Foreword

First Peoples Online Journal

Cindy Blackstock

For thousands of years we have asked our own questions and found our own answers based on the great knowledge of our ancestors. For millennia, peoples of different generations held this knowledge in a sacred trust ensuring its eternal perpetuity. Our ancestors must have known that a time would come when many of our peoples would die as they did during colonization and others would be denied the cultural gifts of their ancestors as they were during residential schools because our ancestors ensured that the strength of the knowledge and values were so strong that they endured these troubled times to bless the care of Aboriginal children today.

There can be no more important knowledge than that which guides the care of our children. Precious always, perhaps even more precious now because together, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, we have before us the responsibility to create a relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children based on respectful coexistence as distinct and valued peoples. For social work this means affirming that Aboriginal peoples are in the best position to care for their children. It also means that – social work must understand that it cannot receive the gift of Aboriginal knowledge if its hands are tightly clutched around its own ideas of what is legitimate, formal and academic.

This journal places Aboriginal knowledge and voice at the centre and supplements this with concordant Euro-western social work knowledge. By including articles that may be unexpected in other journals we endeavor to create space in the academic world for the teachings of Aboriginal peoples and the sharing of new ideas – often rooted in teachings that have stood the ultimate test of lived validation through hundreds of generations.

We dedicate this first edition to all those who came before us - whose knowledge and spirit guide the proper care of children, young people, and each other. And to the generations of young people to follow us – may you look back and know that your voice was heard.

Respectfully
Cindy Blackstock
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Editorial

Learning the Process of Publishing "Voices and Perspectives" on Indigenous Knowledge in the Child Welfare Field

Marlyn Bennett, Editor

The genesis of this journal dates back to a realization that was not fully acknowledged until the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society's (the Caring Society) first publication *A literature Review on Aspects of Aboriginal Child Welfare in Canada* was completed in November 2002. This publication, in addition to a review of the history and the impacts of Canadian child welfare policies for Aboriginal peoples, contained over 800 annotations on articles, books, unpublished paper, reports, videos, theses and dissertations relevant to Aboriginal child welfare. The majority of resources referred to in that publication were generated by non-Aboriginal scholars, students, practitioners and/or policy makers. Very little of the voices and perspectives of Aboriginal people are captured in these academic pieces although the majority of the articles are empathetic and understanding of the impact that Canadian social policies have inflicted on Aboriginal populations.

This journal as a result attempts to level the field of knowledge generation by encouraging, promoting and privileging the "voices, perspectives and experiences" of Aboriginal people in the child welfare field. The main purpose of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* is to "reach beyond the walls of academia" to encourage individuals to publish their research, their ideas on practice, policy and education and to do so from an First Nations/Aboriginal perspective as well as to advance innovative approaches within the field of First Nations and Aboriginal child welfare.

Our first edition is very broad in scope. The first call for papers did not specifically identify a theme. Rather we choose to keep it open ended. As a result our first edition reflects a diverse set of articles which highlights some of the innovation, theory and practices occurring in the areas of Aboriginal child welfare research, policy and practice generally. As with other scholarly works, the articles submitted for publication in this journal have been peer reviewed by Aboriginal scholars, various practitioners and other community and academic "experts" who lent their knowledge and expertise to assisting in the review process.

Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett's *Aboriginal Research: Berry Picking and Hunting in the 21st Centre* is the first article in this edition which speaks to the importance of locating ourselves in the process of conducting research. As Aboriginal people engaged in conducting research we need to be aware of the colonialistic past which we have inherited and how the role of knowledge extraction has served to perpetuate colonialism both historically and contemporarily. Absolon and Willett stress that knowledge is about being, living and doing which implies that Aboriginal research methods are not necessarily static but imbued with action. They remind us that as Aboriginal scholars we have a responsibility to know our history and an acknowledgement that we own our own knowledge. It is implicit on Aboriginal researchers to challenge western knowledge and reality by decolonizing ourselves through our own knowledge production and constructions of Aboriginal realities. Renewal in Aboriginal research processes and methodology they state also requires strength and pride in self,

family, community, culture, nation, identity, economy, and governance. Locating oneself as an Aboriginal researcher requires more than just doing "library research." It requires that all researchers connect to Aboriginal peoples and communities and re-examine for themselves the process of seeking knowledge that more accurately reflects and authenticates the lived realities of Aboriginal families, communities, and nations.

The second article written by myself, Marlyn Bennett, moves into the genesis of how Participatory Action Research came to be. While this piece is not specifically geared toward child welfare research, it does provide readers with a definition and an understanding of the benefits and challenges to undertaking research from a Participatory Action Research perspective.

Kelly McShane and Paul Hastings' article discusses culturally sensitive ways of conducting research in the area of child development and family practices in First Peoples' communities. They conclude that it is important that when working with First Peoples families that practitioners concentrate less on children's problems and families' difficulties but more with an emphasis on understanding the culture and taking an emic approach to building meaningful relationships with families and communities throughout all stages of the research process.

The next article, by Raven Sinclair, expounds upon Aboriginal social work education, stating that to understand the contemporary aspect of Aboriginal social work education, one must begin with an understanding of the history of European and Aboriginal relations in terms of colonization and residential schools. Sinclair identifies some of the challenges of training Aboriginal social workers from an Aboriginal epistemology and combining it with western theory and ideologies within a decolonization framework. Sinclair's piece is an important contribution to the discourse on Aboriginal child welfare as it identifies the need to revisit the core of western social work values and inject Aboriginal "intellectualism" into curriculum content.

Christopher Walmsley reviews the multitude of perspectives that represent the child protection practitioners' relationship with communities in conducting child protection work in Aboriginal communities. These multiple perspectives range from viewing the community as a victim, adversarial, participant or partner to Aboriginal communities as protectors. These views were formed depending on the level of reciprocity exhibited by the Aboriginal communities in working with the practitioners who took part in answering questions related to this study. Walmsley notes that practitioner's view Aboriginal communities as being victims or adversarial when no relationship of trust exists between the community and practitioner. The more reciprocity and mutual respect that exists between communities and child protection practitioners, the more collective community efforts there are in intervening to protect and ensure the safety and well-being of children.

Kathleen Earle Fox reports on her findings respecting neglected Native American children through her analysis of approximately 17,000 cases from the largest abuse and neglect study conducted in the United Stated, through the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). Fox cautions that the utility of NCANDS to determine levels of neglect in Indian Country is limited first, by the method of data collection because the information was collected by the state rather than tribal workers so that American Indian cases are not always included. Secondly, Fox notes that the findings of neglect in the NCANDS database are based on the perceptions of non-Native workers largely unfamiliar with Native American culture, who also hold different perspectives on what is considered to be neglect. Fox found that Native American children found to be neglected faced differential treatment compared to non-Native children when placed in care. Given these noted limitations, Fox posits that it is highly unlikely that the NCANDS results regarding the neglect of Indian children are accurate.

Kathy Bent, Wendy Josephson and Barry Kelly's article looks at the impact of an Aboriginal Enrichment program on the self-perceptions of primarily young Aboriginal mothers enrolled in a program for adolescent parents. Their research shows that the Aboriginal culture component of the program had a substantial positive effect on the self-concepts of program participants. The program not only taught the participants about aspects of their cultural identity but that culture is a basis for self-worth.

The last word belongs to Kenn Richard, the Executive Director of the Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. Kenn shares his perspective on the adoption of Aboriginal children to non-Aboriginal families. Kenn's article is unique in that it provides a perspective that is very much culled from his personal experience working with Aboriginal people in an urban setting and from witnessing first hand the negative impacts and outcomes that cross-cultural adoption imposes on Aboriginal youth living in one of Canada's largest cities.

Readers will note that I have had quite an influence on the creation and development of this journal. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, as the director of research with the Caring Society, one of the major thrusts of my work is to ensure research capacity is built into the components of all that I undertake in my role with a national organization. I have attempted to do that here, although, by some accounts, it may appear that I am monopolizing the publication. Not only am I a contributing author but I also have a hand in all elements of this journal (from editing, writing the editorial, to stylistically designing, laying out and typing this journal). I have done this very purposefully in order to understand the publishing process from beginning to end and everything that can and will happen in between. Secondly, we have all heard the saying that "knowledge is power" but having knowledge also implies a responsibility. Our Elders teach that it is our responsibility to pass on knowledge. The Caring Society is just beginning its journey into the publishing field so it is acknowledged that we will need assistance to carry on necessitating the need to share and transfer what I have learned to another who will take over where I leave off. In the future the Caring Society hopes to hire youth who in turn will assist with mentoring others who wish to write for publication in our journal. All of this requires aspects of mentoring and mentoring is an important element in the transmission of knowledge however one must also know what is important to transmit through the mentoring process. So while it may appear that I have manipulated this publication, is was done with a very clear intention that what was learned would ultimately be shared with youth who will become involved with this publication in the future.

Over the last few months, many individuals have repeatedly enquired as to the status of this journal and many anxiously awaited its release. Undertaking the creation of a new journal is a monumental task for a one person office. However this journal would not be possible without the input of numerous people. It required a great deal of networking not only with the contributing authors but with a geographically diverse group of individuals who make up our editorial board and contacting numerous external reviewers from all across Canada. While it has taken me some time to get the inaugural issue of this journal off the ground, I am heartened by the teachings of the Elders not to rush too quickly into things. Elder Liza Mosher's teaching captures this perspective when she shared the following with Kulchyski, McCaskill and Newhouses in the book *In the Words of Elders:*

Aboriginal Cultures in Transition (1999):

We have to make them understand who we are. ... It's like the Original Man, he was the last one to leave the Creator's side, ... many times he's turned around and looked at the Creator and the Creator had to coax him to go. That's how slow he's walked and that's how we are, like that Original Man. We walk very slow and examine what's there and we don't jump into things right away, as soon as we jump into things right away, we try to go real fast and we fall flat on our face. ... (pp. 164-165).

I have deliberately taken it slow but the extra time that it has taken to draw together a national editorial board, find external reviewers and consult with contributing and prospective authors as well as designing and laying out this journal has been to the Caring Society's benefit but has also contributed to my own ongoing learning process and lessons learned. In the end I have collaboratively created, along with the contributing authors within this inaugural edition, a product that honours and captures diverse and important "voices and perspectives" that contribute significantly to the evolution of Indigenous knowledge creation around research, Aboriginal child welfare policy, and practice within Canada. Though I have much more yet to learn in putting together future editions of this journal, I know that it is important to continuing weaving together what is known from the past and honouring the gifts of the present which ultimately lead to the mysteries of the future. I hope that as you read this journal you are encouraged by the knowledge which the authors of this edition have shared. I hope that you are influenced enough to consider sharing your own knowledge, innovations and experiences by submitting a paper for publication in future editions of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review*. By doing so you will contribute to keeping the diversity of Aboriginal culture and knowledge alive and ever contemporary.

References

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Abstract

In this article issues around research methodology specific to Aboriginal people will be discussed. A brief historical analysis lays a foundation for the need for unique research methodologies as it pertains to Aboriginal people both as researched and researcher. Contemporary critiques by Aboriginal writers and communities will be presented in relation to the limitations and effects of Euro-western research methods. Finally, the authors will discuss issues, possibilities and responsibilities around conducting research as Aboriginal researchers.

Aboriginal research: Berry Picking and Hunting in the 21st Century*

Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett

Locating Ourselves

Location of self in writing and research is integral to issues of accountability and the location from which we study, write and participate in knowledge creation (2002; Said, 1994; Tierney, 2002). As Aboriginal researchers, we write about ourselves and position ourselves first because the only thing we can write about is ourselves (Allen, 1998; Monture-Angus, 1995).

Kathy

As an Anishinabe woman I assert a specific set of experiences based on my cultural, racial, geographical and political location. My name is Minogiizhgo kwe (Shining Day woman) and I am Anishinabe kwe (Ojibway woman) from Flying Post First Nation. I am born of an Ojibway mother and a British father and grew up in the bush. My mother was dismembered from her Nation because of the patriarchal *Indian Act* legislation. She has since been

re-membered as a result of Bill C-31. I too have been re-membered. Searching and re-searching has been central to my journey of recovery and discovery of my history, culture and community. Acknowledgement of my existence as an Anishinabe kwe (Ojibway woman) did not come naturally or easily. The fact that I can say this sets forth the complexities of my political, racial or cultural location as an Aboriginal woman in Canada.

Searching was also central to my experience in the bush. I spent most of my childhood to young adulthood in the bush. The absence of fences, neighbors and physical boundaries led way for the natural curiosities of a child to grow and be nurtured. My curious nature ushered me to find my way in the bush. Exploring the woods was my favorite pastime. The wonders that awaited and the possibilities of discoveries made my journeys into uncharted territories even more exciting. I learnt to search for food, wood, plants, medicines and animals. Trees provided

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* Sometimes in Indigenous knowledge, meaning is not so transparent and can be interpreted differently depending on the listener. Berry picking and hunting are traditional practices that require a specific set knowledge and research skills and when we translate those forms of traditional seeking into the 21st century, we have transformed our knowledge and skill set into contemporary contexts.

Because of who I am, I have accepted that my location, at times, can be isolating as I strive to introduce ideas, methods and practices of different ways of knowing, thinking, being and doing. In my work I often find myself 'trail blazing,' cutting through ideologies, attitudes and structures ingrained in Euro-western thought that can make the path for Aboriginal self-determination difficult, even at times, impassable. I expose people to new ideas and different ways of thinking, being and doing. I am a visionary with thoughts and dreams about life as an Anishinabe person.

markers; streams, rivers and lakes marked boundaries, plants indicated location and all this knowledge I developed out of just being in the bush. I believe that growing up in the bush equipped me with an extraordinary set of research skills. My bush socialization has taught me to be conscious of my surroundings, to be observant, to listen and discern my actions from what I see and hear. Elements of the earth, air, water and sun have taught me to be aware and move through the bush accordingly. My experiences both of being lost in the bush and of knowing the bush really well and learning about its markings have become the roots of my skills as researcher. From these experiences I have also come to understand that, traditionally, Anishinabe people were well-practiced researchers whose methodologies were rooted in Aboriginal epistemologies. Today I am an educator, researcher, coordinator, facilitator, designer, developer and helper. Because of who I am, I have accepted that my location, at times, can be isolating as I strive to introduce ideas, methods and practices of different ways of knowing, thinking, being and doing. In my work I often find myself 'trail blazing,' cutting through ideologies, attitudes and structures ingrained in Euro-western thought that can make the path for Aboriginal self-determination difficult, even at times, impassable. I expose people to new ideas and different ways of thinking, being and doing. I am a visionary with thoughts and dreams about life as an Anishinabe person. In this article I am again challenged to embark on a study, a journey of self-determination in Aboriginal research. Yet, I know that I speak and write truly from my own position, experiences and perspectives and do not represent the Aboriginal peoples' voice. The only voice I can represent is my own (Monture-Angus, 1995) and this is where I place myself.

Cam

Like Kathy, I am a Bill C-31 status Indian. I am from Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan. My mother is Cree and my father is of Scottish/British ancestry. Like Kathy's mother, my mother was dis-membered when she married my father, who is White. The Government of Canada no longer considered her an Indian and, under the rules of the *Indian Act*, her treaty status and band membership were taken away. Although, as their children, we too were dis-membered, our generation has begun the process of re-membering, of reclaiming and of re-searching our Aboriginal heritage. The following is my process of re-membering.

After spending half of her life in residential school, my mother returned home to her reserve and traveled every day to and from the nearest town north of her home to attend high school. It was there at Paynton High School that she met my father, a third generation farm boy whose grandfather had homesteaded about 10 kilometers north of town. After graduation, they both moved to Saskatoon where my mother attended Business College and my father completed a program in commercial construction. They soon married, had two boys, and moved around to wherever my father could find work. After a few years in construction my father bought a half share of the family farm with my uncle and moved us back home. It was there then, that my earliest memories were formed: the smell of freshly mowed grass, clear sunny days with piercing blue skies, and the sound of caragana pods popping in the heat. As a child I remember trying to avoid the bare white-hot light bulb that hung down from a bent nail above the sink where my mother bathed us; getting dressed in the morning beside the diesel-burning furnace in the middle of our tiny house; eating peanuts and listening to the Beatles "*Let it Be*" album on our 8-track stereo.

