985	23,241	93	96	119	
					42%
1986	22,984	100	99		
					26%
1987	22,863	116	115	104	
					35%
1988	23,172	93	94		
					38%
1989	23,172	93	94		
					26%
1990	N.A.	N.A.	93	102	
					37%
1991	24,721	130			
					41%

U.S. = total doctorates earned by citizens in U.S.;

A.I. = American Indian doctorates

Note: Where statistics were unavailable for a source, the table was left blank.

<sup>a</sup> *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities* [Summary Report], National Research Council, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1993, Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>b</sup> *Summary Report 1990: Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities*, by D. Thurgood, 1991, Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Despite its similarity to NRC reports cited above, this summary report has a different Library of Congress catalog number, and the numbers Thurgood cites vary drastically from statistics reported in other NRC Summary Reports.

<sup>c</sup> *Digest of Education Statistics*, National Center for Education Statistics, 1981, 1985-86, 1990, 1992, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

<sup>d</sup> "Minority Students in Graduate Education," by J. Vaughn, 1985. In B. Smith (Ed.), *The State of Graduate Education* (pp. 151-168), Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

also illuminates disturbing disparities among various statistical sources in number of degrees reported as earned. The NCES and the National Research Council (NRC) cite significantly different numbers of doctorates earned by American Indians. The NRC (1976) says there were 143 American Indian doctorates in

1975 (Vaughn, 1985, p. 152), but other sources cite only 36 (Thurgood, 1991, p. 39). The NRC (1982) cites 89 American Indian doctorates in 1981, but NCES (1990a) cites 130. Which numbers are to be believed?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss trends in higher education enrollment and degrees earned by American Indians when statistics vary so widely. One can only wonder about the validity of any measures of American Indian participation in education. If the NRC is to be believed, Native Americans, out of all ethnic groups, hold the longest RTD, or time actually registered in school between the baccalaureate and doctoral degrees. Their RTD is 8.3 years, compared to 7.2 years for Whites, 7.5 years for Hispanics, 8.2 years for African Americans, and 6.8 years for Asians (NRC, 1991, p. 46).

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: POLICIES OF EDUCATING INDIANS

If history is the bequest of meaning from the past to the present, then Indian education has had a remarkably constant inheritance until recent times. Unfortunately, school-based education has not often included the education of Indian children by their parents or by other tribal adults. Native American autobiographies (Brumble, 1981) provide an excellent source of information on tribal methods of education (Eastman, 1916/1977; Sekaquaptewa, 1969), and Eggan (1974) insightfully summarized how Hopi traditional instruction creates an enduring and emotionally profound commitment to Hopi life.

Euro-American nations and churches have consistently sought to replace those profound lessons with a new language, Christianity, patriarchal family structure, subordinate political status, and capitalist economy—all part of a conscious agenda to disenfranchise Indians from their land (Adams, 1988b). Four principal methods have been utilized to accomplish these goals.

#### Four Methods of Disenfranchisement

First, colonial authorities relocated Native Americans into newly created political units: well-controlled communities separate from European settlements. Spanish missions (Van Well, 1942), French Jesuit "reductions" (J. W. Grant, 1984; Moore, 1982), and Puritan Praying Towns (N. Salisbury, 1982) were Indian enclaves within foreign societies.

Second, although the degree of literacy training varied among the European states, native peoples were instructed in the language of civilized society, be it French, Spanish, English, or some other.

Third, these newly created native communities were shaped religiously by diverse European colonizers. Conversion to Christianity was a fundamental necessity, whether the conversion was to Catholicism or Protestantism.

Fourth, native economies were restructured to fit European notions of sedentary agriculture, small-scale craft industry, and gendered labor. Segregated native communities were designed to teach trades and agriculture to men and domestic skills to women (Szasz, 1988; Szasz & Ryan, 1988; Wright, 1989). These

four components of colonization—relocation under political control, replacement of language, religious conversion, and gendered economic reconstruction—permeate American Indian education to the present day.

The hopes of colonial educators are epitomized by Eleazar Wheelock, who sought “to save the Indians from themselves and to save the English from the Indians” (Axtell, 1981, p. 97). Wheelock founded Moor’s Charity School for Indians, as well as Dartmouth College—the two schools were separate institutions, although Dartmouth ostensibly focused on Indian education.

American Indian parents and children resisted these programs of total assimilation in a variety of ways. From armed revolts in the Southwest to epidemic-induced conversions in the Northeast, the course of proselytization was never smooth (Bowden, 1981). Reprisals for resistance could be harsh. The Spanish flogged, amputated hands and feet, or set aflame Pueblo “heretics” in the 17th century (Simmons, 1979), and in 1895 the United States sent Hopi men who resisted federal agents to Alcatraz (James, 1974). More recent assimilatory practices, such as boarding-school enrollment, may seem humane compared to earlier horrors, yet they have also provoked resistance. Indian children have devised ingenious ways to subvert or escape the disciplines of boarding-school life (Adams, 1988a; Coleman, 1993), from smuggling sandwiches to building whiskey stills disguised as Boy Scout outdoor ovens (Lomawaima, 1994).

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the United States left Indian education in the hands of the clergy, subsidizing the work of mission boards in agricultural, domestic, manual-labor, and academic instruction (Prucha, 1979). Diverse native nations met diverse denominations—Quakers, Moravians, Catholics, Presbyterians, Mennonites—some of whom were dedicated to high academic standards and to developing writing systems and literacy in both English and native languages (Neely, 1975). Noley (1979) has pointed out that missionaries began bilingual and bicultural education in the early 1800s for Choctaws and other Eastern tribes. Tribal governments continued this educational tradition after Eastern tribes were relocated to Indian Territory (to become the state of Oklahoma) by the middle of the 19th century. The Creek, Choctaw, and Cherokee nations, among others, established their own academies and seminaries in Indian Territory, such as the Cherokee Female Seminary, established in 1851 (Mihsuah, 1993).