I have happy memories of playing and working on the farm, playing with the neighbor's kids, and going to town to pick up the mail. My memories of school are equally happy: making friends,

Remembering and talking about my experience as an Aboriginal person is Aboriginal re-search. Through the telling and re-telling of my story, I am able to reclaim, revise and rename my history so that I come to a new understanding about it.

participating in class, and riding the bus. Yet, as I remember and discuss my childhood with Kathy, what is missing from my memories is as revealing as the memories themselves: While my brothers and I were the only Aboriginal students in the entire school, I have always wondered why I could not recall any experiences of racism during those early years. Kathy, however, was not surprised, and asked me about the context of my experience. As I remembered the context, the answer to my question was unveiled: My family did not live on the reserve and we associated mostly with our White relatives in and around Paynton. We participated in community associations and events in Paynton: 4-H, softball, curling, library, sports days, auctions, dances, and church. We conducted all of our business in White communities. For all intents and purposes, we lived like White people and because of our connections at many levels (family, business, and friends), we were accepted as White.

To be sure, my family suffered many experiences of racism: I remember the way that many of my father's relatives shunned my mother and spoke of her in a patronizing or demeaning manner. I remember my mother crying because the captain of the Paynton ladies' softball team had pushed her and told her "Go home! We don't want to play with you!" I remember my brother (whose complexion was visibly darker than my own) being teased and getting his ears pulled until they bled by an older boy on the bus. However, for the most part, we were accepted and were treated with respect by the community. It wasn't until I left the comfortable confines of our rural community for the more overt racism of the city that I began to experience discrimination in a more direct way, which had a more powerful effect on me.

For me then, my life experience had left many questions unanswered. Remembering and talking about my experience as an Aboriginal person is

Aboriginal re-search. Through the telling and re-telling of my story, I am able to reclaim, revise and rename my history so that I come to a new understanding about it.

History of Research on Aboriginal Peoples

As Aboriginal people, we often find ourselves negotiating the sensitive area of research both as researched and researcher. While Indigenous peoples are the most studied ethnic group in the world (Smith, 1999), the study of "other" has not been our tradition because in Aboriginal culture "one does not tell or inquire about matters that do not directly concern one" (Gunn Allen, 1998, p. 56). Mihesuah (1998a) explains:

> While non-Indian historians and some Indians have made careers out of speaking for tribes and interpreting culture besides the one to which they belong, many Indians will not write about tribes other than their own, even if they have insights into those cultures. When it comes to speculating on Others' motivations and world-views, many Indians are simply uncomfortable and won't do it (p. 12).

Aboriginal peoples have a history of studying all things around us that we interact with and relate to such as the earth, animals, plants, water, air, and the sun. Traditionally, research has been conducted to seek, counsel and consult; to learn about medicines, plants and animals; to scout and scan the land; to educate and pass on knowledge; and to inquire into cosmology. The seeking of knowledge is usually solution-focused and has an underlying purpose of survival. Berry picking and hunting required a knowledge set of seeking skills, which sustained Indigenous families and communities for thousands of years. We understood that we are all related and that our actions affect our environment; that the mere observance of a thing changes it. Therefore, we must care

While the role of Indigenous oral traditions were to remember authentic realities, the role of research and written text was to propagate the superior intelligence and strength of Europeans (Gilchrist, 1997; Smith, 1999). In the context of imperialism and colonialism, Aboriginal people were and continue to be misrepresented for the purpose of propagating, maintaining and justifying control, domination and genocide (Churchill, 1992).

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Indigenous communities are comprised of cultural histories passed down since time immemorial. Cultural histories speak about the cosmology of the universe and our location in it. Such histories have been carried on from generation to generation via oral traditions of storytelling, ceremony, songs, and teachings, as well as rituals and sharing. Each nation retained, recorded and recounted its own cultural histories. These histories reflect in the names of places, people and elements of creation, a spirit that is alive in the land. The names are imbued with meaning, teachings and spirit. These histories were then relevant and meaningful to the lives, culture and survival of each Indigenous nation. They were then and remain today etched in the memories of their people and the land.

With the onslaught of colonization however, Europeans brought with them a reverence for the written word as the most valid representation of fact. Indigenous oral histories became misrepresented and were dismissed as legends, myths, and folklore. With the emergence of the printing press in the 1500's and 1600's came the development of travel books, whose pages misrepresented Indigenous peoples as "less than excellent people of the earth" (Miles, 1989). In the 1700's the social sciences, anthropology and ethnographic studies of 'other' portrayed another account of Indigenous people. What was recorded and represented were voyeuristic accounts of 'other' embedded in the values, beliefs, attitudes and agendas of the colonists. Fixico (1998) explains:

> During the British colonization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, newspapers used negative reports about Indians to sell newspapers. Eager novelists picked up their poisoned pens to embellish on any Indian resistance to intrigue readers with horrific atrocities. In the 1800's ethnographers recorded notes, wrote articles, and drafted manuscripts

> describing Indians and their cultures. More ethnographers and anthropologists followed in the late 1800s in desperate efforts to study Native American cultures… Careless historians followed ethnographers and anthropologists as a part of the academic community that wrote imbalanced articles and books about American Indians (p. 87-88).

While the role of Indigenous oral traditions were to remember authentic realities, the role of research and written text was to propagate the superior intelligence and strength of Europeans (Gilchrist, 1997; Smith, 1999). In the context of imperialism and colonialism, Aboriginal people were and continue to be misrepresented for the purpose of propagating, maintaining and justifying control, domination and genocide (Churchill, 1992). "Since the written work is considered the 'true medium' of historical accuracy, history was left to the discretion of the literate. Those with the ability and opportunity to write had their own agendas to promote" (Voyageur, 2000, p. 86). These written texts were fictitious representations of Whiteness in relation to 'other' that constructed images based not in truth, but on the colonizer's preferred image (Deloria, 1998; hooks, 1992; Mihesuah, 1998b). Contemporary critiques of ethno-historical accounts of Aboriginal people deal less with Aboriginal people and more with the "self-image of the writers and how the Indian world should properly be constructed" (Deloria, 1998, p. 65). Historical written texts by non-Aboriginal authors about Aboriginal peoples reveal more about the patriarchy, paternalism, racism, White supremacy, fear, ignorance and ethnocentrism of their authors than they do about Aboriginal peoples (Voyageur, 2000).

The Darwinism and evolutionary thought that was foundational to the worldview of Western authors molded and shaped the representations and images of Aboriginal people they presented by perpetuating competition

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for survival via "survival of the fittest", which, in turn, evoked rationalizations and justifications for the implementation of racist, discriminatory, and ultimately genocidal policies and practices against Indigenous peoples (Miles, 1989). Yet, at the same time, from their point of view, non-Aboriginal researchers saw themselves as merely curious observers and as objective, benevolent record keepers of history. Although not all anthropological representations were misrepresentative or written in malice of Aboriginal people, their cultural elitism and ignorance left fertile ground for written material that became foundational to genocidal policies and practices implemented against Aboriginal people in Canada.

The historical role of research in perpetuating colonial thought is documented in works of Smith (1999), Battiste and Henderson (2000), Cajete (1994; 2000), Hampton (1995a; 1995b), Gilchrist (1997) and many other Aboriginal scholars who also critique the Eurocentric and artificial contexts in which Aboriginal people have been forced to exist. Stiffarm (1998) suggests that measuring Aboriginal knowledges against Western criterion is academic racism and colonialism. She writes:

> Aboriginal knowledge was invalidated by Western ways of knowing. This unconscious, subconscious and conscious means of invalidating Aboriginal knowledge served to perpetrate a superior / inferior relationship around knowledge and how this knowledge is passed on. Systemic racism was clearly perpetrated in this way (Stiffarm, 1998, p. xi).

The legacy of colonizing knowledges have attempted to disconnect Aboriginal peoples from their traditional teachings, spirituality, land, family, community, spiritual leaders, medicine people, and the list goes on. Diminishing the value of Aboriginal knowledges has been an ongoing deliberate, calculated attempt to oppress and ultimately to extinguish

the very Aboriginal cultures whose oral epistemologies, philosophies, worldviews and theories have sustained the earth and all its inhabitants since time immemorial.

In historical and contemporary terms, research continues to play a role in justifying oppression and genocide. Gilchrist (1997) explains:

> The fact that much research does not confront ideologies of oppression prevents the application to research of critical knowledge regarding traditional culture, colonial history and racist structure. This results in research which does not use appropriate concepts as variables and defines ones culture using the cultural beliefs of another (p. 76).

Of particular relevance are the representations of images of Aboriginal people in written text and in social science research via anthropologists and ethnographers.

Any illumination of past, present, and future First Nations conditions demands a complete deconstruction of the history and application of ideology and, most importantly, of the impact (personal and political) of racism. That is, we need to know how we got into the mess we're in. "Colonialism means that we must always rethink everything" (hooks, 1992, p. 2). We need to have an analysis of the colonization (Smith, 1999) and our cultural past to decolonize our mind, heart, body and spirit. Without this critical knowledge, we are operating in a vacuum. Colonization of Aboriginal peoples could not have been perpetuated and maintained without the role of knowledge extraction and propagation of false consciousness. Henderson (2000a) claims that if the context of a person's reality does not allow one to move in their world and to discover as much about themselves as they can, then such a context is artificial. These false images and misrepresentations that hinder Aboriginal people from seeing themselves as they really are have disconnected them from their natural contexts and have

For the Western-minded thinker, knowledge exists in an ethereal realm outside of the self. In Western society, there are generally accepted rules of order, principles of accounting, teaching pedagogies, rules of law, medical treatments, etc., which one simply learns without necessarily making a personal connection to. Yet for Indigenous people, knowledge comes from within (Ermine, 1995); knowledge is being, living, and doing.

created 'artificial contexts' (Henderson, 2000a). Thus, re-contextualizing Aboriginal experiences, events and history can help us make sense of our reality (Henderson, 2000b).

Aboriginal research and writing then, as forms of media and as tools of education and socialization, demand a reconstruction and revolution of representations and images. We are concerned with the creation of written texts that liberate authentic Aboriginal knowledges, voices, and experiences at individual and collective levels. Smith (1999) explains this need to reclaim the power of the oral tradition:

> Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view of rewriting and rerighting our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying … Franz Fanon called for the indigenous intellectual and artist to create a new literature … to write, theorize and research as indigenous scholars (p. 28-29).

Limitations & effects of Euro-Western Research Methods

Smith (1999) states that "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (p. 1). However, since there is a fundamental difference between Indigenous and Euro-western thought, "many critiques of research have centered around the theory of knowledge known as empiricism and the scientific paradigm of positivism" (Smith, 1999, p. 42). Western thought is linear, positivist, and normative. Research that is based in Western thought assumes that there are causal relationships in the world which can be observed, measured, catalogued, categorized and predicted.

Euro-Western research is "wrapped around empirical evidence and the 'burden of proof'" (RCAP, 1996, Vol 4, Ch 3, s. 1). Indigenous thought, on the other hand, is holistic, circular, and relational. "Indigenous peoples have traditionally seen all life on the planet as so multidimensionally entwined that they have not been quick to distinguish the living from the non-living" (Kincheloe & Semali, 1999, p. 42). "All my relations" is a popular phrase we use to acknowledge our relationship with all things on the earth: plants, animals, earth, water, air, and other humans. As such, "the non-western forager lives in a world not of linear causal events but of constantly reforming, multi-dimensional, interacting cycles, where nothing is simply a cause or an effect, but all factors are influences impacting other elements of the system-as-a-whole" (RCAP, 1996, Vol 4, Ch 3, s. 1). For the Western-minded thinker, knowledge exists in an ethereal realm outside of the self. In Western society, there are generally accepted rules of order, principles of accounting, teaching pedagogies, rules of law, medical treatments, etc., which one simply learns without necessarily making a personal connection to. Yet for Indigenous people, knowledge comes from within (Ermine, 1995); knowledge is being, living, and doing.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) further illustrates the distinction between Indigenous and Western research:

> The methods of [Western] science are essentially reductionist, that is to say, they seek to understand organisms or nature by studying the smallest or simplest manageable part or sub-system in essential isolation ... Traditional knowledge seeks to comprehend such complexity by operating from a different epistemological basis. It eschews reductionism, placing little emphasis on studying small parts of the ecological system in isolation (Vol 4, Ch 3, s. 1).

Research methods and discourse by Aboriginal authors is met with resistance and fear because White academics have for too long enjoyed the status of 'expert' in matters concerning Indigenous peoples.

These epistemological differences between Euro-western and Indigenous worldviews imply an inherent flaw in any attempt to apply Euro-western methods to Indigenous contexts. The study of Aboriginal cultural phenomena through a non-Aboriginal epistemological lens can only yield findings that are distorted and incorrect. Gilchrist (1997), states that the application of positivist methods based on control and manipulation produces data that is contrary to and works against principles of self-determination. For example, the flexibility, community participation, ownership, and control of the research process that is integral to community-based research contradict more positivist methods. Furthermore, Gilchrist (1997) contends that there are often no research mechanisms in place that might flag Aboriginal community participants of biased research results since there are often minimal efforts to return results to the community for review and validation.

Cole and Knowles (2001) suggest that "researchers (because they usually initiate such relationships) must do all they can to challenge the hierarchical principles and practices that traditionally define the relationship between researchers and those whom they research" (p. 26). We contend that, when it comes to the study of Aboriginal cultural phenomena, these hierarchical principles must be completely rejected. Because "there is a need for the community to express and define their own needs ... and to produce and implement culturally distinct theory and methods for solving problems which result from colonization" (Gilchrist, 1997, p. 77), research should be controlled by the community from the development of the research agenda through to data collection and analysis.

Today we face the fact that Euro-western theories remain safeguarded and upheld as superior sources of knowledge and analysis in text, often at the expenses of those being studied, usually Indigenous peoples. It is ironic that whole academia bases its reputation and prestige on the study of Indigenous and marginalized peoples while, at the same time, questioning the validity of Aboriginal knowledge, research and literature because they do not reflect Euro-western research methods and writing. They feverishly resist any loss of power and authority erecting more barriers and moving the goal posts further along in an effort to exclude and isolate Aboriginal scholars.

Today, the game has changed. We Indigenous people own our own knowledge. We make up the rules. We set our own goals. We know who we are and what we need to do for our own sake. Aboriginal researchers are challenged with making transformative changes in research processes and practices. A revolution or transformation is a shift in context. As we shift our contexts, Gilchrist (1997) tells us that we

> have a common struggle – that is to decolonize ourselves and our knowledge production. We need to change research methods to end the objectification of Aboriginal communities, and to encourage action based knowledge that is useful on the road to self-determination (p. 80).

Methodologies such as community-based research and participatory action research have provided a launch pad for the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies and community participation (Sinclair, 2004). At the same time, we must recognize that it is our responsibility as Indigenous researchers to continue in the development of methods that are embedded in our own epistemological frameworks.

Possibilities and Responsibilities

Through the re-membering process, individuals are absolved of blame and the community is brought into re-connecting (Nabigon, Hagey, Webster, & MacKay, 1998, p. 114).

Indigenous researchers today carry the responsibility of understanding our history

Renewal in Aboriginal research processes and methodology requires strength and pride in self, family, community, culture, nation, identity, economy, and governance.

and applying that understanding to the development of knowledge that contributes to the liberation of our present and future. That is, "Indigenous researchers are expected, by their communities and by the institutions which employ them, to have some form of historical and critical analysis of the role of research in the indigenous world" (Smith, 1999, p. 5). Gilchrist (1997) outlines our responsibilities for conducting research:

> We cannot blame the individual for underlying racist assumptions acquired through socialization and education. However, it is not unreasonable to expect researchers, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal alike (McNab, 1986), to bring with them a thorough background on the history of colonialism and a broad based knowledge of Aboriginal cultures when engaging in research with our communities. Researchers must have a critical interpretation of colonialism and western domination embedded in research methodology. They must be prepared to engage with community representatives so that their research methodology more accurately reflects an Aboriginal point of view (p. 80).