By the late 1800s the federal government began to displace missions as the primary educator of Native Americans (Prucha, 1979). In 1875 Col. Richard Henry Pratt began a successful federal experiment in education among Kiowa and Cheyenne prisoners of war incarcerated at Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida. After three years of imprisonment, a number of the young Kiowa and Cheyenne requested further schooling. Convinced that equal educational opportunity was all that separated native people from the advantages of civilization, Pratt tried in vain to locate an agricultural college that would accept his students. Samuel Armstrong accepted them into Hampton Institute, a school for African Americans, but the Indian college at Hampton was short-lived. Armstrong, a staunch conservative committed to a racist hierarchy of humankind, and Pratt, with

his progressive notions of racial equality, could not tolerate one another (Adams, 1977; Utley, 1964).

Pratt successfully lobbied Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz and the Congress to establish the first federal off-reservation boarding school for American Indian youth at unused military barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (Ryan, 1962; Utley, 1964). Carlisle Indian School opened in 1879. Within five years similar schools were established: Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma; Genoa Indian School in Nebraska; and Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas. By the turn of the century the federal government ended its subsidies of mission schools, opened 25 off-reservation boarding schools, and operated dozens of local day schools and on-reservation boarding schools.

Federal policy of total cultural assimilation of Indian people and federal educational practices of military regimentation, strict discipline, and intensive manual labor clearly reveal federal intent to train young Indians in subservience to federal authority (Adams, 1988b; Lomawaima, 1993; Littlefield, 1989, 1993). Non-native and native reformers have objected to the principles and/or the practices of assimilatory education since its inception. Religious or political groups have, at various times, fought corruption and graft in the federal administration of Indian affairs and advocated more humane treatment of Indian students. Perhaps the best-known, and most effective, exposé of federal Indian administration was the 1928 report, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Meriam, 1928). The Meriam report’s chapter on Indian education targeted boarding schools as inappropriate places to raise children, and recommended public and on-reservation day schools as alternatives.

Under the leadership of John Collier, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the education division of the BIA began to shift support from boarding to day schools, from federal to public schools, from assimilatory to respectful attitudes toward native cultures (Philp, 1977; Szasz, 1977; see Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986–1987, for a historical and contemporary review of federal/mission education of Native Canadians). The assimilatory view has not disappeared from the scene, however. As recently as 1989, BIA schools were advised to provide “bonified [*sic*] vocational preparation” and to beware the “consequences” of teaching any language but English, or even English as a second language (Latham, 1989).

### Research on the Boarding School Experience

Indian resistance to the federal agenda of assimilation in the boarding schools has proved a rich ground for historical and contemporary research on what federal/mission education has meant to Indian individuals and communities. Early research on boarding schools tended to focus on the social, cultural, psychological, or intellectual pathologies of Indian students or the pathologies of the environment (Birchard, 1970; Krush, Bjork, Sindell, & Nelle 1966). Alternatively, authors investigated the history of particular schools by focusing on federal policy and the documentary evidence left by school staff (Ryan, 1962; Trennert, 1988).

In 1983, McBeth introduced the voices and opinions of native alumni of federal boarding schools in Oklahoma. Her work paved the way for research and films revealing the opinions and

experiences of native people in U.S. boarding schools (Lomawaima, 1994) and Canadian residential schools (Haig-Brown, 1988; Johnston, 1988; Pittman, 1989). Basil Johnston's memoir of his education at "Spanish," a Jesuit boarding school in northern Ontario in the 1930s, is the contemporary counterpoint to Francis LaFlesche's (1900/1978) moving account of Presbyterian mission education of young Omaha children in the 1880s. Boarding-school attendance has left a range of legacies, from family enrollment at an "alma mater" over successive generations (McBeth, 1983; Lomawaima, 1994; Stull & Kendall, 1986) to very negative attitudes toward all schools (Butterfield & Pepper, 1991).

Ethnographic study of contemporary boarding-school students has been carried out largely in Alaska, rather than the lower 48 states (Kleinfeld, 1973c). In 1985 the governors of the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico sponsored an oral history of the Santa Fe Indian School. The resulting museum exhibit and catalog (Hyer, 1990) eloquently convey native voices, native lives, and native self-determination in education.

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### RESEARCH ON INDIAN EDUCATION

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Scholarly and professional discussion of Indian education began as early as 1884, when the Indian Service (later called the BIA) began an annual tradition of summer institutes for its teachers. By summer 1903 Superintendent of Indian Schools Estelle Reel had organized 10 such institutes (Reel, 1903). As part of her plan to professionalize her teacher corps, Reel successfully applied to the National Education Association (NEA) for recognition as a subgroup. In 1899 the group on Indian education met for the first time to present papers and exchange ideas at the NEA annual meeting. Teachers, principals, and administrators discussed, among other topics, the relation between literary and industrial education, teacher training, trades instruction for Indian boys, and domestic training for girls, "the uplifters of the home" (NEA, 1900, p. 701).

In 1936 the education division of the Indian Service began to publish a field letter entitled *Indian Education* to present "concise and clear-cut statements of the philosophy, policy and preferred procedures of Indian education" (Beatty, 1953, p. 10). Volumes of reprinted articles from the newsletter focus on education for cultural change (Beatty, 1953) and education for cross-cultural enrichment (Thompson, 1964). Willard Walcott Beatty, a proponent of Progressive education, was the Indian Bureau's Director of Education from 1936 to 1952. "Sympathetic and understanding of the customs and heritage of other peoples," Beatty endeavored to develop an education relevant to Indian life (Szasz, 1977, p. 49).

Although Beatty was not ultimately successful, the concept of community schooling, the construction of reservation day schools, and bilingual education programs did flourish under his administration. Beatty was succeeded by Hildegard Thompson (1952–1965), who guided the education division through difficult years. Congressional legislation to terminate tribes' special government-to-government relation with the federal

government, and mandates to relocate Indians to urban areas, threatened tribal sovereignty during her tenure (Szasz, 1977).

### Self-Determination: Rhetoric or Reality?

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s radically shifted the status quo on reservations. More and more Indian children had been enrolling in public schools, and Indian parents and communities exercised newfound political power to reform existing schools or establish new schools of their own (Johnson, 1968). Congressional and federal investigations of Indian education uncovered scandals and advocated reforms (Aurbach & Fuchs, 1970; Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 1969; Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972; NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 1971). Congress responded with a landslide of legislation promoting tribal self-determination in education. This legislation included the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (P.L. 89-10, amended in 1966 to include BIA schools), the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, the 1972 Indian Education Act (Title IV of Public Law 92-318), the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638), and the Educational Amendments Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-561 and its technical amendments P.L. 98-511, 98-89, and 100-297).

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (P.L. 93-638) exemplifies how rhetoric—what sounds good on paper—has collided with administrative reality in American Indian education. P.L. 93-638 regulated the existing practice of contracting federal monies (administered through the BIA) to Indian communities to run local programs (Senese, 1986, p. 153). The practice of "638 contracting" has been praised by some as the greatest opportunity in history for Indian people to control their own destiny (Szasz, 1977), while others damn it as yet another link in the chain of BIA bureaucratic oppression (Barsh & Troster, 1975; Grell, 1983; Senese, 1986). Senese argued that 638 contracting offers Indian communities only an "illusion of control and competency" (p. 154), while the language of the law, its implementation, and the flawed disbursement of funds have crippled community-based education.

Senese began with Flannery's (1980) findings that "the growth in contracting operations in schools slowed *after* the passage of P.L. 93-638" (Senese, 1986, p. 155), and went on to quote tribal leaders who call 638 the "BIA self-perpetuation act" and who equate self-determination with "job insecurity" (pp. 161–162). Senese identified four major ways 638 reinforces BIA control and weakens community direction of education: the broad discretion of the secretary of the interior to decline or terminate contracts; late and unpredictable funds available only on a cost-reimbursable basis; no budgetary provisions for raises or promotions; and the "lack of bureau accountability" for technical assistance funds (p. 161). In a case study of 638 contracting at the Kickapoo Nation School, Grell (1983) repeated all of Senese's criticisms and concluded that "control of the school is not a panacea" for Indian education because "the incompatibility of externally imposed restrictions and tribally-oriented values in education remains" (p. 9). McCarty (1987, 1989) detailed identical problems of program instability, student transfers,

staff turnover, and unpredictable funding as major obstacles to community school success on the Navajo reservation.

### The Disadvantaged Child

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, educational and social scientists began to study the school experiences of American Indian (and other minority) children and to document their achievement levels on standardized tests. Some researchers focused on the validity of testing instruments, others on the inadequacies or underpreparation of minority children. Two articles in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* exemplify the latter focus. The authors used standardized developmental tests to "document" that Nez Percé kindergarten students had "less developed" visual perception (Lowry, 1970, p. 303) and "severe linguistic inadequacy" (Ramstad & Potter, 1947, p. 493) compared with their White classmates.

A "culture of poverty" model labeled children, their families, and communities as fundamentally "disadvantaged"—culturally, socially, and/or economically unable to melt into the great American pot (Crow, Murray, & Smythe, 1966; Webster, 1966). L. Salisbury's (1974) research in Alaska attributed to cultural disadvantage the maladjustment of native students to college life. Students had "communication problems" because of their "cultural attitude toward [not verbally] sharing problems" (pp. 194–199). Salisbury hoped to teach the students to "verbalize problems freely" in order to make the "transition toward a culture in which [they] must find a place" (p. 199). "Disadvantage" models continued the assimilationist thrust of two centuries of Indian education with assumptions that Indian children must "find their place."

Other scholars removed the onus of disadvantage from Indian students, and placed responsibility elsewhere for minority student "failure." Bryde's (1970) classic study of scholastic failure and personality conflict examined the "cross-over phenomenon" (Brown, 1979) among Sioux students. These students achieved at or above national norms in their first few school years, then crossed over and "reverse[d] their performance by underachieving for the rest of their scholastic lives" (Bryde, 1970, p. 1). By the seventh or eighth grade, students sensed "themselves caught by forces beyond their command" and responded with rejection, depression, alienation, and anxiety (p. 67). Bryde and others recognized that systematic social inequities were being played out in the schools as well as in the larger society (Ogbu, 1983, 1987, 1989; Parmee, 1968).

### The Drop-Out Rate: Problems of Comparability

Disproportionately high drop-out rates and low graduation or retention rates for Native American students, at all educational levels, have been a matter of statistical inquiry and policy concern for decades. The NCES sponsored three longitudinal studies of drop-out rates during the 1970s and 1980s (NCES 1988, 1989, 1990b). The studies were hampered by very small sample sizes of American Indian/Alaska Native students, making statistical analysis impossible (but see descriptive reports for some of the data sets; e.g., BIA, 1988). The 1980 survey of 30,000

sophomores and 28,000 seniors across the country found a 31.8% drop-out rate for American Indian females, 27.2% for American Indian males, 18% for Hispanics, 14.1% for Blacks, 2.7% for Asian-Americans, and 11.5% for Whites (Peng & Takai, 1983). The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 tracked 24,599 eighth graders (including 307 students coded as Native American) and reported drop-out rates of American Indian/Alaska Native, 9.2%; Black, non-Hispanic, 10.2%; Hispanic, 9.6%; White, non-Hispanic, 5.2%; and Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% (NCES, 1990b).