In other words, we have a responsibility to know our historicity. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers who tackle any facet of Indigenous study accordingly must have a critical analysis of colonialism and of research methodology as an instrument of colonization. In addition, we must learn, know and live our own Indigenous epistemologies, genealogies, traditions and cultures. The knowledge set that is expected of an Aboriginal researcher far exceeds what has been expected of non-Aboriginal researchers in Aboriginal contexts. We, as Aboriginal researchers, have had to be masters of both our own worldviews and Euro-Western worldviews. Gilchrist (1997) illustrates the layers of challenges that we have to overcome towards actualizing our potential for the production and sharing of knowledge:

> When we have overcome the myths of value neutrality and objectivity; when we insist on historical contextualization and cultural acknowledgement, and when we have complete access to technical knowledge and ownership of our research; we will improve the quality and value of research concerning Aboriginal people. Only then will we fully realize the rights of Aboriginal people and construct our own reality. (p. 80).

Furthermore, Aboriginal researchers and non-Aboriginal researchers in Aboriginal communities must exercise a sharing of power in the research process. That is, community participation and community control and ownership at all levels of research process must be evident.

In short, an Aboriginal research methodology requires Aboriginal paradigms. Aboriginal research must have contexts that acknowledge both our cultural and colonial history. Such variables as knowledge of history, culture and contemporary contexts affect process and research outcomes. Research outcomes, in turn, affect policy, programming, practice and societal perception. Renewal in Aboriginal research processes and methodology requires strength and pride in self, family, community, culture, nation, identity, economy, and governance.

Locating self in research brings forward ones reality. Critical authors advocate doing so as a response to the crisis in representation where the objective neutrality of writing is no longer considered real (hooks, 1992, 1993; Mihesuah, 1998b; Monture-Angus, 1995; Monture-Okanee, 1995; Owens, 2002; Said, 1994; Smith, 1999; Tierney, 2002). These authors encourage writers to 'get real' and to see our own as an important element in the work of social science research, writing and representation (Tierney, 2002). A genre of writers both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal now choose to represent themselves in their

The idea of 're-membering' as a research method and process facilitates a full reconnection. Reconnecting is also healing to our recovery process. Recovering stories, experiences, teachings, tradition and connections is what 'remembering' facilitates.

writing and publications via storytelling, poems, or personal narrative and thus representing their own reality (Absolon & Willett, 2004; hooks, 1992).

Research is a bad word within Indigenous circles (Smith, 1999). Today we need to rename our processes for sharing and creating knowledge by using language that is congruent with our experiences and culture (Smith, 1999; Thiong'o, 1986). For example, research as a "learning circle" (Nabigon et al., 1998) is a process that generates information sharing, connections, builds capacity and seeks balance and healing. A learning circle also facilitates the remembering process and 're-membering' of individual experiences into a collective knowing and consciousness. The idea of 're-membering' as a research method and process facilitates a full reconnection. Reconnecting is also healing to our recovery process. Recovering stories, experiences, teachings, tradition and connections is what 'remembering' facilitates. Smith (2001) has identified twenty-five research projects, which exemplify Indigenous research methods.

1. Claiming
2. Testimonies
3. Story telling
4. Celebrating survival
5. Remembering
6. Indigenizing
7. Intervening
8. Revitalizing
9. Connecting
10. Reading
11. Writing
12. Representing
13. Gendering
14. Envisioning
15. Reframing
16. Restoring
17. Returning
18. Democratizing
19. Networking
20. Naming
21. Protecting
22. Creating
23. Negotiating
24. Discovering
25. Sharing

We encourage Indigenous researchers to contemplate these methods and to imagine new ways to seek out, to share, and to create knowledge. While these approaches should evidence innovative and diverse research possibilities, their frameworks must be ones that work for and with Indigenous communities.

Issues to consider in Aboriginal scholarship and writing

There are a number of ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that can present special difficulties for indigenous researchers who, in their own communities, work partially as insiders, and are often employed for this purpose, and partially as outsiders, because of their Western education or because they may work across clan, tribe, linguistic, age and gender boundaries (Smith, 1999, p. 5).

Smith (1999) writes that Aboriginal research should "be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful" (p. 9). She goes on to state that Aboriginal research methodologies are as much about process as they are about substance. "Cultural protocols, values and behaviors… [are] an integral part of methodology" (Smith, 1999, p. 15).

The role of ethical Aboriginal research is basically threefold: first, to eradicate ethnocentrism in the writing of Aboriginal history and representation; second, to continue to actively dispute the imbalanced scholarship about Aboriginal peoples; and third, to be sensitive to cultural knowledge, honor its sacredness and not publish certain cultural ceremonies or rituals (Fixico, 1998).

As we (Aboriginal scholars) put our knowledge, experiences and worldviews into written text, we must do so in connection to our communities (whoever or whatever that may be). To write in the absence of connection to community or tribal group could be perceived and interpreted as vicarious writing or writing in a vacuum. We need to talk to

At times, we need a hologram to illustrate the multiplexity, multi-dimensions and interconnection of all aspects of Aboriginal reality.

other Aboriginal people and go beyond the library (Mihesuah, 1998b). Library research and writing is not enough. We need to be coming from a context that is based on a current reality and reflect representations of that reality.

The extraction of Aboriginal knowledge is another sensitive issue. What can we put into text? Where are the boundaries? Who determines the standards? We need to be careful about what knowledge we put out there in text. Further research into these questions needs to be done. Since colonization Aboriginal resources have been extracted for the benefit of outside interests while Aboriginal peoples received little or no benefit for them. And Aboriginal people "have never been able to stop the traffic in distorted and sensationalized imagery" (Miller, 1998, p. 106). Today, Aboriginal scholarship plays a critical role in countering and critiquing such sensationalized representations.

Conclusion

There are issues in writing in academia around the actual act of writing and use of the English language. For example, Kathy was socialized by an Anishnabe woman, her mother, whose first language was Ojibway. Cam was raised by a Nehiyaw mother whose first language was Cree. Although in both cases our first language is English, we have learned to speak and write through our mothers' epistemological lenses. Therefore, English is like a second language to us perceptually. We have heard other Aboriginal people identify with similar experiences of thinking and writing. As we begin to explore the intricacies of Aboriginal languages, we can see the limitations of the English language. In written English, Aboriginal meanings can be misunderstood, misrepresented or extracted out of context. These issues we contemplate in our writing while constantly searching for terminology, language and words to formulate and reflect our worldview and experiences as

written expression.

We find encouragement in literature that reinforces other forms of writing and representation such as narrative, self-location, subjective text, poetry or storytelling. Smith's (1999) decolonizing methodologies are validating and reflect diversity. Aboriginal reality is diverse and expressions of it demand diversity. We encourage Indigenous writers to access and utilize diverse methods in order to counter the fear they experience and to foster more natural and authentic expressions of self in written text.

We are both at Ph.D. levels of learning, yet continue to struggle over issues around putting our thoughts and ideas into written text that exist for us and not for non-Aboriginal writers. We know that Aboriginal knowledge and culture is ever flowing, adaptable and fluid; our socialization has taught us that. This is the power of 'circle process' and oral traditions. At times, we need a hologram to illustrate the multiplexity, multi-dimensions and interconnection of all aspects of Aboriginal reality. We know our ideas and perspectives will change and grow. Yet writing on paper seems one-dimensional, permanent and fixed.

Finally, representations are limited by worldview, socialization, internalization and perceptual lens. It is impossible to represent all Aboriginal people in research and one should not try to do so. It's better to focus on specific areas of Aboriginal theory and research development than attempt to take broad sweeps with one brush. The images and representations we paint will reflect perspective and orientations. Thus, acceptance of our accountability for what is being written and shared is integral to recovering Aboriginal knowledge and worldviews responsibly. As we trail blaze in uncharted territories to recover our own research methods, representations and images in an increasingly diverse Aboriginal world, Deloria (1998) reminds us that "[t]here has never been an objective view of the Indian

It is true that we have struggled. Yet through our ancestors and through our elders we have survived. We are still here. And we continue to thrive and evolve. Our histories, our traditions and our culture have always been inside of us.

and there never will be" (p. 66).

Much of the work in Aboriginal/Indigenous research, we stated, calls for us to re-examine the process of seeking knowledge and knowledge creation. Undeniably, Aboriginal scholars are forging pathways and making positive contributions toward a reclaiming of our own knowledge production. It is our hope that other Indigenous scholars are validated and encouraged to continue developing and affirming methodologies and processes that strengthen Aboriginal peoples lives. We (Absolon & Willett, 2004) have suggested the following considerations in the development of Indigenous methodologies:

1) *respectful representations*: consider how you represent yourself, your research and the people, events, or phenomena you are researching;

2) *revising*: consider changing your methods, listen to the community and be flexible and open to processes that are culturally relevant;

3) *reclaiming*: consider asserting and being proud of yourself; trust in your traditions and cultural identity to inform and guide your process of sharing and creating knowledge;

4) *renaming*: consider 'Indigenizing' language by restructuring and reworking it to create meanings that are Indigenous;

5) *remembering*: consider journeying into the ancestral memory banks through ceremony, tradition and ritual in order to reconnect and remember who you are;

6) *reconnecting*: consider creating research processes that foster and maintain connections with community and with contemporary issues;

7) *recovering*: consider incorporating our histories, diversities, traditions, cultures and ancestral roots;

8) *researching*: consider innovative Indigenous methodologies, be a trailblazer, have courage, tenacity and faith.

The general discourse that is propagated in school is that Indigenous people are losing our culture, our languages and our traditions. It is true that we have struggled. Yet through our ancestors and through our elders we have survived. We are still here. And we continue to thrive and evolve. Our histories, our traditions and our culture have always been inside of us. The spirit of Indigenous people transcends time and space. And Indigenous research has a role to play in passing our histories, culture, and language to future generations. As we take control over our own knowledge sharing and creation processes, we assert our rightful place in the ongoing education of our children and of our nations. We are proud that after so many generations of oppression and genocide we are able to remember, research and reclaim our beautiful heritage.

Kinanâskomitinawaw. Miigwech.

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A Review of the Literature on the Benefits and Drawbacks of Participatory Action Research

Marlyn Bennett

Abstract

This paper reviews Participatory Action Research as a methodology. It maps the origins of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and discusses the benefits and challenges that have been identified by other researchers in utilizing PAR approaches in conducting research.

Introduction

Aboriginal people's view of researchers in general and anthropologists in particular, often extends beyond mere skepticism to contempt and distrust. In particular, the field of anthropology (and arguably others as well) is viewed by Aboriginal Peoples as being largely esoteric, irrelevant and incapable of contributing to solutions for the myriad of problems faced within Aboriginal communities (Warry 1990).

Research findings are often cloaked in academic jargon, are often unintelligible to communities and have largely been irrelevant to community needs. Academic reputations, so the argument goes, have been built on the backs of Aboriginal subjects and at the political and economic expense of Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities are now advocating research that is more collaborative and meaningful to their communities.

Awareness concerning the potential value of research varies enormously between Aboriginal communities (Warry 1990). Warry speculates that many communities have neither the inclination,

nor the local expertise, to generate research agendas, or standards for local research (64). This is particularly true in the north, where, despite licensing by the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, there still is, each summer, a massive influx of natural and social scientists. Inuit community inquiry groups often lack the time or the expertise to gauge the potential usefulness of the research or are unable to generate their own research agendas. Warry (1990) states that in contrasting the North with the South, a number of southern First Nations communities routinely enter into contractual relationships before allowing researchers to enter their communities. Aboriginal leaders clearly recognize that the information needs of their communities are obvious, but they denounce the monopolistic control of academia over the research process. Specifically, when the analysis and interpretation of research findings must take account of Indigenous science, which is based on experiential and humanistic interpretation, rather than academic needs (Colorado 1998, Warry 1990, and Stevenson, no date). In the quest to learn more about Indigenous Peoples and cultures, the resulting process and product of research has become a

Participatory Action Research is seen as a flexible method that complements the ideals held by many academic researchers in the various fields of anthropology, social sciences, history, theology, economics, philosophy, social work, community and economic development.

commodity – it can be exchanged with universities, colleges, and publishers for a host of values, including advanced degrees, professional reputation, career mobility and book revenues (Richer 1988). Indigenous Peoples themselves have rarely capitalized on the commodification of their own cultural background and knowledge. When information appropriated by researchers from Indigenous sources becomes a commodity for private ends, it inherently becomes a process of alienation (Richer 1988) and ultimately, oppressive (Stevenson, no date).

Today, many Aboriginal communities will not indulge research that benefits only the researcher (Richer 1988). Indigenous Peoples believe they have been "researched to death" and will no longer tolerate colonial intrusion by researchers (Smith 1999; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Richer 1988; and Flaherty, no date). Indigenous Peoples and communities are becoming more aggressive and in some areas, particularly now in the Northwest Territories and in Nunavut, researchers are required to apply for a license in order to conduct research in the North (Stevenson, no date; and Ward, 1996). These new research measures make it clear that Indigenous peoples now increasingly seek equal relationship in the research process and will no longer accept researchers who do not respect and honour that equality.

Research, whether it is formal or informal, should not perpetuate the status quo. Non-intrusive methods that are most conducive to the needs of the community should be advocated for which assists in the research process but at the same time is mindful not to continue to re-colonize participants in the process. Research methods chosen must include a process whereby members of the communities are given an opportunity to voice their opinions and be involved (but not superficially) in the research process throughout the life of any proposed project (St. Denis 1992). Participatory Action Research or PAR has been identified as

one such method that is most conducive to doing research with Aboriginal peoples and communities. Participatory Action Research is seen as a flexible method that complements the ideals held by many academic researchers in the various fields of anthropology, social sciences, history, theology, economics, philosophy, social work, community and economic development (Fals-Borda 1992, Frideres 1992, Gayfer 1992, Reimer 1994, Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). This paper provides a generic overview of the origins of Participatory Action Research and in doing so also looks at the various definitions as well as discusses some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with this research approach.

Origins of Participatory Action Research

There has long been a growing interest in alternative research paradigms. The search for new alternatives came from professionally trained researchers who found their paradigms inadequate to answer all the questions they had (Tandon 1981). With the development of alternative research paradigms, common folk (such as the poor, illiterate, and rural people) began to initiate many successful development efforts (Tandon 1981). Many of these alternative initiatives led to the creation of what would later be called "Participatory Action Research." The term "Participatory Action Research " (hereafter referred to as PAR) is an umbrella term that includes several traditions of theory and practice. Definitions vary according to traditions and users (Brown 1993). St. Denis (1992) notes that often authors coin their own terms to describe their methods and methodologies, even though they are basically similar to one another. Other terms that are used in the literature to describe PAR include participatory research, action research, praxis research, participatory inquiry, collaborative inquiry, action inquiry, and cooperative inquiry (Whyte 1991).

The origins of Participatory Action Research emerged out of development projects by oppressed people in Third World countries and entered English-language awareness during the 1970s. Much of Participatory Action Research was driven by humanistic urges to assist the "victims of oligarchies" and their "development" policies. One of the earliest influences on Participatory Action Research approaches came from the Brazilian adult educator, Paula Freire. Freire is well know for his support of the liberation struggles of colonized peoples in the rural areas of Latin America. Freire's ideas have in turn influenced many generations of adult educators in many parts of the world.

According to two early architects of PAR (Tandon 1981 and Hall 1975), two interrelated forces became instrumental in the emergence of PAR:

1. Dominant research paradigms were seen as being insufficient and oppressive; and

2. Dominant research paradigms exploited a large majority of people in underdeveloped countries.

Classical or dominant research paradigms are premised upon notions of neutrality and objectivity. In the dominant paradigms' ongoing exploitation, it assigned the title of "professional expertise" to researchers, which implies that only professionally trained individuals can undertake to do research. Neutrality and objectivity became the hallmark of the research process. According to these paradigms, only professionally trained persons have the capacity to be neutral and objective (Tandon 1981, Hall 1975). Those considered to be "professionally trained" usually come from sectors of society that "have it all" (Tandon 1981: 21). All of these reasons (and many others too numerous to mention) precipitated the need for finding an alternative research method that would replace the exploitative elements of the dominant research paradigms. It had to provide an avenue for those people traditionally underrepresented in society the opportunity to gain access to knowledge and action for improving their situations (Tandon 1981, Almeida, et al 1983).

The origins of PAR emerged out of development projects by oppressed people in Third World countries and entered English-language awareness during the 1970s (Brown and Tandon 1983, Gayfer 1992, Frideres 1992, and Fals-Borda 1992). Much of PAR was driven by humanistic urges to assist the "victims of oligarchies" and their "development" policies (Fals-Borda 1992). One of the earliest influences on PAR approaches came from the Brazilian adult educator, Paula Freire. Freire is well know for his

support of the liberation struggles of colonized peoples in the rural areas of Latin America (Brown and Tandon 1983, Jackson, et al 1981, Hall 1981, Frideres 1992, Gayfer 1992, Cornwall and Jewkes 1995, and Cain 1977). Freire's ideas have in turn influenced many generations of adult educators in many parts of the world. It is rare to read a book, article or thesis on literature, population, education or social transformation that does not acknowledge Friere, directly or indirectly (Gayfer 1992: 19). Budd Hall (1981) noted that

> Freire was the first to articulate the connection between learning and political transformation and to validate that the work of socially aware educators and others were not marginal, but a key to transformation (Gayfer 1992: 19).

Friere's approach to adult education engaged individuals in critical analysis and organized action to improve their dismal situations (Brown and Tandon 1983). His work affirmed that peoples' own knowledge is valuable to community development and the research process (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

Freire first came to the attention of English readers in 1969 through the Harvard University (Heaney 1993). Today, Freire's writings are commonly included in required bibliographies of graduate programs in adult education. His books, once banned in his native Brazil, are now used to guide the training of those in the Brazilian military and local universities (Heaney 1993). Although PAR came later and developed independently of Freire, today Freire would be considered one of PARs staunchest supporters (Gayfer 1992).

At first PAR was either ignored or roundly condemned by other researchers the world over (Heaney 1993, Gayfer 1992). But by the 1970s and early 1980s, PAR not only became an interesting topic of discussion, it also quickly became the subject of academic discourse in graduate programs and a favorite topic at respectable conferences around the

The shift of Participatory Action Research into North America created opportunities to work with traditionally disadvantaged peoples and social movements, such as Latin American immigrants and First Nations Councils. Participatory Action Research has addressed women's issues as well as the issues of peoples with disabilities. Participatory Action Research has also served as a tool of the Aboriginal movement in Canada, particularly with concerns surrounding health, social and economic issues.

world (Heaney 1993). One university even established a "center" for participatory action research (Gayfer 1992). A major advocate of PAR since 1975 has been the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) (Frideres 1992). ICAE is an international network of participatory researchers, which held the first international forum on participatory research in Yugoslavia in April 1980 (Gayfer 1981). PAR as an alternative or collective approach to social investigation was introduced to readers in 1975 issues of Convergence (Vol. 8, No. 2). In this issue, Budd Hall called for assistance to develop this methodology, which brought forward both an enthusiastic international response as well as blasts of hostility and criticism from then elite and dominant professional circles (Hall 1981, Gayfer 1992). These responses gave rise to the development of a participatory network during 1977 and 1978 as a program of ICAE. This partnership with ICAE came about because it appeared that PAR, with its emphasis on "people as experts," shared a common premise with adult education (Hall 1981). According to Gayfer (1981), who was the editor of Convergence at the time, and Hall (1981), this network was comprised of autonomous centers from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America, with increased interest shown by educators in the Caribbean and Arab regions. Convergence provided an update on PAR in the 1981 edition (Vol. 14, No. 3) and continues to publish numerous articles on PAR discourse (Gayfer 1992).

Although PAR had its origins in Third World countries, Third World countries are not the only countries where PAR methodology is being conducted. By the late 70s, participatory research work was well underway throughout the world. Subsequent projects brought participatory research from the developing countries to urban and rural North America and to various disciplines, including public health, sociology, economics, anthropology, history, community development

initiatives, theology, philosophy and social work (Fals-Borda 1992, Frideres 1992, Reimer 1994, and Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). This awareness increased the realization of knowledge as power, an idea first espoused by Paulo Freire in his major publication Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (Gayfer 1992, and Frideres 1992).

The shift of PAR into North America created opportunities to work with traditionally disadvantaged peoples and social movements, such as Latin American immigrants and First Nations Councils (Hall 1993). PAR has addressed women's issues (Hall 1981, Maguire 1987, Gayfer 1992, Barnsely and Ellis 1992) as well as the issues of peoples with disabilities (Barnsley and Ellis 1992). PAR has also served as a tool of the Aboriginal movement in Canada, particularly with concerns surrounding health, social and economic issues (Jackson, et al 1982).

In Canadian social work, Brant-Castellano (1986) noted its usefulness in resolving the widespread crisis experienced by Aboriginal families and communities in relation to the reform of Aboriginal Child welfare during the early 1980s. According to Brant-Castellano, PAR was initiated because the surrounding society pre-empted the community's right to work out their own solutions respecting family matters and, in attempting to help, compounded their problems (52). With the help of PAR, a healing process began that was initiated by Aboriginal Peoples, and with the determination that their own knowledge would never again be overridden by outside expertise.

Activist researchers in the Tansanian Bureau of Resource Allocation and Land Use Planning Project are considered, in the literature available, to be the first to use the term "participatory research" (Gayfer 1992). This term was used to describe an experimental pilot project survey with 46 villages in Tanzania, as part of the self-reliance campaign on village development. Their approach scoffed at the social

Many researchers have described PAR as being an integrated approach to research that involves the participation of community members. Maguire, in particular, described Participatory Action Research as an alternative style of research, which uses a three-part process of social investigation, education and action to share in the creation of social knowledge with oppressed people.

science research myth of objectivity and neutrality as well as the sanctity of survey methods with a simple principle:

> Villagers themselves as active participants in a research plan that would ultimately motivate them to evaluate their own strengths and needs for the development of their villages (Gayfer 1992: 20).

The Tanzanian experience foreshadowed some basic tenets of PAR:

> … faith in the capacity of ordinary people to learn, to name their reality, to become their own researchers in seeking answers to the questions of their daily lives and survival; the inquiry as a collective and educative process; participation in agenda-setting, data collection and analyses; and control over outcomes (Gayfer 1992: 20-21).

Defining Participatory Action Research

No one owns PAR nor is a step-by-step "cook book of recipes" for doing PAR available (Gayfer 1981 and Hall 1975). Because there are no hard and fast rules respecting how PAR should be implemented, it is a process easily adaptable to many researchers and research situations. Some of the common values underlying PAR, as identified by Hall (cited in Ryan and Robinson 1990 and Cain 1977) include:

1. The problem originates in the community itself and the problem is defined, analyzed and solved by the community;

2. The ultimate goal of research is the radical transformation of social reality and the improvement of lives of the people involved. The beneficiaries of the research are the members of the community itself [rather than researchers];

3. Participatory research involves the full and active participation of the community in the entire research process [from beginning to end];

4. Participatory research involves a whole range of powerless groups of people: the exploited, the poor, the oppressed, the marginal, [including Aboriginal peoples], etc.;

5. The process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in the people of their own resources and mobilize them for self-reliant development;

6. It is a scientific method of research in that the participation of the community in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality; and

7. The researcher is a committed participant and learner in the process of research, which can lead to militancy on his/her part, rather than detachment (Ryan and Robinson 1990, Cain 1977: 11-12).

Many researchers (Hoare et al 1993, Ryan and Robinson 1990, Simonson and Bushaw 1993, Reardon et al 1993 and Lammerick 1994) have described PAR as being an integrated approach to research that involves the participation of community members. Maguire (1987), in particular, described PAR as an alternative style of research, which uses a three-part process of social investigation, education and action to share in the creation of social knowledge with oppressed people. In more detail, Maguire described PAR as a method of social investigation of problems, involving the participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and solving. It is an educational process for the researcher as well as the participants, who analyze the structural causes of named problems through collective discussion and interaction. Maguire recognized that PAR is a way for researchers and oppressed peoples to joint in solidarity to take collective action, from both a short and long term basis, toward radical social change. Maguire notes that participatory research aims at three types of change:

- Development of critical consciousness of both researcher and participants;

Participatory Action Research is often illustrated in the literature as involving the full and active participation of the community in the entire process from start to finish.

- Improvement in the lives of those involved in the research process; and

- Transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationship (29).

Barnsley and Ellis (1992) in their publication *Research for Change: Participatory Action Research for Community Groups*, defined PAR as being a "community directed process of collecting and analyzing information on an issue or situation for the purposes of taking action and making change" (90). A community directed approach means that community members assist the researcher while at the same time empower themselves in the ongoing investigation of the social reality of their community. PAR helps the participants build local skills and the capacity to increase their community's autonomy (Maguire 1987, St. Denis 1992 and Hoare et al 1993).

PAR is often illustrated in the literature as involving the full and active participation of the community in the entire process from start to finish (Maguire 1987, Barnsley and Ellis 1992, and Hoare et al 1993, Simonson et al 1993 and Lammerick 1994). Fals-Borda characterizes PAR as:

> … part of social activism, with an ideological and spiritual commitment to promote people's (collective) praxis. That informally or formally, the life of everybody, as part of the PAR research is a kind of praxis (1992: 15).

Community members have a role to play in setting the agenda of enquiry; they also participate in the data collection and the analysis of documentation generated over the course of the research and more importantly, participants have more control over the use and outcome of the whole research process. In a nutshell, PAR means doing research "with" rather than "on" people (Maguire 1987).

At least five fields of practice have made contributions to PAR approaches: (1) action research in organizations; (2) participatory research in community development; (3) action research in

schools; (4) farmer participatory research and technology generation; and (5) participatory evaluation. According to the literature review of PAR by Deshler and Ewert (1995) PAR has also been used in conjunction with architecture and community planning, landscape ecology design, and environmental and land use planning. The fields of practice that have contributed to PAR are discussed briefly below as an introduction.

Action research in organizations is extensively used in the field of organizational behavior and organizational development in industry and business organizations by management embracing human resource theories, specifically associated with the socio-technical systems perspective that has focused on the fit between technical and social systems (Deshler and Ewert 1995). This tradition has it roots in Latin America and was strongly influenced by concepts such as critical thinking, critical consciousness, conscientization, and empowerment by Paulo Freire in the late 1960s (Deshler and Ewert 1995). Among the major authors representing this tradition are David Brown (1992), Ken Readon, Welsh, Kreiswirth and Forrester (1993) and William Foot Whyte (1992).

Participatory Research in Community Development is considered to be a process of combining education, research and collective action on the part of oppressed groups working with popular educators and community organizers. The knowledge that is generated is intended to help solve practical problems within a community and, ultimately, contribute to a fairer and more just society. Its primary purpose is to encourage the poor and oppressed and those that work with them to generate and control their own knowledge. It assumes that knowledge generates power and that people's knowledge is central to social change (Deshler and Ewert 1995). Authors that represent participatory research in community development include: Orlando Fals-Borda (1992), Budd Hall (1975,

While conventional research strategies have been identified as being inadequate, researchers agree that participatory action research, while preferable, is not a simple alternative.

1981), McCall (1981), Rajesh Tandon (1981), Brown and Tandon (1983), Patricia Maguire (1987), Readon et al (1993) and Barnsley and Ellis (1992).

Action Research in Schools advocates that teachers should control the educational research agenda and participates in conducting inquiries to test the worth of educational knowledge (Deshler and Ewert 1995). Some of the authors identified with action research in schools include Simonson and Bishaw (1993) and Husen (1988).

Farmer Participatory Research and Technology Generation are also known as "participatory technology development." Mainly agricultural researchers and other instrumental rural development workers developed this approach gradually as an alternative to the traditional "transfer of technology" or "top-down" approach to agricultural research and extension. It emerged from farming systems research and emphasizes the participation of farmers in technology generation, testing, and evaluation to increase or promote sustainable agricultural production and natural resource management (Deshler and Ewert 1995). Another form within this tradition is "participatory rural appraisal," a process that involves villages in a situation analysis that can lead to further participatory documentation of local knowledge and agriculture and natural management experiments. The acknowledgement of the value and importance of Indigenous or local knowledge accompanied the formulation of participatory technology generation (Deshler and Ewert 1995). Major authors associated with this approach include Schensul (1987) and Cornwal and Jewkes (1995).

Lastly, Participatory Evaluation as described by Deshler and Ewert (1995) emerging out of responses to concerns that program evaluations were being under-utilized and that participation on the part of stakeholders would increase their use. Reflection on the relationship of program evaluation practice as a way of serving the public's interest led to participatory evaluation that could serve democratic ideals of social justice and equity. A similar recognition occurred in the evaluation of international programs of community health, rural development, literacy, agriculture, and natural resource management that involving people who are on the receiving end of development in evaluations is likely to assure that most efficient allocation of scarce resources and early identification of ineffective or wasteful use of those resources. This tradition emphasizes that people on the receiving end are ultimately the best judges of whether or not benefits have been produced. Among the major authors representing this approach are Norman Uphoff (1992) and Gail Reimer (1994).

The Challenges of PAR

While participatory methodologies seem to be all the rage these days, many researchers (Hall 1981, Conchelos and Kassam 1981, Pigozzi 1982, Simonson et al 1993, and Cornwall and Jewkes 1995) have expounded upon some of the possible negative elements and pitfalls associated with participatory action research. While conventional research strategies have been identified as being inadequate, researchers (in particular Tandon 1975, Hall 1981, Conchelos and Kassam 1981, St. Denis 1992, Reimer 194, and Cornwall and Jewkes 1995) agree that participatory action research, while preferable, is not a simple alternative.

Some academics (most notably Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) have noted that when engaged in participatory action research that "working with local people is far from easy" (1673). Some of the factors that make it difficult for researchers to conduct participatory research include the fact that not everyone within the community will want to partake in participatory research. Add to this the fact that local people may be skeptical about the perceived benefits of the research and as such, may not want to invest their time

Researchers who utilize participatory methods must be very careful to recognize that no two groups of peoples or communities are ever homogenous. Within groups and/or communities, there exists a multitude of interrelated axes of differences, including wealth, gender, age, religion, health, ethnicity and power

and energy into any research project. In relation to this, Cornwall and Jewkes note that community participation often carries more significance for outsiders than it does for those within the community. Even if there is interest by community members in the research project, there may be the added barriers of time as participation in any research related activity is time consuming. Most individuals, especially those living within oppressed economies, are too busy trying to secure the basic necessities of life to participate in research activities (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

Cornwall and Jewkes (quoting Madan 1987) remind researchers that participating communities are "made" rather than "born." Further, that involvement by the community members may not always be continuous or predictable. Participants can experience task exhaustion and the composition of the research group(s) can fluctuate over time. Researchers must be careful to tread softly between the need to generate sufficient interest for the research project and at the same time avoid raising false hopes within the community. They also suggest that the limitations of the research should be honestly identified at the outset so that the establishment of trust within the community is not compromised. Trust can be compromised if participation leads to frustration for participants if they think benefits might be available through participation but then find that knowledge about benefits in no way translates into or guarantees access to benefits (Pigozzi 1982). St. Denis (1992) warns that if people do not understand the research being conducted and/or do not have the opportunity to negotiate a direction for the research to take; they will be reluctant to participate in the research. She further postulates that community people are not academics, and they will not take seriously or get involved in a research project that they do not understand. Even the concept of research as something that can benefit the community, in of itself may be an alien concept to the community (St. Denis 1992).

Hall (1981) recognized early that there are some dangers for participants under participatory action research. Hall noted that social science researchers often gravitate toward participatory research as a way to get people to agree to a position, an action, or a policy, which others (e.g. social workers, adult educators, etc.) feel is important to their purposes. These purposes are not necessarily the same purposes of the participants or communities. In this way PAR can be used as an effective and manipulative "tool" for getting the predominant views of the state into the heart and minds of those that oppose the predominant views (Hall 1981, St. Denis 1992). A good example of such an approach is the consultation approach the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada endorsed through the much-anticipated revision of the *Indian Act* by Minister Nault's promotion of the First Nations Governance Act. In such instances, PAR is used as a coercive instrument, which governments can use to subtly brainwash those who resist the dominant position.