In 1992 the *Journal of American Indian Education* (Swisher, 1992b, 1992c) devoted two special issues to drop-out research, as

the statistics regarding these rates among Indian/Native students have been highly speculative, inaccurate, and/or embedded in the innocuous category of "other" when reported . . . there is not a clear picture of the reasons that Indian/Native students are leaving school. (Swisher, 1992a, p. 1)

Swisher and Hoisch (1992) reviewed drop-out studies from the 1960s through the 1980s, revealing disparities from study to study among measurement techniques, sample sizes and compositions, and data sets that made nationally comparable or meaningful figures very difficult to obtain.

In an effort to calculate Indian drop-out rates more accurately, Swisher, Hoisch, and Pavel (1991) drew data from 26 state and national educational agencies, BIA offices, and tribal entities in the 20 states identified by the census with the largest Indian/Native populations. While state data response was quite timely and complete, data were difficult to impossible to obtain and/or compare across BIA and tribal sources. A subsequent follow-up study focusing on BIA schools found a 25% drop-out rate in grades 9 through 12 (no data were available before grade 7) (Swisher & Hoisch, 1992, p. 9).

Swisher and Hoisch (1992) summarized the major stumbling blocks to drop-out research: widely varying statistical methods and/or incomparable data sets, frequency of student transfers, and minimal attention to the reasons why students leave school. The phenomenon of transferring is especially confounding for drop-out statistics. Swisher and Hoisch reported transfer rates from 10% in BIA elementary schools to 30% in BIA high schools to 50% at Chemawa, a BIA boarding school in Oregon (p. 20).

Researchers who have explored students' school experiences and reasons for dropping out have identified a variety of important social, cultural, economic, and academic factors. Their studies tend to focus on "school-based" reasons for dropping out, such as uncaring teachers or inappropriate curriculum (Reyhner, 1992); on "home-based" reasons, such as lack of parental support or first language other than English (Platero, Brandt, Witherspoon, & Wong, 1986); or on "student-based" reasons, such as boredom, life goals unrelated to school instruction, pregnancy, or substance abuse (Bowker, 1992). Many studies incorporate one or more of these perspectives on school stayers and school leavers.

Coladarci (1983) interviewed students who had dropped out of a Montana high school district and identified noncaring

teachers, objectionable school curriculum, irrelevant schooling, problems at home, lack of parental support, and lack of peer support as major influences on the decision to drop out. Platero et al. (1986) found Navajo and Ute students were mostly "bored." Their academic problems were minor, but social friction with other students, absenteeism due to pregnancy, and grade retention resulting from absenteeism pushed them out of school. Similarly, in an NEA-sponsored study, Swisher and Hoisch (1992) found that "apparently, in New Mexico [Native American] students are more likely than any other ethnic group to become dropouts because, for one reason or another, the district removes them from school, a fact that warrants further investigation" (p. 17).

Brandt (1992) reported the findings of the Navajo Area Student Dropout Study (NASDS) (Platero et al., 1986). Prior to NASDS, reported drop-out rates across the reservation ranged from 30 to 95% (Brandt, 1992, pp. 48-49). NASDS tracked students through their Navajo census numbers, and interviewed 889 students—670 stayers and 219 leavers. The investigators found that "over 50% of the students that the schools identified as 'dropouts' had in fact either transferred to another school or had graduated" (p. 52). NASDS estimated a transfer rate for the study area of 30%, a dropout rate of 31%, and rank-ordered the reasons students gave for dropping out, from number 1, "bored with school," through "problems with other students," to number 15, "having to work" (p. 57). Academic factors were minimally involved for school leavers; strong Navajo cultural ties were found among stayers and leavers; and bilingual proficiency in Navajo and English was positively linked to persistence in school. Brandt concluded that, whether students chose to stay or leave, schools were not "challenging or engaging Navajo students socially or intellectually" (p. 61).

Bowker (1992) reviewed the extensive literature on American Indian student dropouts as she focused on female students to determine what factors contribute to women's school success (graduation) or nonsuccess (nongraduation). Bowker's two-year study of 991 Indian females of diverse backgrounds from seven northern Plains groups (all grew up on reservations) found that many of the girls "academically . . . were confident in their abilities to do their school work, yet many of them did not choose to do so" (p. 14). Bowker found "strong evidence" that "American Indian girls drink no more than non-Indian girls," but noted that 50% of the Indian female dropouts were due to pregnancy, compared to 40% for the national norm (p. 15). The strongest indicator Bowker found for school success was "the support of their families," especially their mothers and grandmothers (p. 16). She could not find strong correlates for school "failure." "In the final analysis, this study found no formula for success or dropping out. Women who dropped out were those whom most educators would not consider at risk; others succeeded with the deck stacked against them" (p. 17).

Deyhle's (1992) seven-year ethnographic study of Navajo and Ute "school leavers" provides a rich source of evidence and data. She followed six class cohorts (1984-1989), interviewing students and leavers at a border town high school and at a Navajo reservation high school. Deyhle found that native students and non-native teachers/administrators neither trusted

nor cared for one another. Students were not blind to the institutional racism of the schools or to their limited economic and social opportunities in the surrounding community. Deyhle calls their decision to leave school "a rational response" to racism (p. 25).