Researchers who utilize participatory methods must be very careful to recognize that no two groups of peoples or communities are ever homogenous. Within groups and/or communities, there exists a multitude of interrelated axes of differences, including wealth, gender, age, religion, health, ethnicity and power (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). Researchers as a result, must be cognizant of competing, contested and changing versions of what constitutes "community needs" and/or "values." Added to this is the need to be aware that different definitions will emerge depending upon which interest group is consulted and accordingly to the way in which these groups or communities interpret the researchers' intentions (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

In utilizing PAR methodologies, researchers can be caught in a catch-22 situation depending upon whom they align themselves with upon initial contact with communities and/or groups. Research has

Participatory action research can also bring other unintended negative consequences to those who participate. Participants may become alienated from their community by virtue of their association with the research project. For instance, a heightened awareness by a marginal group of its oppression can increase unhappiness

been noted to be more easily facilitated if it is organized through the medium of dominant stakeholders or "leaders," who are often most able to mobilize resources, interest and articulate concerns about the research project. However, the problem with utilizing these individuals may mean, "inviting manipulation of the research according to the agendas of the powerful" (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995: 1673). On the other hand, working outside the power structures can weaken both the potential impact of the project at a wider level, as well as invite continued marginalization of the people and goals of the project (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

Participatory action research can also bring other unintended negative consequences to those who participate. Participants may become alienated from their community by virtue of their association with the research project. For instance, a heightened awareness by a marginal group of its oppression can increase unhappiness (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). In the extreme opposite, participants might come to view themselves as, or align themselves with, the elite. Some projects have resulted in the creation of a participating elite among the local people. That is, participants come to believe that his or her newly gained skills or knowledge somehow make them superior to non-participating members within their communities (Pigozzi 1982). Pigozzi noted that in one participatory situation, those participating in the research project "considered non-participants as stupid, at best" (11). Researchers must be conscious of these kinds of attitudes that which, when cultivated under the participatory process, can foster factionalism within a community.

Factionalism sometimes exists irrespective of the introduction of participatory research activities. For instance, Pigozzi (1982) pointed out that within some participatory relationships (especially in Third World countries), there already exist class structures (whether they

be real or perceived) which researchers should be aware of. Researchers must be aware of the local constraints that enable class systems to exist. And further, that the participatory process can be affected by such factors as class tensions, factionalism and ethnicity, which can have direct impact upon participatory research. In acknowledging that these factors have relevance, researchers might benefit from understanding how these factors might be affected by project activities and vice versa (10). To bring home this point, Pigozzi highlighted a story about rickshaw pullers and how participation contributed to factionalism rather than eradicating unfair structures that previously existed:

Within the cooperative program of the Comilla Project rickshaw pullers were one of the disadvantaged groups. Each puller rented a rickshaw at a high daily rate, which he paid to the owner from his daily earnings. A group of pullers asked help in forming a cooperative. Each contributed a portion of daily earnings to the cooperative so that each member could eventually own a rickshaw. It worked. Within the relatively short period of time, each puller had become his own master through following simple cooperative principles (10).

As successful as this story sounds, Pigozzi states that it failed to captivate the negative outcomes that resulted from this participatory endeavor. The rickshaw pullers, becoming themselves owners, ended up repeating the very same exploitative cycle all over again. By hiring out their newly acquired rickshaws at high rates to other pullers less fortunate than themselves, they perpetuated the same exploitative mentality (Pigozzi 1982: 10). Pigozzi stresses that it is important researchers recognize what participatory research and the education associated with it can do to participants and what its limitations are (11).

There are other parties that have direct involvement in participatory activities. The role of these third parties has remained silent in most of the literature

*Funders of research
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part in wielding influence
over the research project
and process. For instance,
Hall noted influence can
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funding policies to expand
procedures that regulate
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society and he cites
two examples such as
immigrants and Aboriginal
Peoples. Intervention and
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funded by government
sources.*

on participatory action research. However, some scholars (most notably Hall 1981, Conchelos and Kassam 1981, and Cornwall and Jewkes 1995) have identified their concerns with the role of third parties in participatory action research. Third parties can include funding and sponsoring agencies as well as government officials and its bureaucracy. Funders of research projects can play a major part in wielding influence over the research project and process. For instance, Hall (1981) noted influence can be exercised by utilizing funding policies to expand procedures that regulate certain groups within society and he cites two examples such as immigrants and Aboriginal Peoples. Intervention and influence is especially predominant in situations where the research is funded by government sources. In such situations, the researcher is rarely given complete discretion to carry out research in the manner he or she sees fit. The third party may intervene in a variety of ways from demanding practical results of a certain sort at a certain time or demand project documentation at awkward moments and points of time during the life of the research project. Thus, the results generated by the research can ultimately run the risk of becoming a programmed product of the third party or sponsoring agency rather than being owned by the researcher and the participants of the research project (Conchelos and Kassam 1981).

It is important to note that the participatory process has political dimensions attached to it as well. Participation, especially when it is linked to decision-making, is political because change through participation often demands change in the distribution of power (Pigozzi 1982). Under such circumstances, Pigozzi elucidated that:

> Those who are threatened by a redistribution of power have, in their own best interest, responded in predictable ways. Usually they try to prevent loss of power (or resource control) by making it difficult to

operate or continue research or development projects that facilitate the confrontation of power structures by the disadvantaged (12).

Thus, researchers who advocate participatory methods must be cognizant and aware that the response of the rich and/or powerful might not always be one of accommodation to the project, the researcher, or the participants in the project. Again, Pigozzi cites an extreme example of non-accommodation by the local elite to attempts by the powerless to lessen the gap between the rich and the powerless. In this example, 15 pheasant participants were killed when a project-meeting center was burned down. The fire was attributed to a coalition of local elites who allegedly were threatened by the power that the cooperating participants might be able to wield (13). Pigozzi concludes that participatory projects that are political by virtue of their goals may run into difficulties imposed from the outside during implementation. However, Pigozzi also states that participatory projects need not always have such dire effects to be problematic. He states that if participation is supposed to enhance benefits in some way, then the very absence of outcomes and benefits can be considered to be a negative result of participation (13).

It is primarily through the participatory venue that researchers have been provided with insights and views that they ordinarily would not have access to or know about. One of the earliest proponents of PAR (Budd Hall) had this to say about participatory action research:

It would be an error to assume that naive or uncontrolled use of participatory research results in strengthening the power of the powerless, for experience has shown that power [under PAR methods] can easily accrue in those already in control (15).

As a result, researchers have gained more power for themselves within the academic status quo and this has fed ideological control by giving more power

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to the institutions that researchers do research for (Hall 1981: 15). Moreover, most academic researchers are ill prepared to do participatory research simply because they have been taught to consider themselves and Western scientific knowledge as superior (Colorado 1988, and Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). Within this milieu, research is given artificial neutrality. Training instills in researchers notions of "objectivity" and the "purity" of science that numbs them to the political realities of life in the real world of those they conduct research on and/or with (Colorado 1988; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). On the other hand, it has also been highlighted by some academics (e.g. Cornwall and Jewkes 1995) that the participants drawn from local communities, like academics, carry their own biases, prejudices and beliefs into participatory research. While their local knowledge and connectedness into local networks can enhance communication and commitment, in some contexts it may be inappropriate to engage local people in certain types of participatory research projects. Cornwall and Jewkes highlighted an example of research being done in Uganda on HIV/AIDS, where it was necessary to employ non-local individuals to collect sensitive data so as not to further stigmatize the local people who had contracted HIV/AIDS (1674). In this project, it was necessary to shelter the privacy of these people from the community members who did not have the HIV/AIDS virus/disease.

Another disadvantage highlighted by Reimer (1994) as to community impressions of PAR, relate to the inherent relationship outside researchers have with local individuals that are hired to assist in the research process. Individuals that are hired under the rubric of "co-researcher" may have ambivalent feelings about their role in the research process. He or she may know that his or her role encompasses more than just interpreting for the principle researcher. However, to other community members, he or she may not be seen as

being a "researcher" simply because he or she has not received the formal education or training to become a "researcher." As a result, those community members who have not yet had direct participation in the research project will see these individuals as merely "helpers" rather than legitimate "co-researchers." Reimer points out that the history of colonialism within the research enterprise and the relationship of research dynamics is impossible to eradicate. Much work remains to be done to "decolonize" and "de-mystify" social science research being done particularly in Aboriginal communities (Reimer 1994).

Conclusion

This piece has attempted to define PAR and map its origins. It has outlined advantages and disadvantages as identified in the prevailing literature that have evaluated PAR as a primary research method. As highlighted there are benefits coupled with weaknesses in choosing PAR as a method of doing research. PAR attempts to undo the monopoly over knowledge production by universities (Hall 1999) and within the hands of Aboriginal peoples, in particular, it can be used as a powerful tool among many methods that empower and reflect ways of knowing, being and doing that are culturally endemic to the diverse Aboriginal societies in Canada. This article merely offers readers and Aboriginal communities as well as researchers an opportunity to choose for themselves whether the advantages as outlined above outweigh the disadvantages or vice versa. While PAR as a research method has been around for close to 35 years, its use in the Aboriginal context of research is still relatively uncultivated however there are many research initiatives undertaken by Aboriginal communities and researchers which have since taken advantage of this powerful approach.

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Culturally Sensitive Approaches to Research on Child Development and Family Practices in First Peoples Communities

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Abstract

This paper focuses on highlighting some of the concerns that need to be addressed in conducting psychological research with First Peoples children and families. The extensive literature on healthy child development and family practices in Caucasian families is contrasted with the limited perspective on First Peoples families. We suggest that this is, in part, due to an unnecessary focus on problem behaviours of children from First Peoples communities. We contend that it is imperative for developmental psychologists to adopt a new perspective, by acknowledging the strengths and competencies of First Peoples families, and using more culturally-sensitive approaches to working with First Peoples.

Introduction

In traditional psychological models of socialization, parents are given the primary responsibility for encouraging their children to adopt the values of society and facilitating their children's optimal social and emotional development (Grusec & Ungerer, 2003). A great deal of research has examined the familial influences on children's successful integration into broader social and academic spheres, but the vast majority of this research has been conducted by academics trained in Western scientific traditions and working with Anglophone Caucasian families. Recently, developmental psychologists have become increasingly interested in studying family relationships and children's development of competence in non-majority cultures, although little of this research has been done with families from Canada's First Peoples. The lack of research on the relations between parenting and children's competence in the First Peoples is not simply due to a lack of research on First Peoples families in general. Indeed there are many published studies, but this literature is disproportionately focused on children's development of *problems*. Perhaps this bias has been motivated by a legitimate concern and desire to help those children and families experiencing distress. Some First Peoples children and youth do have serious mental health problems, and obtaining access to appropriate services for those children is a serious issue. However,

The lack of research on effective socialization in First Peoples families has contributed to an absence of information on the normative healthy development of First Peoples children.

the reality is that, like children and youth in the majority culture, most children and youths from First Peoples communities *do not* have psychosocial problems that limit their abilities or competence (Gotoweic & Beiser, 1993; MacMillan, Welsh, Jamieson, Crawford, & Boyle, 2000). Why, then, have developmental psychologists overlooked this fact and failed to examine the strengths of First Peoples families that support their children's competent development?

We contend that one reason why this knowledge gap has arisen is from ill-guided attempts to import the standard research procedures of Western social science disciplines, without regard for the cultural models and practices guiding communication and socialization in First Peoples communities. The lack of research on effective socialization in First Peoples families has contributed to an absence of information on the normative healthy development of First Peoples children. The success of Western-based approaches to treatment may be hampered by this limited understanding of cultural differences. By identifying positive and adaptive aspects of socialization, we will have a more accurate and complete understanding of the experiences of First Peoples families, and this information can be used to support the minority of First Peoples families in which children do have problems. Therefore, the goals of this paper are to instill readers with an awareness of culturally-sensitive approaches to research with First Peoples, and to underscore the importance of examining strengths of First Peoples families, instead of overlooking them.

Healthy Psychosocial Development: Effective Parenting for Positive Growth

Competence is generally used to describe children's healthy psychosocial development. Competence is demonstrated in a number of ways by children (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Saarni, 1999).

Competent children feel good about themselves, adjust well to new situations and challenges, are typically happy, value their friendships and involvement with peers, and are successful in their scholastic endeavours. They express their emotions and desires in socially acceptable ways, rather than becoming frustrated or confrontational. They are empathic and demonstrate good problem-solving skills with their peers, attempting to find prosocial solutions to disagreements rather than resorting to aggression.

Caregivers, and more specifically parents, have most often been identified as having the greatest influence on children's competent psychosocial development. The foundations of competent development are established in the caregiver's relationship with her or his infant (e.g., Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Effective parenting of infants is characterized as sensitive to the needs of infants and responsive to infants' cues (Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999). In other words, these parents recognize what their infants' needs are, when their infants' require their care, and how to best provide this care to their infants (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Main & Solomon, 1990). This approach to infant care bestows infants with a secure attachment to their parents, such that infants feel safe, supported, and prepared to learn about the world.

Although secure attachment has been considered a cornerstone of the subsequent development of social and emotional competence, it is not sufficient, nor does it represent the sole contribution of parents. A variety of features of child-rearing of preschoolers, school-aged children and youth have been identified as supporting healthy psychological functioning. Some of the most frequently studied aspects of child-rearing include *limit-setting*: establishing rules and guidelines for children's behaviour; *modeling*: engaging in the kinds of behaviours parents want to encourage in their children; *reasoning*: explaining why rules are in place,

An authoritative style of child-rearing, which is both demanding (rules, limits, and expectations) and responsive (warmth, negotiation and reasoning) is typically associated with children's healthy psychosocial development and competence.

behaviours are necessary, and what the consequences of children's actions are; *negotiating*: being flexible and allowing children to contribute to decisions; *showing warmth*: being affectionate and caring; and *monitoring*: being aware of a child's where-abouts, activities, and friendships.

Parents who engage in limit-setting have children who engage in more prosocial behaviours with others (Cowan, Cowan, Schulz, & Heming, 1994) and perform better in school (Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Paulson, 1994). Parental limit-setting also is linked to lower aggression and delinquency (Denham, Workman, Cole, Weissbrod, Kendziora, & Zahn-Waxler, 2000), and anxiety and depression (Mattanah, 2001) in children. Parents who model caring and concerned behaviour toward others (e.g., are helpful and giving) have children who are more likely to react similarly when they see others in distress (Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1984). Parents who use reasoning and negotiation when interacting and disciplining their children have children who demonstrate competent methods of self-expression (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990). Parental warmth is associated with greater prosocial behaviour and greater academic competence (MacDonald, 1992; Paulson, 1994). Parents who are effective at monitoring have children who are less antisocial, oppositional, and likely to use alcohol or drugs (Dishion & Patterson, 1997; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992).

Conversely, there are also a range of child-rearing behaviours that are considered less adaptive, as they are associated with undesirable outcomes in children and youth. For instance, a consistent finding across the literature is that parents' use of *corporal punishment*, including slapping, spanking, and more severe physical punishments, is associated with aggression, delinquency, depression, and other mental health problems (MacMillan et al., 1999; Strauss & Donnelley, 1994). Other aspects of

child-care may become maladaptive if they are used inappropriately or excessively. For example, although all parents need to shield their children from danger, parents who are *over-protective* and unnecessarily restrict their children's experiences tend to foster greater anxiety, shyness and dependence in their children (Barber & Harmon, 2002; McShane, 2003; Rubin, Burgess, & Hastings, 2002).

Of course, different parenting behaviours do not get used in isolation from each other. Children experience most of these kinds of child-care behaviours to varying degrees. Many researchers look at the pattern of parents' use of varying behaviours in order to characterize parents' general or overall styles of raising their children (Baumrind, 1971). These styles are often described as varying along two key underlying dimensions: *demandingness* and *responsiveness* (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). An *authoritative* style of child-rearing, which is both demanding (rules, limits, and expectations) and responsive (warmth, negotiation and reasoning) is typically associated with children's healthy psychosocial development and competence. This has been shown in children's higher self-esteem, social and moral maturity, caring and helpfulness toward others, involvement in school learning, academic achievement and educational attainment (e.g., Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, Usher, & Bridges, 2000; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Conversely, children who have psychosocial problems or lower levels of competence most often are raised by parents who use non-authoritative styles of child-rearing. These styles include authoritarian (demanding but not responsive), permissive (responsive but not demanding), and neglectful or uninvolved (neither demanding nor responsive).

First Peoples Families: Limited Perspective on Psychosocial

First Peoples and Caucasian parents hold many of the same values with respect to the psychosocial outcomes they seek to foster in their children. These include family connection, autonomy, friendships, maturity, cooperation, and responsibility. But there are also some differences in values.

Development

The above detailed theories and research have been derived almost exclusively from Caucasian children and families. Furthermore, the majority of researchers examining children's competence and child-rearing practices are from a Western cultural background and have received their academic training from Western institutions. It is only recently that researchers have examined these research areas in non-Western cultures. Researchers have recognized that children develop within a complex system of relationships affected by numerous levels of the surrounding environment, one of which is the *cultural milieu* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1993). Specifically, culture provides the broader context within which parents form their beliefs about which characteristics should be valued in children and how to promote those characteristics. Children also learn to interpret the meaning of parents' approaches to child-rearing according to the standards of their culture.

This acknowledgement of culture's role in socialization has spurred research examining features of child-rearing in different cultures. It has quickly become apparent that the patterns of associations between child-rearing practices and children's competence in Caucasian Canadian families (described above) are often different from those in non-majority culture families (e.g., Carson, Chowdhury, Perry, & Pati, 1999; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002). For instance, studies examining Caucasian Canadian and Chinese families have found that parents' response to children's anxiety can have vastly different effects on children's competence. Chen, Hastings, Rubin, Chen, Cen, and Stewart (1998) found that in Caucasian families, parents feel negatively toward and are rejecting of, their children's anxious symptoms. This pattern is not seen in mainland Chinese families; these parents are more accepting of children's anxiety and feel better about anxious children.

Over time, Chinese children's anxious symptoms recede and social competence improves, whereas anxiety in Caucasian Canadian and American children tends to be more stable and associated with social difficulties (Chen, Li, Li, Li, & Liu, 2000). This suggests that although it might be possible to measure the same child-rearing characteristics across cultures, their relations to children's competence should not be assumed to be the same in different cultures.

In terms of First Peoples families, there has been limited work to date examining families and their role in healthy psychosocial development. It has been suggested that parenting values and attitudes of First Peoples are similar to those of Caucasian parents, although they differ in the degree to which these attitudes are translated into actual rearing of children (Glover, 2001). First Peoples and Caucasian parents hold many of the same values with respect to the psychosocial outcomes they seek to foster in their children. These include family connection, autonomy, friendships, maturity, cooperation, and responsibility. But there are also some differences in values. In the United States, traditional First Peoples values can include: generosity; respect for elders; respect for all creation; harmony, and non-interference (Deyhle & LaCompte, 1999; Glover, 2001; Kallam & Coser, 1994). First Peoples also differ in how they try to promote these healthy outcomes. Research with First Peoples in the United States has found that these families rely heavily on modelling and storytelling as vehicles of teaching or socialization (Deyhle & LaCompte, 1999; Glover, 2001; Kallam & Coser, 1994). In response to children's misbehaviours, common discipline strategies include power assertion, love withdrawal, inductive discipline, shame or embarrassment (Hoffman, 1977). A feature that appears to be unique to First Peoples is the dispensing of punishment by family members other than parents: such as aunts, uncles or grandparents. The goal of this

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involvement of other family members in disciplinary actions is to protect the bond of love between parents and children, and also to reinforce the extended family's involvement in the child's day-to-day upbringing (LaFromboise & Low, 1998).

One of the most striking differences in general parenting approaches between First Peoples and Caucasian parents is best described below:

> The dominant culture often shows concern about the relative freedom given to a Native American child and the apparent lack of parental concern about the child's behavior. What appears as *excessive permissiveness* or *indulgence*, however, may consist of allowing children to develop in a *healthy way*. Autonomy is highly valued, and children are allowed to make their own decisions and operate semi-independently at an early age with the freedom to experience natural consequences (italics added; p. 218; Glover, 2001).

Supporting competent development is the specific goal underlying this technique. Parents and researchers from outside First Peoples communities may not see this technique as supporting that goal, but this difference in perspective reinforces the over-arching role culture plays in establishing the meaning and effects of parental actions. Some research has examined the links between child-rearing attitudes and practices, and children's competence in First Peoples families. The larger extended family, increased time spent with tribal elders, and increased frequency of activities involving the entire family have been associated with a decreased likelihood of Ojibway adolescents being involved in delinquency activities (Zitzow, 1990). First Peoples children who are raised in a warm, accepting, nurturing environment exhibit more positive social skills (Rohner, Chaille, & Rohner, 1980), similar to what has been observed with Caucasian families. The emphasis on self-reliance and autonomy by American Indian parents

seems to promote an early emergence of developmental milestones; including dressing oneself, and doing regular chores (Miller, 1979, as cited in Joe & Malach, 1992). Caucasian children are reared in a *child-centered* world, where parents expect them to accomplish tasks appropriate for their age. This contrasts with American Indian children who are reared in an adult-centered world, where they are encouraged to master adult tasks (e.g., responsibility for self-care).

Another interesting link between the emphasis on autonomy and children's competence comes from an unlikely place: parents' views of special needs children. Connors and Donnellan (1998) conducted a research study to examine Navajo views on disabled children. This information was gathered during an anthropological research study that was conducted at a residential facility for exceptional First Peoples children on the Navajo Nation, in the United States. This research was approached from a *participant-observer* perspective, whereby the researchers fully immersed themselves in the Navajo culture to the greatest extent possible in order to understand and document the culture's unique values and social processes about disabled children. The families selected for this research included at least one child who was labelled as autistic or mentally retarded by Western psychologists, and who was in residence at the facility. Connors and Donnelan (1998) noted that:

> A great deal of permissiveness is given to Navajo children until the age of six or seven and this pervasive cultural child-rearing practice helps to explain the tolerance accorded to the clients with autism and those behaviors that are perceived to approximate notions of social competence (p. 175).

The authors go on to state that this notion of 'permissiveness' applies to physically handicapped children as well. These children are considered children, not in a helpless sense, but rather in a 'becoming persons' sense. This tolerance

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for and acceptance of individuality also makes Navajos less inclined to identify behaviours as 'problems' and more likely to view them 'characteristics' (Connors & Donnellan, 1998). Although no research exists on how these views influence parenting practices, it is known that Navajo parents are reluctant to segregate or isolate children with disabilities. It is also known that this acceptance fosters a more relaxed attitude toward the role of the disabled child in the Navajo family structure. Thus, it is conceivable that this greater integration leads to more natural and healthy development in those children. Connors and Donnellan (1998) conclude that "this suggests that the traditional Navajo culture provides flexibility and resiliency in the face of disability that makes mental and emotional adjustments somewhat easier for the families to bear" (p. 179).

Clearly, this small collection of studies supports the proposition that effective and adaptive socialization practices of the First Peoples promote competence and healthy psychosocial development in their children. Both the value system of the First Peoples culture, and the child-rearing attitudes and behaviours of parents and extended family members, may confer advantages to children of the First Peoples. However, it is equally apparent that there is a dearth of empirical investigations on the links between socialization and competent development in the First Peoples. The more extensive literature on psychosocial problems needs to be balanced by more studies of typical, normative, healthy family functioning and child development.

In the remainder of this paper, we make several suggestions for ways in which developmental psychologists can begin to redress past oversights. These include the adoption of a different theoretical model or framework, the utilization of more sensitive, culturally-appropriate methodologies for learning about socialization and development in First Peoples, and novel approaches

to initiating and pursuing the research process.

Resilience: Focusing on the Positives

Thirty years ago, a few leading developmental scientists began to draw researchers' and clinicians' attention to the fact that many, perhaps most, children raised in circumstances of hardship and adversity do not develop psychological problems or psychiatric disorders (e.g., Garmezy, 1974, Rutter, 1979). Despite experiencing economic deprivation, homelessness, social discrimination or other risks and disadvantages, these individuals develop well, attaining competence and health, and accomplishing relevant developmental social, academic, and occupational milestones. The prevalence of *resilience*, attaining healthy developmental outcomes despite the experience of adversity, points to the adaptability and tenacity of humans, and highlights the truism that problems are the exception, rather than the rule, of development. Researchers' investigations into the factors that predict or support resilience have revealed that resilient children are not extraordinary; they are ordinary (Masten, 2001). If children have intact neurocognitive functioning (e.g., no evidence of neurological injury) and supportive, involved parents, they are likely to survive even seriously adverse circumstances without being scarred.

Most of the research on resilience has been conducted with lower-income, visible minority groups in the United States. It is important to note, however, that epidemiological studies of the First Peoples indicate that healthy psychosocial development is the norm in these communities as well (e.g., Gotowiec & Beiser, 1993; MacMillan et al., 2000). Given the low average annual income of Canada's First Peoples families, the number of First Peoples families living in sub-standard housing, the number of First Peoples communities located in

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remote locales with limited access to services, and the enduring prejudices held toward First Peoples by many in Canada's majority culture (Joe & Malach, 1992; Strauss, 1995), it would be reasonable to state many of the children of the First Peoples are being raised under conditions of risk. Thus, the fact that most of these children do not show evidence of marked psychosocial difficulties is evidence that, like children from other communities, *they are resilient*.

Given the salient contributions of effective parenting to the resilient development of children in other cultural groups, it is likely that some of the qualities of parenting by First Peoples (e.g., modelling, involvement of other family and community members, maturity demands) protect children from the negative effects of adversity and hardship, and promote their healthy psychosocial development. By refocusing our theoretical perspective from models of illness and pathology (the effects of risk factors on the development of problems), to models of health and competence (the contributions of protective factors to the development of positive outcomes), developmental scientists can support effective parenting and resilient development in the First Peoples. Further, by accurately characterizing the ways in which First Peoples children show their competence, and identifying the family and cultural features that support this competence, we may be able to design new and culturally-meaningful ways to assist the minority of First Peoples families in which children are not manifesting resilience. Cooperative and proactive recommendations for child-rearing ("Try this; it has worked for your neighbours.") are likely to be more effective for helping families to overcome their troubles than prohibitive directions drawn from dissimilar experiences ("Don't do that because we've found it doesn't work.").

New Directions for Our

Understanding of First Peoples

We are now faced with the challenge of shifting our research focus with First Peoples families away from a negative-outcome focus, to a competence and resilience focus. This shift will permeate through all levels of research, including *topic*, *participants*, *measures*, and *process*. Traditionally, most researchers have taken an epidemiological approach whereby groups of First Peoples are described on a broad variety of characteristics (e.g., age, gender, level of schooling, psychiatric problems), but any given characteristic is not examined in great depth. This has applied equally to examinations of children's problems and parents' socialization of children. Therefore, as well as refocusing attention from problems and limitations to competencies and strengths, researchers need to shift from broadly but shallowly surveying the First Peoples to obtaining more detailed, in-depth accounts of their experiences.

In most cultures parents are the primary caregivers. However, in First Peoples families the extended family plays a large role in raising children (Joe & Malach, 1992; MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996). Kinship, emphasizing the inter-connectedness of many family members and even non-familial community members, is one of the fundamental traditional values of First Peoples. In addition to biological parents, the socialization of children involves grandparents, other family members, and tribal elders (Burgess, 1980; Cooke-Dallin, Rosborough, & Underwood, 2000; LaFromboise & Low, 1998). In fact, compared with Canadian Caucasian families, grandparents and extended families are more involved in First Peoples families and more First Peoples children live in homes with three or more generations of family members (Thompson, 2003). The family constellations of the First Peoples can also differ in other ways. For instance, infants may be reared in a separate home

The existing research on parenting among First Peoples parents has relied on traditional social science methods of inquiry, including questionnaires with rating scales. Some researchers have questioned the appropriateness of these methods. As these questionnaires were principally developed for use with Western cultural groups in North America, they may not be valid or appropriate for use with other cultural groups including First Peoples.

by grandparents or uncles and aunts. As youths they may continue to live with other family members, who can include third or even fifth-degree relatives (MacPhee et al., 1996; Seidman et al., 1994). A 'family' does not only consist of children with their biological parents, but includes all community members involved in socialization of children. Thus, in terms of research *participants*, we will need to broaden our definition of parents to include all individuals involved in child-rearing. With respect to the research process, this means that we should ask who the members of a 'family' are (family and nonblood relatives) and avoid assuming that only the biological parents comprise the family. Conversely, we also should not assume that *all* members of the extended family should be included. In our attempts to understand familial influences on First Peoples children's development and competence, we need to resist applying Western traditional notions of 'parents' and look for more culturally appropriate definitions of parents.

The existing research on parenting among First Peoples parents has relied on traditional social science methods of inquiry, including questionnaires with rating scales. Some researchers have questioned the appropriateness of these methods (e.g., Beiser, 1981). As these questionnaires were principally developed for use with Western cultural groups in North America, they may not be valid or appropriate for use with other cultural groups including First Peoples. The content covered in those questionnaires may not be relevant for the experiences of First Peoples. The wording of questions may contain implicit biases, be unclear, or be unfamiliar to First Peoples. The concepts of ratings scales and anchor terms (e.g., *strongly disagree*) have grown out of Western academics' work and may not be typical of First Peoples' thoughts and perspectives on child rearing and children's competence. Also, methods of interpreting the meaning of scores usually have been standardized on the basis of Caucasian

groups who differ immensely from most First Peoples groups on a number of characteristics, thus potentially rendering all comparisons or inferences about test results inaccurate and invalid.

One might infer from this critique that researchers simply need to standardize test scores with First Peoples groups in order to use these existing questionnaires more appropriately. While that certainly would be helpful, we contend that new approaches and methods will also need to be researched. Traditional social science questionnaires should be supplemented (if not replaced) by other information gathering methods that are adapted to better match traditional First Peoples customs and values. Although common in some social science fields, *narrative approaches* have only recently been recognized as potentially valuable and rich sources of information by socialization researchers working within psychology. Narrative approaches allow parents to generate open-ended and self-directed accounts of their parenting practices; this may be an ideal method because First Peoples culture stresses the importance of conversation (e.g., Carbaugh, 2001). Participants' freely generated accounts of their beliefs, experiences and practices can be examined for themes and content that are directly relevant for First Peoples socialization of children. Similarly, narrative reports from parents, other family members, teachers or even children themselves may be more effective ways of identifying First Peoples children's competent development. The flexibility of narrative procedures makes them well-suited for application to a range of topics.

One last area that will require a shift in focus is the process through which research is initiated and maintained. Standard research has been likened to a 'helicopter' process, where the researcher drops in for a quick data collection trip and is never seen again. Montour (1987, as cited in Macaulay et al., 2003) described this experience as "outside research teams

Montour described this experience as "outside research teams swooped down from the skies, swarmed all over town, asked nosey questions that were none of their business and then disappeared never to be heard again". This kind of researcher-initiated approach often benefits the researcher and his or her academic career, but is of little or no benefit to the First Peoples communities.

swooped down from the skies, swarmed all over town, asked nosey questions that were none of their business and then disappeared never to be heard again". This kind of researcher-initiated approach often benefits the researcher and his or her academic career, but is of little or no benefit to the First Peoples communities. Darou and his colleagues (Darou, Hum, & Kurtness, 1993; Darou, Kurtness, & Hum, 2000) describe the James Bay Cree of Québec as having endured countless negative experiences with non-Aboriginal researchers. As a result, they have ejected all but one researcher and put a moratorium on all future research in their territory. They state that this is due to the researchers' refusal to accept Cree authority, and the little perceived benefit of this research for the community. Darou, Hum, and Kurtness (2000) concluded with the following suggestions: (1) "It is entirely inappropriate to conduct research unless you have been invited in and you have a clear and relevant purpose" and (2) "It is important that your research put something valuable back into the community" (italics added; p. 52). Overall, the process of research needs to be collaborative in nature and yield some tangible outcomes that can be of benefit to the community.

Culturally-Sensitive Directions for Research

Theories regarding cultural differences in psychopathology have centered around two opposing perspectives: emic vs. etic (Dragnus & Tanaka-Matsumi, 2003). The *emic* approach focuses on the culture-specific behaviour, customs, values and traditions of a specific culture group. This position has also been described as a relativist perspective. From this vantage point, researchers focus on the scope of cultural variation, the need to understand the unique phenomena within any given culture, and to study cultural groups on their own terms. This perspective is contrasted with an *etic* or *universalist*

perspective which looks for universals that are 'true' across cultures and focuses on the differences in levels of certain dimensions and categories across different cultural groups.

For culturally-sensitive research to be conducted with First Peoples families, an emic approach needs to be taken. Researchers must clearly understand the culture before embarking on a research project. Douglas (1994) presented an account of her experiences in understanding schooling within an Inuit community as a first step towards recontextualizing the institution of schooling to better reflect the community context. Likewise, Gillis (1992) sought to understand First Peoples parents' views about early childhood education prior to suggesting changes to day care curriculum. These two researchers were successfully able to understand First Peoples communities prior to suggesting changes to schooling, and circumvented the use of false assumptions of First Peoples to guide their research.