Deyhle found Ogbu's (1987) concept of castes useful in understanding "failure" among the native students attending the border town high school. She accounted for school success among the students attending the on-reservation school through cultural integrity of school and community (Deyhle, 1992, pp. 26-27). Deyhle concluded that "when youth revealed the feelings they had of being 'pushed out' of schools and 'pulled into' their own Indian community, one must look beyond 'individual failure' as pivotal reasons for leaving school" (p. 43). "As many as 18% of these Indian youth were physically in school for 12 years and still did not graduate," and 55% of those who dropped out did so in the 12th grade (pp. 27-28). She established an overall dropout rate of 21.3%.

### Learning and Interactional Styles

As educators have struggled to develop culturally relevant classroom materials and pedagogic methods (Lipka, 1991), researchers have addressed the issue of how children might learn and exhibit knowledge in culturally specific ways. Swisher and Deyhle (1987), in their review of this literature, define learning style as "the way in which knowledge is acquired," and interactional style as "the way in which knowledge is demonstrated" (p. 345). The cultural discontinuity/congruence hypothesis predicts that cultural discontinuities between teachers and students (King, 1967; Sindell, 1974; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987), between Indian and non-Indian learning styles (Cazden & John, 1971; John, 1972), or between teacher-imposed and community-sanctioned interactional styles (Phillips, 1972, 1983) will hinder children's achievement as measured by standardized tests. Deyhle (1983) raised a provocative issue for standardized testing in an article documenting the transition of Navajo students from eager test takers (grades one and two) to test resisters (grades six, seven, and eight). She posits that a culture that values process over product, coupled with students' gradual realization of the personal judgment entailed in passing or failing, conspire to create students who reject testing itself.

Learning-style researchers have focused on, among other critical parameters defining how children learn and how they display what they learn: (a) linguistic performance (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Phillips, 1972, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981) and linguistic nonperformance, or silence, in the classroom (Dumont, 1972; Wax, Wax, & Dumont, 1964); (b) observational or "private" versus trial-by-error learning (John, 1972; Wolcott, 1967); (c) cooperative versus competitive learning strategies (Brown, 1980; Miller & Thomas, 1972); (d) field-dependent versus field-independent perceptual and personality organization (Dinges & Hollenbeck, 1978); (e) cultural congruence; and (f) brain hemispheric dominance (not discussed further here; see Chrisjohn & Peters, 1989, and Rhodes, 1990, for rebuttals to the idea of "right-brained" or "whole-brained" Indians).

**Linguistic Performance.** Phillips's (1972, 1983) seminal study of Warm Springs (Oregon) reservation education outlined dif-



ferent standards of linguistic performance in the community and in the school. She called these linguistic standards "communicative competencies." Communicative competency is defined and judged through a framework of rules governing who speaks when, for how long, in what order, and in what context. Phillips called the framework of rules that govern speech "participant structures." Phillips concluded that Indian children at Warm Springs resisted participant structures that were school-defined and teacher-dominated, and that required students to recite publicly as a sign of mastery over content knowledge. One of the most cited studies of Indian education, her 1972 work laid the framework for two decades of research on linguistic performance and classroom interaction.

The classroom interaction model has been productively applied to studies of reading instruction. Au and Jordan (1981) described the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) developed for native Hawaiian children. KEEP successfully integrates native Hawaiian values of informal education into formal classroom reading lessons, building on the Hawaiian "talk story" or storytelling model. Van Ness (1981) analyzed a similar program for getting Alaskan Athabascan children ready for reading.

Greenbaum and Greenbaum (1983) reviewed the literature on cultural differences in classroom interaction, and the possible effects of sociolinguistic interference that result when teachers and students nonverbally regulate conversation in conflicting ways. They identify three possible kinds of interference: (a) misinterpretation of intent or content; (b) value conflicts, such as cooperative versus competitive learning; and (c) "converged accommodation," the degree to which participants in a conversation may shift speech styles to conform to another speaker as a sign of approval or disapproval. While concluding that Indian and non-Indian classroom interactions do differ in the frequency/duration of utterances, voice loudness, and degree of visual attention, they caution that "it has yet to be shown empirically that such differences obstruct the students' comprehension of what they are being taught" (p. 28).

Thielke and Shriberg (1990) suggest that Indian children's delays in language and speech development and reduced educational achievement may be related to the high incidence of otitis media (inflammation of the middle ear) among native populations. This study raises important questions that warrant further research on Native American health problems and their educational impacts (see Dorris, 1989, for the disturbing implications of fetal alcohol syndrome [FAS]).

Phillips (1972, 1983) also discussed how Warm Springs adults taught children to pay attention, to observe, to practice on their own, and only then to undertake public performance or demonstration of a new skill or knowledge. This notion of "private learning" (Swisher & Deyhle, 1989, p. 4) has been attested as well for Navajo children (Longstreet, 1978), Oglala Sioux children (Brewer, 1977), and Yaqui children (Appleton, 1983).

*Private Learners.* In addition to characterizing Indian children as private learners, many researchers also see them as silent students. Studies have attempted to demonstrate empirically what teachers report anecdotally: that Indian children are much

quieter than other children in the classroom. In their study of Oklahoma Cherokee children's behavior in classrooms, Dumont and Wax (1969) posit a "Cherokee School Society" shaped by the students in response and resistance to an imposed, alien institution. By the seventh and eighth grades the students

surrounded themselves with a wall of silence impenetrable by the outsider, while sheltering a rich emotional communion among themselves. The silence is positive, not negative or withdrawing, and it shelters them so that . . . they can pursue their scholastic interests in their own style and pace. By their silence they exercise control over the teacher. (p. 222)

Guilmet (1978, 1981) examined the oral-linguistic and non-oral-visual behavioral patterns of Navajo and White children in the classroom and the playground to determine if the Navajo students were more or less quiet. Differentiating the assumptions of (a) learning-style theory—Navajo children learn non-orally and visually at home, therefore they are culturally predisposed to quieter behavior at school—and (b) interference theory—classrooms are an alien environment unsuited to expression of Navajo oral-linguistic competencies, therefore children are quieter at school than at home—Guilmet observed a small sample of 16 Navajo and 7 White children. Navajo children were strikingly less oral-linguistic and strikingly more nonoral-visual than White children. This difference was more marked on the playground than in the classroom. Based on earlier research on Navajo mothers (1979), Guilmet proposed a "culturally appropriate [Navajo] mode of attending" (1981, p. 149) that defines intense speech interactions and high levels of physical activity as discourteous, self-centered, and undisciplined (1979).