A corollary point is the need to respect the heterogeneity of First Peoples. Often First Peoples are considered a homogenous group and their culture is reduced to a single entity (Gross, 1998; cited in Coleman, Unrau, & Manyfingers, 2001). Recognizing that there are intergroup differences should not be made at the expense of recognition of intragroup differences. With over 550 recognized Native nations in the United States and over 1000 reserves in Canada, there exists considerable heterogeneity (Thomason, 1991; Weaver, 1997, 1999). Additionally, being part of a culture does not mean that all individuals subscribe to the specific values and traditions of that culture to the same degree. As Gross (1998; as cited in Coleman et al., 2001) stated "all the study in the world about a given culture or subculture might not lend a hint of explanation of the behavior or attitudes of a single member of that culture or subculture" (p. 9). Understanding First

With the shift toward Participatory Action Research, recognizing and promoting active community participation in research is replacing past research models in which researchers held exclusive control over the process and the results. Thus, it will be essential to advance a code of research ethics that focuses greatly on confidentiality, avoidance of harm and potential benefits at a community level.

Peoples at an individual, family and community level is a requisite of any research endeavours that hope to be insightful, accurate, and useful.

Working with a community is perhaps the most culturally-sensitive approach to research with First Peoples populations. In this framework for conducting research, communities are involved in an equal partnership with researcher. This method is called *participatory action research* (PAR) and is defined as the systematic enquiry, involving collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied and the researchers, for the purpose of education and taking action or effecting social change (Green et al., 1995). PAR is based on the integration of community members as equal partners; integration of the intervention and evaluation the intervention's success; and creation of learning experiences for the program's researchers and staff, as well as participants. A unique feature of this research perspective is the equal involvement of 3 members: (i) community researchers; (ii) academic researchers; and (iii) the community advisory board (community members). The importance of the PAR process cannot be overstated, as both research outcomes and practical knowledge transfer will contribute to First Peoples' acquisition of the information, skills and tools needed to continue advancing their own welfare.

An excellent example of the successful implementation of this research agenda in a First Peoples community in Canada is the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP; Potvin, Cargo, McComber, Delormier, & Macaulay, 2003). Members of the Kahnawake community recognized increasing rates of diabetes as an important health concern. KSDPP was therefore founded by Kahnawake community members, working with researchers, with the goal of reducing the incidence of Type 2 diabetes amongst the First Peoples in Kahnawake. KSDPP seeks to accomplish

this by implementing intervention activities for schools, families and the community that promote healthy eating, physical activity and positive attitudes about health. They conduct community-based research on these activities and report all research results back to the community. They also train community intervention workers, and academic and community researchers and individuals from other First Peoples communities to promote capacity building. Of particular significance is the adaptation of the curriculum to coincide with the values and beliefs of the Mohawk culture. This impressively demonstrates a thorough understanding of the culture, providing evidence for a successful emic approach.

Ethical Considerations with First Peoples

With the shift toward PAR, recognizing and promoting active community participation in research is replacing past research models in which researchers held exclusive control over the process and the results (Macaulay et al., 1998). Thus, it will be essential to advance a code of research ethics that focuses greatly on confidentiality, avoidance of harm and potential benefits at a community level. It is worthy to note that, correspondingly, Canadian codes of ethics (e.g., MRC, NSERC, & SSHRC, 1998) and those of First Peoples groups (e.g., Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and Nunavut Research Institute, 1998) have grown to reflect this sharing of leadership, research design, and decision-making (Macaulay et al., 1998).

Additionally, integral to PAR is the development of a code of ethics to guide each specific research study, developed through the collaboration of the researchers and the community members. Macaulay et al. (1998) provide a useful example of the successful development of a code of research ethics applied to the KSDDP. Their code included a policy statement about the incorporation of a Mohawk perspective into the project, clarification

A great deal is known about Caucasian children's healthy psychosocial development and the qualities of parenting that support their competence. Conversely, developmental scientists working with First Peoples cultures have concentrated their efforts on children's problems and families' difficulties. This has contributed to an incomplete and unrepresentative picture of First Peoples families.

of the roles and obligations of the partners, and guidelines for control of data and dissemination of results. Thus, through the process of discussion and negotiation that is essential to a true partnership, the expectations, rights and responsibilities of all research collaborators were clearly and openly established.

Researchers and practitioners must also be aware of ethics on a daily level, through the ethics of personal interaction (e.g., Ellerby, McKenzie, McKay, Gariépy, & Kaufert, 2000). Respect for the rights, and protection of the well being, of participants in research must be informed by an awareness of and sensitivity to the values and traditions of the culture in which participants live. Brant (1990) described how potential interpersonal conflicts can be avoided by utilizing First Peoples' practices of non-interference, non-competitiveness, emotional restraint, and sharing. Non-interference is rooted in maintaining deep respect for every individual's independence, such that approaching an interaction as an instructor, or attempting to persuade or coerce another person, are undesirable ways to behave. Non-competitiveness serves to minimize group rivalry, and prevents the embarrassment that a less able group member might feel in a situation that has the potential to reveal individual differences in ability. Emotional restraint promotes self-control and discourages the expression of strong emotional reactions, either positive or negative. Sharing is based on generosity and the avoidance of hoarding of goods or resources. Together, these practices emphasise respect and egalitarianism in interpersonal interactions. Researchers' use of these practices to discuss the research procedures and process, and negotiate the code of research ethics, should serve to facilitate successful and mutually beneficial interactions with the First Peoples children, families and communities involved in investigations.

Concluding Remarks

A great deal is known about Caucasian children's healthy psychosocial development and the qualities of parenting that support their competence. Conversely, developmental scientists working with First Peoples cultures have concentrated their efforts on children's problems and families' difficulties. This has contributed to an incomplete and unrepresentative picture of First Peoples families. Researchers should approach First Peoples communities with the goal of understanding the culture, by taking an *emic* approach. This process should be done by developing meaningful relationships between academics, researchers, and community members before proceeding with research, and maintaining this collaboration through all stages of the research process. The majority of children in First Peoples communities *are* healthy and competent and do *not* have psychological problems. Redirecting our research efforts towards focusing upon the strengths of families and children, and using procedures that are appropriate and sensitive to the values and traditions of the First Peoples, will be essential for obtaining a more balanced and accurate understanding of socialization and development within these communities.

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Abstract

Aboriginal social work is a relatively new field in the human services, emerging out of the Aboriginal social movement of the 1970s and evolving in response to the need for social work that is sociologically relevant to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal social work education incorporates Aboriginal history and is premised upon traditional sacred epistemology in order to train both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social workers who can understand and meet the needs of Aboriginal people. The deficiencies of contemporary cross-cultural approaches and anti-oppressive social work education are highlighted as a means to emphasize the importance of social work education premised upon relevant history and worldview. The values and responsibilities that derive from Aboriginal worldview as the foundation for Aboriginal social work education are discussed in terms of the tasks that are implied for the educator and student of Aboriginal social work. Such tasks include self-healing, decolonization, role modeling, developing critical consciousness, and social and political advocacy. Aboriginal social work education, a decolonizing pedagogy directed to mitigating and redressing the harm of colonization at the practice level, is a contemporary cultural imperative.

Aboriginal Social Work Education in Canada: Decolonizing Pedagogy for the Seventh Generation

Raven Sinclair

Introduction

Aboriginal social work education is an emerging pedagogy framed within colonial history and Indigenous worldview. Colonial history establishes the proper contexts for contemporary social and physical pathologies that are highly visible in many Aboriginal communities while Indigenous worldview provides a vital source of knowledge and cultural reflection for Aboriginal students. This paper describes the risks that result from an assumption that current cross-cultural and anti-oppressive approaches are an effective lens through which to regard hundreds of years of oppression and cultural destruction. A discussion of Aboriginal social work education is held to support the assertion that a decolonizing pedagogy is a contemporary cultural imperative; that culturally appropriate and sociologically relevant teaching and healing models must evolve and translate into practice and service delivery that will meet the needs of future generations.

Historical context of Aboriginal social work

Between the years of 1950 and 1977, the Spellumcheen Band in British Columbia lost 150 of 300 children through child welfare apprehensions (McKenzie and Hudson, 1985). In the same period, a Manitoba Band lost just over 100 children. Child welfare authorities removed many of these children without any notice to the families or bands, and many of these children have never returned. While child welfare agencies received thousands of dollars per Aboriginal child placed for adoption, Aboriginal families who searched for their children were lied to and deliberately misled by social workers (Kimmelman, 1982; Fournier and Crey, 1997).

The scooping of the children comprises mainstream social work in the eyes of Aboriginal people. Social work has negative connotations to many Aboriginal people and is often synonymous with the theft of children, the destruction of

The social work profession and social work education have not been free from colonial influence. In the words of Freire, "the social worker, as much as the educator, is not a neutral agent, either in practice or in action". Indeed, early social work practices were complicit with government colonial actions. When Aboriginal people began to protest against the residential schools system and the schools began to close down , the 'child welfare era' ensued and is evidenced by the mass child welfare 'scooping' of Aboriginal children culminating in transracial adoption and/or long-term foster care. Aboriginal people have decried these actions as genocidal .

families, and the deliberate oppression of Aboriginal communities. The "60's Scoop" is one story in the backdrop of colonialism and how colonization has manifested in the realm of child and social welfare and social work with respect to native people in Canada (Duran and Duran, 1996; Bruyere, 1999; Lee, 1992; Hart, 1999; Poonwassie and Charter, 2001; McKenzie and Hudson, 1985). Aboriginal involvement in the foster care and welfare systems are other stories, the origins of which can be traced to colonialism. Social workers that work with Aboriginal people must be aware of these historical elements of the interaction between western social work and Aboriginal people because the majority of Aboriginal clients will have encountered these experiences directly or intergenerationally.

Colonialism and the growth of the Child Welfare system

The historical context that all social workers should know is the story of two nations of people who began a symbiotic and allied relationship that, over time, deteriorated as the driving forces for land and resource acquisition strengthened. The colonialistic actions and attitudes towards Aboriginal people have been deliberate and calculated; designed to displace and distance the people from their land and resources. The attempted obliteration of Aboriginal culture was one strategy towards achieving that end. Almost every contemporary social pathology or health issue in Aboriginal communities can be attributed directly to the fallout of colonialism (Midgely, 1998) whether the source is the industrial/residential school era which saw children forcibly confined to institutions, the child welfare era that witnessed the forced removal of children from their families and communities, or the contemporary era of racism, social exclusion and marginalization, and oppression.

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colonial influence. In the words of Freire (1990), "the social worker, as much as the educator, is not a neutral agent, either in practice or in action" (p.5). Indeed, early social work practices were complicit with government colonial actions. When Aboriginal people began to protest against the residential schools system and the schools began to close down , the 'child welfare era' ensued and is evidenced by the mass child welfare 'scooping' of Aboriginal children culminating in transracial adoption and/or long-term foster care. Aboriginal people have decried these actions as genocidal . In this manner, the social work profession became a pawn to further enact state policy towards native people (Hart, 1999; Bruyere, 1999; Maurice 2000) During the residential school period, complicity occurred through the social workers who accompanied the police on their forays onto reserves to remove the children. After the residential school period, the profession unquestioningly aligned itself with the assimilation policies manifested in the transracial fostering and adoption of Aboriginal children (Fournier and Crey, 1997). It is often stated that the intentions of social workers who went to reserves and apprehended children were good, albeit misguided. One BC social worker has a more enlightening perspective:

> …when we removed children from their own homes and put them in foster homes about which we knew next to nothing, no matter how we cloaked our actions in welfare jargon, we were putting those children at risk….the welfare department which employed me was the biggest contributor to child abuse in the province (Fournier and Crey, 1997: 86).

To quote Justice Kimmelman (1982), "the road to hell was paved with good intention and the child welfare system was the paving contractor".

Canadian government policies with respect to Aboriginal people have been

Recognizing that western trained social workers might not be able to meet the needs of the Aboriginal population, Aboriginal educators began to question to relevance of mainstream social work education for Aboriginal students, and the First Nations University of Canada (formerly the "Saskatchewan Indian Federated College") School of Indian Social Work was founded in 1974.

directed towards a goal of assimilation. The titles of the various pieces of legislation of the last century speak for themselves: The Gradual Civilization Act of 1857; the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869. Enfranchisement with respect to the *Indian Act* occurs when an Aboriginal person willingly or unwillingly relinquishes their Aboriginal status and any rights that accrue from that status. Duncan Campbell Scott, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, speaking about the issue of enfranchisement, stated in 1920:

> Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department. This is the whole object of this bill (Jamieson, 1978: p.120).

The enfranchisement amendment to the *Indian Act* encouraged Indian men to relinquish their Indian status and become "Canadian citizens" (Frideres, 1998) . Enfranchisement was automatic for individuals who received a university degree, entered the military, or became a doctor or lawyer. The educational agenda for Aboriginal people in Canada was also designed from within an assimilationist perspective and had the goal of acculturating Aboriginal people to a western way of living and thinking. By forcing residential school (legislated in the 1920 amendment) education on Aboriginal people, the government welded absolute power in altering language, culture, and socialization. Aboriginal people argue that this form of education amounted to cultural genocide as languages were lost, cultural practices were denigrated, and traditional socialization practices were replaced by institutionalization.

Social Work Education

Western theoretical hegemony manifests primarily in educational institutions. The most harmful assumptions are that western thought ought to be the standard educational platform, is automatically relevant and valid, and is universally applicable. The Aboriginal person becomes a virtual non-entity in institutions that marginalize Aboriginal thought and reality through the neglect and erroneous authoring of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, languages, and colonial history. For Aboriginal children who are required to learn in mainstream institutions, western education has not mirrored the social, political, economic, or worldview reality of their daily lives because Aboriginal history is generally absent in curricula. The exception is specific native studies degree programs. The early Aboriginal social activists and pioneers who penned "Indian control of Indian education" recognized the potentially harmful effects of such an educational system on Aboriginal people (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). They understood that the western educational paradigm was serving to colonize Aboriginal people at the intellectual level (Cardinal, 1969; Smith, 1999) and some directed their critiques to social work (Weaver, 1999; Hart, 2001; Morrisette, McKenzie, and Morrissette, 1993). The paradigm from which 'social work' has been taught and practiced is western in theory, pedagogy, and practice.

> We need to address the problem of how we train an Indian social worker. I have some very serious doubts about the ability of existing social work schools to do that – to really meet the needs of native people. I don't think they're capable of that. Not because they're not teaching and doing good things, but I don't think they understand native people (Stalwick, 1986, p. 16).

Recognizing that western trained social workers, Aboriginal social workers included, might not be able to meet the needs of the Aboriginal population, Aboriginal educators began to question to relevance of mainstream social work education for Aboriginal students, and the First Nations University of Canada (formerly the "Saskatchewan Indian Federated College") School of Indian

Awareness without legitimate action is a cognitive ploy that risks passing for anti-oppressive and anti-racist pedagogy and practice in social work. It contributes to silence and inactivity about tangible issues of racism and oppression in the field of social work and in society. Contemporary anti-oppressive pedagogy does not address the culture of silence because it does not require anything beyond a theoretical grasping of issues.

Social Work was founded in 1974. The following year, the social work diploma program was initiated at Maskwacis Cultural College in Hobbema, Alberta. The development of Aboriginal social work education programs has been a vital step for several reasons: the lack of substance within cross-cultural and anti-oppressive social work education for Aboriginal students, the neglect of the impact of colonial history on contemporary social and wellness issues, and the absence of Indigenous knowledge in social work pedagogy.

Cross-cultural and Anti-Oppressive Education

In the contemporary context among mainstream generalist social work schools, the generalist social work student learns about Aboriginal people through cross cultural and/or culturally sensitive social work education and practice. Unfortunately, cross-cultural discourse often dismisses and/or incorrectly authors Aboriginal thought, history, and colonization in terms that are ambiguous and misleading. Examples of this include having the history of colonization phrased as "cultural disruption" (Williams and Ellison, 1996), or having Aboriginal epistemology relegated to the level of "religion" or "mysticism" (see Deloria, 1999; Warrior, 1995). It is inconceivable that any social worker mandated professionally and ethically to address social problems and strive for social justice, would not have a full understanding of the historical context of current Aboriginal issues given the high percentage of Aboriginal clients in most social work settings. The fact that the Aboriginal context is poorly addressed or omitted in social work (see for example, Turner, 1999) is unacceptable and contributes to what Freire (1970) refers to as a 'culture of silence'. A culture of silence exists where the oppressed are not heard in society, and where a lack of knowledge about their contexts creates a high risk for the perpetuation of racism,

discrimination and an ethic of 'blaming the victim' for their own situation.