*Cooperation or Competition?* It is commonly asserted that Indian children are raised to be more "cooperative" than White children, and that competition is expressed by Indian children only in group contexts, such as team sports. Miller and Thomas (1972) compared 48 Blood children from a reserve school in Alberta, Canada, with 48 non-Indian children in an urban school. The children, all between the ages of 7 and 10, were tested with the Madsen Cooperation Board under two experimental reward conditions. In the first experiment, cooperative behavior was necessary to ensure a high rate of reward for each player. Both Indian and non-Indian groups cooperated effectively to achieve a group reward. Under the individual reward system, however, the "performance level of Indian children continued to increase while that of the non-Indian children deteriorated" (p. 1109). The Indian children developed verbal strategies to cooperate, and reprimanded competitive behavior. The authors note in their conclusion that "it is tempting to relate these differences to differences in the cultural background of the groups . . . but the specific ways that these . . . cultural factors find expression in cooperative behaviors . . . are not known in detail at the present time" (p. 1110).

*Field-Dependent or -Independent?* Swisher and Deyhle (1989) note that the little research on Indian students' degree of

field dependence/field independence contradicts the model Ramírez and Castañeda (1974) developed, based on their study of Mexican American children. Mexican American children tested higher in the direction of field dependence than Anglo children, who tested higher toward field independence. This cognitive model proposes that formally organized families who promote strong individual identity produce field-independent children, and that shared-function families (especially in groups isolated from the U.S. mainstream) who promote group identity will produce field-dependent children (Ramírez & Castañeda, 1974). The Ramírez and Castañeda model predicts that Navajo children would be more field dependent than White children. The 1978 study by Dinges and Hollenbeck demonstrates exactly the opposite. Dinges and Hollenbeck propose genetic, environmental, experiential, and linguistic factors to account for this unexpected result. Their recognition of cultural and grammatical imperatives that privilege "perceptual-cognitive abilities" is noteworthy, but their devaluation of Navajo creativity is not. Dinges and Hollenbeck claimed that Navajo women do not create rug patterns according to a cultural aesthetic, but that they merely "duplicate" them "from memory" (p. 218).

**Cultural Congruence.** Mohatt and Erickson (1981) used Phillips's (1979) model of participant structures to analyze culturally patterned aspects of classroom behavior as they scrutinized the teaching styles of two "effective and experienced" teachers, one an Indian female, the other a non-Indian male, in a school on the Odawa reserve (Canada). They were interested in the "cultural congruence of each [teacher's] style with the pattern of interaction customary for Indian children in everyday life" (p. 117). Their observation of how the non-Indian teacher adapted his style over the course of a year helped convince the native board of directors to pledge research monies to "see whether more culturally congruent participant structures will increase achievement among native students" (p. 119).

Kleinfeld (1974) examined whether altering nonverbal cues that communicate "warmth" in teaching styles would stimulate learning, question answering, and question asking among 20 White and 20 Eskimo students. The cues were ethnographically defined according to Eskimo values. She found that "warm" college guidance sessions did increase learning for both groups, but that "ethnic group differences were few and not altogether consistent" (p. 3). Earlier research (Kleinfeld, 1973a) provided some evidence suggesting that "warmth" expressed by a test administrator could raise intelligence test scores for Athabaskan Indian and Eskimo students.

### Cultural Discontinuity/Congruence Theory and Criticisms

The theoretical perspective of cultural discontinuity/cultural congruence unites many of these studies across the divide of whether they see school failure as a student pathology (the student "drops out") or a school pathology (the school "pushes out") or a home/cultural pathology (native home/community "pulls out" student). Simply put, this theory predicts that cultural/linguistic difference among teacher, school, and student

can result in student underachievement or failure; cultural/linguistic congruence among teacher, school, and student leads to student success.

Ledlow (1992) tackled the whole question of cultural discontinuity between home and school as an adequate explanation for dropping out. She critically reviewed earlier research and found "little or no explicit research to prove the hypothesis" that cultural discontinuity contributes to school failure or that culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy contribute to school success (p. 21). Ledlow supports the cultural discontinuity/cultural compatibility hypothesis as a research question, but objects to unquestioned assumption of its validity. She proposes that macrostructural explanations of minority schooling, rooted in a Marxist perspective, might more productively focus on "economic and social issues"—pregnancy, drugs, boredom, institutional racism, poverty—"which are not culturally specific to being Indian" (p. 29) in order to address dropping out. Evidence from Deyhle (1992) and others indicates that "a strong sense of traditional cultural identity . . . provides a student with an advantage in school. The idea that traditional Indian students may have an academic advantage over more 'acculturated' students is an important issue" (Ledlow, 1992, p. 34). McShane (1983) also critiqued Indian education research as "theoretically naive" (p. 34). He turns to psychological analysis for "powerful" models to interrelate cognition, affect, and behavior.

Ogbu (1989), in his differentiation of voluntary and involuntary minorities, has pointed out that some minority groups who do well in school are more culturally different from the "mainstream" school culture than groups who do poorly (pp. 182–183). A simple model of cultural congruence does not account for their school success. In Indian education, Osborne (1989) called into question the whole rationale of the cultural congruence hypothesis by pointing out that complete cultural congruence between Indian (specifically Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico) and U.S. values is not possible in the classroom. Classrooms are incongruous institutions within Zuni culture. He questioned the desirability of cultural congruence, since Zuni parents want their children prepared to survive and excel in mainstream U.S. society. Osborne proposed a conceptual framework of "fused biculturalism" to describe the juxtaposition of irreconcilable but coexisting cultural traditions.

Yet another critique of research in Native American education zeroes in on the lack of evidence to support the abundance of literature about Indian students' "visual learning styles" (Kleinfeld & Nelson, 1988, p. 2). Kleinfeld and Nelson directed an extensive computer search of the literature that suggests that Indian children have "special strengths" in spatial abilities and visual memory (p. 1). They searched the psychological, ethnographic, and educational research for studies that empirically tested the claim that "instruction adapted to Native American learning styles increases achievement" (p. 8). They found three. Two studies (McCartin & Schill, 1977; Shears, 1970) did not show that Native American students learn more with visually based instruction. The third (Brickson, 1972) found support for the claim in one site but not another, but also found that visually based instruction was even more effective for White than for Indian children. Kleinfeld and Nelson concluded that the

lack of evidence notwithstanding, the "learning-style" construct remains popular because educators want to avoid "deficit" language and because the terminology is useful in grant proposals and in describing the plethora of adjustments teachers make when dealing with specific Native American groups.

### Curriculum Development

The debatable efficacy of learning-style/teaching-style research should not lead us to forget the equally important issue of curriculum content. How we teach children, and how they learn, should not obscure the critical nature of what they are being taught. Any Native American who has suffered through a television miniseries on "How the West Was Lost," or a high school history lecture lauding the bold, adventurous spirit that led Columbus to his "discovery," or an elementary classroom reenactment of the first Thanksgiving, knows this lesson. What if teachers scrupulously develop culturally/linguistically sensitive pedagogical methods, but never alter the content of what they teach? Can we expect Indian children to "succeed" in school so long as Indian history, cultures, and people are systematically excluded from, marginalized within, or brutalized by curricular content? Research findings from the Rough Rock Demonstration School on the Navajo reservation underscore this question. When an experimental social studies curriculum based on local values and ideas was introduced, children blossomed from silent "concrete" learners into talkative, analytical students (Benally, Lynch, McCarty, & Wallace, 1991).

Projects in curriculum development have achieved positive results in some Indian-controlled schools. The Kickapoo Nation School introduced new curriculum in 1985 and reversed declining performance on test scores (Dupuis & Walker, 1989). McCarty (1987, 1989) described the fractious and difficult process of curriculum and language development at Rough Rock Demonstration School as an exercise in frustration; Okakok's (1989) more optimistic view stressed the benefits of integrating Inupiat and Western Alaskan cultural values into the administration and curriculum of the North Slope Borough School District.

What goes on within schools is only part, of course, of the influences to which children are exposed. DeMarrais, Nelson, and Baker's (1992) delightful description of the cognitive skills reinforced by "storyknifing," the storytelling activity of young Alaska Native girls along the muddy banks of the Kuskokwim River, concluded with the discouraging observation that this childhood pastime has been supplanted by hours in front of the TV.

### Language Policy and Language Renewal

Native American language use, language maintenance, and language renewal are tremendously important influences on educational experiences and policies, but would require another chapter to review adequately. As many as 200 native languages are still spoken in the United States today, but patterns of fluency vary widely among communities (Leap, 1981). At one end of the continuum, groups such as the Navajo tribe try to maintain a language still spoken by a majority of members

(Rosier & Holm, 1980). Along the middle, the Tachi-Yokuts in central California struggle to revive interest in a language spoken only by an elderly few (Britsch-Devany, 1988). At the other end of the continuum, native languages have virtually disappeared, leaving their traces in a locally specific version of "Indian English" (Leap, 1977).

Long-standing federal policy to eradicate native languages has only recently been revised to provide grudging support of the idea of bilingual education (McCarty, 1992; Zepeda, 1990). Since the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 (other federal titles also supply monies to support bilingual/bicultural education) at least 70 native communities have developed language-education projects (McCarty, 1992; St. Clair & Leap, 1982). Federal language policies have intended primarily to establish "transitional" bilingual programs, to move children from a native language to fluency in English (J. H. Grant & Goldsmith, 1979; Spolsky, 1972, 1978). Most native people, however, are committed to maintaining native language as well (Palmer, 1988). Native-language use is being fostered from Makah on the northwest tip of Washington state (Renker & Arnold, 1988) to Passamaquoddy in Maine (Spolsky, 1978).

Tribes have turned to professionally and academically trained linguists to help develop educational programs in spoken and written language (Hale, 1973; Leap, 1988; Watahomigie & Yamamoto, 1987; Young, 1972). Fluent native speakers of Hopi, Navajo, Papago, and other languages have also obtained graduate degrees in linguistics and applied their training to educational development. Despite a dramatic reduction in federal funds for bilingual education initiated by President Reagan in the early 1980s, it seems unlikely that Native Americans will willingly or easily surrender their languages. Many communities are deeply troubled, however, by the challenges of language maintenance or renewal as truly fluent speakers grow fewer and older, and younger generations grow up inundated by the constant English chatter transmitted via cable, satellite dish, and videos.

### Trends

Research on Indian education has tended to move away from models that propose deficiencies in the student's language abilities (Phillion & Galloway, 1969; L. Salisbury, 1974), or neural organization (Ross, 1989), or cultural background, to theories of social and economic discrimination (Ogbu, 1983, 1987, 1989) that contextualize schools within the larger community. Current research trends define native cognitive skills as strengths, not weaknesses (Macias, 1989), and try to discover the characteristics of successful students (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Grantham-Campbell, 1992; Shutiva, 1991). DeMarrais et al. (1992) focus on storytelling skills of Alaska Native girls; Kleinfeld (1973b) studies Eskimos' visual skills; Nelson and Lalami (1991) discuss Tohono O'odham children's "visual-spatial, pattern-symbol and kinesthetic" skills for the creative process.

American Indian participation in higher education promises to grow as more and more tribes establish their own community colleges. Since Navajo Community College, the first tribally controlled community college, was established in 1969, this

area of educational opportunity has grown by leaps and bounds. Today 27 tribal colleges across the United States offer Native American adults an alternative in higher education that is structured upon native values and philosophies (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1989). At Sinte Gleske college in Sioux country, native scholars map the constellations and their earthly correlates among the geographic features of the Black Hills (P. Deloria, 1984); native scholars gather at the Institute for Native Knowledge at Humboldt State University in Northern California to exchange ideas; finally, native scholarship is being shaped by native people.

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### ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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Native Americans face multiple challenges in the coming century as they work to maintain sovereignty, develop economically, preserve or regain language, and ensure educational access and achievement for their young people. Significant obstacles to all these goals exist within U.S. society, as the states and Donald Trump battle to restrict Indian gaming, as Congress legislates arts and crafts production, and as the Supreme Court whittles away at religious freedoms (*Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Assn.*, 1988; *Employment Division v. Smith*, 1990).

It is perhaps ironic that a pan-tribal identity has become more real over time, but that pan-tribal linkage today complicates educational policy making and educational research. Too much policy has been predicated on creating viable solutions to "Indian" problems, generically defined. Too much research has been predicated on the hope that one teaching method or learning style or classroom environment or curriculum package will serve all Native Americans equally well.

One of the unfortunate consequences of too little educational research, and a high proportion of research focused on culturally/tribally specific sites or isolated reservations, is that provocative but slender evidence is generalized to all "Indian" children. Educators need to acknowledge the diversity of native cultures and experiences, and work locally to develop relevant content and methods. It may be that their achievements will never be generalizable to all "Indian" children. We need a wider range of research in the increasingly multicultural, increasingly poor urban schools where more and more children are being educated, far from "traditional" tribal homes.

Diversity in the classroom means we must attend to the skills, strengths, and needs of each child as an individual, building on native values without romanticizing them. Fiordo (1988) presents a Canadian example of education to eliminate alcohol and drug abuse, the Four Winds Development Project, that develops native cultural metaphors without stereotyping an "Indian Learning Style." The impulse is there for well-meaning teachers, curriculum developers, school administrators, and federal policy makers to discover the perfect learning style, pedagogical method, or curricular content for all Indian students, be it left-brain learning, whole-language instruction (Kasten, 1992), or generic spirituality (Locust, 1988). The search for the single teaching method or learning style that best serves or typifies a racially, linguistically, ethnically, or economically de-

finied subgroup of U.S. society is like the search for the Holy Grail. It risks becoming a sacred calling that consumes resources in the search for an illusory panacea for complex social and educational ills.

History, politics, and education have been inextricably bound up with one another in Indian America. Activism for educational change and empowerment has served as a political proving ground for Native American leadership. In the wake of the 1960s civil rights movement, the birth of the National Indian Education Association offered a forum for nationwide communication and organization. Alternative, native-run presses such as The Indian Historian Press, *Wassaja*, and *Akwesasne Notes* linked tribal communities and provided unprecedented opportunity to disseminate information and exchange ideas. The Chicago Indian Conference in 1961, the formation of the National Indian Youth Council in the early 1960s, and the first Convocation of American Indian scholars at Princeton in 1970 brought people together and developed new levels of political consciousness and cooperation (Indian Historian Press, 1970; Josephy, 1982; Lynch & Charleston 1990).

Locally controlled schools, such as Rough Rock Demonstration School, served as exemplars of community organization and educational self-determination. Rough Rock has hosted thousands of visitors and observers since it opened its doors. Schools have frequently been the flash point for political organization in Indian communities. In the South, for example, the desegregation of a tripartite school system (White, Black, and Red) focused the energies of the Poarch Band of Creeks, who eventually achieved federal recognition (Paredes, 1992). When Native Americans occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay on November 20, 1969, they resolved to "plan our own futures and educate our own children" (blue cloud, 1972, p. 21). Their plan for Alcatraz included a Center for Native American Studies with "traveling colleges" to visit reservations, a training school, and a museum. Education was foremost in their minds, and their vision was realized in part when D-Q University was established at Davis, California (blue cloud, 1972; Lutz, 1980). The vision flourishes today on the campuses of 27 tribally run community colleges. Education, politics, and history still walk hand in hand across Indian country, while economic development too often trots at their heels like a half-grown hound.

Native American communities know their own history well, and that highly developed historical consciousness tends to make them skeptical of federal promises of change or educators' promises of improvement. The special legal and political status of tribes and the implications of sovereignty may mitigate against a wholehearted acceptance of multicultural education if "multicultural concepts seem to promote the assimilative trend by standardization at the expense of self-determination in Indian education" (Jaimes, 1983, p. 17). If self-determination means a tribal community college, or an all-Indian urban school (Butterfield & Pepper, 1991), it may appear to run counter to U.S. ideals of desegregation and cultural sharing. Native America has insisted for 500 years on the right to its own ideals. If Native American people are making educational decisions according to their own ideals—ideals of cultural survival and sovereign status—then they must be respected. Nothing less than the Constitution of the United States promises them that sovereign right.

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