Similarly, anti-oppressive practice has an inherent danger. The danger lies in proclaiming an anti-oppressive stance, while doing little or nothing to address the reality of oppression. As a profession, social work can do many things with "awareness" of critical issues such as racism, including nothing. "Awareness itself 'lacks political substance and is sociologically naïve'" (Dominelli, 1998, p.13). Awareness without legitimate action is a cognitive ploy that risks passing for anti-oppressive and anti-racist pedagogy and practice in social work. It contributes to silence and inactivity about tangible issues of racism and oppression in the field of social work and in society. Contemporary anti-oppressive pedagogy does not address the culture of silence because it does not require anything beyond a theoretical grasping of issues. Neither the personal involvement nor the commitment of the social work student or practitioner is requested or required. Social workers risk falling into the trap of believing that just because they are social workers they are, therefore, non-racist and non-oppressive because the profession has a Code of Ethics to guide practice and because social work institutions proclaim they are committed to this ideology.

For Aboriginal social work students, engaging in studies on how to become an effective cross-cultural worker in Canada verges on ludicrous because the cross-cultural or minority 'client', is automatically labelled as the 'other.' This forces the Aboriginal student to take a dominant subjective stance with respect to issues of diversity because they are never requested to examine their work with 'white' individuals as cross-cultural. They are required to perceive of themselves and their people as the "other" who is in need of assistance (Said, 1978; Blaut, 1993, see also Gross, 1995). Such an approach only perpetuates marginalization and constructions of difference, and fosters the internalizing of racism. An explanation for

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this is found in Duran and Duran (1995), who articulate that the term "'cross-cultural' implies that there is a relative platform from which all observations are to be made, and the platform that remains in place in our neocolonial discipline is that of Western subjectivity " (p.5). In simpler terms, even in the new millennium, the standard for social work education and practice is literature and education based on the worldview, lifeways, and reality of the dominant, predominantly white, and mainstream society.

Aboriginal social work education, mandated by Aboriginal Elders to train social workers to work with Aboriginal people, is not cross-cultural because within Aboriginal social work programs are founded on the assumption is that the workers and the clients are from the same cultural group. Rather, Aboriginal social work education attempts to achieve cultural relevance. Mainstream social work can take a lesson from this concept. Culturally relevant pedagogy incorporates perspectives and practices respectful to the group in question and attends to those issues that impact most on Aboriginal people (Weaver, 1999). Those issues are history and epistemology.

History

Many authors recognize the importance of understanding Aboriginal history in education and practice with Aboriginal clients (Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette, 1993; Nabigon and Mawhiney, 1996; Cross, 1986; Hart, 1999; Puxley,1977; Graveline, 1998; Laenui, 2000; Deloria, 1999; Battiste, 2000), as an approach that must occur within the context of colonialism and from an Aboriginal worldview perspective (Bruyere, 1999; McKenzie and Hudson, 1985; Puxley, 1977; Battiste, 2000; Poonwassie and Charter, 2001; Lederman, 1999; Duran and Duran, 1995). Incorporating the historical context into social work education and especially service delivery is an approach

that constitutes Freire's (1970, 1998) notion of the development of critical consciousness through conscientization. Conscientization is a critical approach to liberatory education that incorporates helping the learner to move towards a new awareness of relations of power, myths, and oppression. By developing critical consciousness in this way, learners work towards changing the world. For Aboriginal students, accurate reflection of Aboriginal history and epistemology provides accurate frameworks to reflect their personal experiences in the classroom setting. This approach enables the Aboriginal social work student to truly understand their personal and familial contexts, as well as their sociopolitical contexts, and the contexts of the majority of the people with whom they are hoping to work and to whom they are hoping to be of assistance. Students gain the appropriate knowledge set to understand both the problem definition and the problem solutions. At the level of service delivery in Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal social service agencies, critical consciousness provides the structural framework for understanding contemporary social conditions, and it also paves the way to reacquiring the necessary value and ethical foundations for practice by drawing upon traditional knowledge.

The key to traditional Aboriginal wisdom rests in the reconstruction of Aboriginal ways of knowing - epistemology (Pillai, 1996; Grande, 2000; Duran, Duran and Yellow Horse Braveheart, 1998; Duran and Duran, 1995; Bruyere, 1999; Henderson, 2000; Ermine, 1995) - and its incorporation into social work pedagogy. In the Aboriginal social work milieu, traditional knowledge is being nurtured and supported through inclusion in the curricula and synthesis into the daily workings of institutions. Reviving ancient knowledge from the ashes of colonialism is critical to Aboriginal social work education and the healing agenda. In discussing research, Maori scholar Karen Martin argues that theory has historically

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drawn "upon frameworks, processes and practices of colonial, western worldviews and the inherent knowledges, methods, morals and beliefs" (p.2) but that Indigenous worldview provides the "core structures" (Martin, 2001) of a theoretical orientation. In Aboriginal social work education and practice, Aboriginal epistemology provides the core structures - the values and ethics - for social work delivery and practice.

Aboriginal Epistemology

How do Aboriginal educators begin to reconstruct knowledge based on Aboriginal epistemology keeping in mind western theoretical and pedagogical hegemony, not to mention raised eyebrows at the mere mention of Aboriginal 'intellectualism' (Grande, 2000)? The lack of intellectual 'space' reserved for Indigenous thinkers in any field makes this reconstruction a challenge (Alfred, 1999; Battiste, 1998). However, the challenge must be taken because colonialism, in which oppression is a tool, "…constructs the 'other' as savage, barbaric, inert, and subhuman" (Pillai, 1998). Non-western theories and knowledge are marginalized in the colonial context. Cognitive imperialism extends to the post-secondary classroom (Battiste, 1998). Indigenous theories not only challenge the language of colonialism but challenge western theoretical hegemony and provide the space for important critiques of colonial relations of power, domination, and exploitation (Dei, 1999). In Aboriginal social work, these critiques provide the foundational context of education that will, ultimately, translate into direct practice.

Pillai (1998) adds that the critically important aspect of Indigenous knowledge reconstruction centers on the relationship between Indigenous epistemology and ecological survival. Indigenous ways of knowing are linked intrinsically to the land and nature, and hence, ecological survival - "reconstructing "Indigenous theories" must be seen not as an end in itself but as an

integral part of movements for ecological and economic survival" (Pillai, 1998, p. 209; see also Deloria, 1999).

Indigenous epistemology provides the pathway to knowledge from which flows natural laws, and human values, ideologies, and responsibilities. There are several key concepts that encapsulate basic tenets of 'Indigenous' epistemology. These tenets are, for the most part, generalizable among nations, although manifestations of them may be, different among nations (Nabigon and Mawhiney, 1996; Morrisette, McKenzie and Morrissette, 1993; Hanohano, 1999). This background of 'worldview' information forms the pith of Aboriginal education in general and Aboriginal social work education, in particular, because for Native cultures, spirituality is inextricably and intrinsically woven into philosophy, ideology, and daily living.

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"All my relations" is first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds of us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings. But the relationships that Native people see go further, the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. More than that, "all my relations" is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner (King; 1990, p. 1).

The 'kinship web' extends to all human relations, both living and unborn. The responsibility of the living is to care

The second concept, which is woven through all concepts of indigenous worldview, is the concept of the sacred. If the notion of 'all my relations' is a cornerstone to indigenous worldview, then the notion of the sacred is best described as the supreme law: "The sacral permeates all aspects of indigenous worldview.

for and honour the suffering, memory, and spiritual well-being of those who have passed away, as well as to pray for the lives of (and to act as caretakers of the earth) for seven generations to come. Hence, the kinship web is physical, spatial, and temporal (Deloria, 1999; Henderson, 2000; Kulchyski, 1999, McCaskill and Newhouse, 1999). All species, all forms of life, have equal status before the presence of the universal power to which all are subject. The interrelatedness and interconnectedness dimensions of Aboriginal epistemology are often taught and understood visually through the medicine wheel, or the sacred circle, which is a symbol, a tool, and an ideology (Nabigon and Mawhiney, 1996; Morrissette, McKenzie and Morrissette, 1993; McKenzie and Hudson, 1985; Duran, Duran and Yellow Horse Braveheart, 1998; Maurice, 2000; Hanohano, 1999; Bruyere, 1999; Hart, 2001; Graveline, 1998)

The second concept, which is woven through all concepts of Indigenous worldview, is the concept of the sacred. If the notion of 'all my relations' is a cornerstone to Indigenous worldview, then the notion of the sacred is best described as the supreme law: "The sacral permeates all aspects of Indigenous worldview. In practice, this translates to a reverent belief in the sacredness of life manifested in an array of behaviours that are integrated into daily life: sunrise ceremonies honouring the new day, the simplest prayers uttered in the course of the day, to the most reverent ceremonies such as the Sundance and the sweatlodge" (Sinclair, 1999, p.5).

Decolonizing Pedagogy

The implications of these epistemological values for the Aboriginal social work educator go beyond merely knowing the information from whence one can engage in a 'banking' concept of education with students; that is, Freire's (1970) notion of the student as a tabula rasa or blank slate to be filled with information, and the educator as the expert. Both the educator and the student must involve themselves in the process of healing, learning, and developing along a path guided by Aboriginal epistemology. Colloquially, one must 'walk the talk' (Katz, 2001). The Aboriginal approach to education is more than a difference in perspective. "At a fundamental cultural level, the difference between traditional Aboriginal and Western thought is the difference in the perception of one's relationship with the universe and the Creator" (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991). The critical aspects of Aboriginal epistemology address the key concepts of harmony and balance, the absence of which signifies dis-ease or illness that form a focus for remedial action. Hence, Aboriginal epistemology and healing methodology are inseparable in the Aboriginal social work classroom.

In practice, what studies are finding is that remedial programs based on Aboriginal epistemology are proving effective with higher client reported success rates (Hart, 2001; Duran, Duran and Yellow Horse Braveheart, 1998; Nabigon, 1996; Lederman, 1999; Stevenson, 1999). "Many successful programs currently operating among Native American groups use Native American epistemology as the root metaphor for theoretical and clinical interventions", as are approaches which utilize a hybrid, or mixed Aboriginal-mainstream methodological model – "postcolonial practice integrates Indigenous knowledge and therapies with Euro-american models of therapy" (Duran, Duran and Yellow Horse Braveheart, 1998, p. 70). Duran, Duran and Yellow Horse Braveheart discuss emerging therapies and practices based on post-colonial thought which involves critical analysis of history and the revaluing of Aboriginal healing knowledge. Similarly, the goal of Aboriginal social work then, appears to be the decolonization of Aboriginal people, which is enacted through methodology that contextualizes colonization, and integrates

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healing methods based on Aboriginal epistemology.

From this perspective, Aboriginal social work can be described as a practice that combines culturally relevant social work education and training, theoretical and methodological knowledge derived from Aboriginal epistemology that draws liberally on western social work theory and practice methods, within a decolonizing context (Sinclair, 2001). Aboriginal social work education, then, is charged with the task of imparting this knowledge to students in order that they can effectively work in a decolonizing context.

The premises for social work in Aboriginal communities and with Aboriginal people is undergoing a transformation as the result of reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, expressing Indigenous voices, acknowledging Indigenous ways of knowing, and implementing Indigenous healing practices. This reconstruction of epistemology and the reconstruction of voice that challenges neocolonialism comprise the critical pedagogy that has evolved as the primary approach to Aboriginal social work education. For example, the recently implemented Master of Aboriginal Social Work program of the First Nations University of Canada and the University of Regina, is based on a pedagogy derived from Aboriginal epistemology, and is premised on training counselors and therapists who will utilize traditional methodology to work with the direct and intergenerational survivors of the residential school system (Katz, 2001). Similarly, the Native Human Services program at Laurentian University is community based and driven, and premised upon culture-specific helping methods. Such approaches are having an influence in the mainstream social work education milieu. Community based BSW programs delivered in communities by mainstream universities such as the University of Regina, the University of Victoria, University of Manitoba, University of

Calgary, Carleton University, and the University of Quebec have emerged along with "access" social work programs that emphasize rural and Aboriginal course content for delivery in Aboriginal and remote locations. The community based and access programs are striving to create culturally relevant programs for Aboriginal students and more often utilize Aboriginal educators and consultants in designing and delivering the programs.

The Challenges of a Decolonizing pedagogy

The cultural imperative of Aboriginal social work education is to train social workers who incorporate Aboriginal epistemology and pedagogical methods into their approaches, combined with appropriate and useful western theory and practice models, within a critical historical context. On one level, taking this path is simple – the Elders say 'walk your talk', 'heal yourself before you can heal others' - and once the individual has acquired sufficient western-validated education, the work begins. On another level, it is a solitary journey where Aboriginal worldview and traditional knowledge foundations have few mirrors in western pedagogy, and critical analysis with respect to Aboriginal populations is, at least within mainstream institutions, relegated to one class or theoretical approach such as anti-racism or cross-cultural social work. Aboriginal social work educators are informed by an array of theories in the areas of post-colonialism, liberation, anti-racism/oppression, and other critical theories, and they are charged with the task of incorporating what works in these theories with their own and their students' social, economic, and political realities. Contemporary reality for Aboriginal people in Canada is neocolonialism, manifested in racism, oppression, and exclusion. For Aboriginal social work students, a large portion of the learning has occurred before they set foot in a classroom. The material that provides the fodder for Aboriginal

The material that provides the fodder for Aboriginal social work curriculum does not come from a textbook – it comes from the post-colonial frontlines where intergenerational trauma is the norm, and is manifested in lateral violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, suicide, depression, and rampant ill-health.

social work curriculum does not come from a textbook – it comes from the post-colonial frontlines where intergenerational trauma is the norm, and is manifested in lateral violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, suicide, depression, and rampant ill-health.

The approaches that Indigenous scholars are finding effective are framed within an ancient sacred knowledge. Aboriginal social work practitioners and educators are charged with personal responsibility based on this knowledge base. The responsibility is to engage in a healing journey in order to be able to embark upon the tasks of helping others whether it is in the field or in the classroom – "In healing ourselves, we heal our communities and our Nations" (Native Human Services Program Statement of Philosophy, Laurentian University). Hence, the work involves working towards individual physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. In addition, the Aboriginal social educator and worker must act as role model who is expected to challenge stereotypes, address issues of oppression and internalized colonization, reclaim and contextualize Aboriginal history, acquire western theoretical and practice knowledge, engage in the reconstruction of Aboriginal epistemology and pedagogical forms, and synthesize these tasks into a form that meets the mandate of the Elders, the requirements of western institutions and regulatory bodies, and needs of students.

The knowledge and insight that the educator accrues must then be presented with skill, tact, and sensitivity to students who come from diverse educational backgrounds and are most likely intergenerationally affected by colonization . They often have English as a second language, are survivors of residential schools, the sixties scoop and the child welfare system, are dealing with intergenerational trauma issues themselves, face social and institutionalized racism and oppression in an urban setting, and

finally, may experience their own degrees of internalized colonialism which affects how knowledge is heard and integrated. These are the challenges of a decolonizing pedagogy.

The Future

Increasingly the theme of decolonization as a necessary element of education is being explored (Hart, 2001; Bruyere, 1999; Laenui, 2000; Alfred, 1999; Weaver, 1999). The next task for Indigenous social workers is to discuss more freely the processes and models that are proving effective (Duran, Duran and Yellow Horse Braveheart, 1998; Graveline, 1998; Stevenson, 1999), and to articulate Indigenous models and methodologies for others to emulate. Hence, Aboriginal social workers and educators must publish at a higher rate in order to disseminate and share the knowledge. Recognizing that Aboriginal social work in the 'frontlines' is extremely demanding, and Aboriginal educators are scrambling to keep up with the increasing numbers of Aboriginal students, time and space must be made for authoring of Aboriginal wisdom. Another area where Aboriginal social workers and educators need to direct attention is towards health research. Support for Aboriginal faculty and workers to embark upon a research agenda is needed. The money is available through federal funding programs, but the capacity needs to be developed for Aboriginal social workers to be able to successfully access those funds. Aboriginal people must lead the assault on the ill health and social pathologies within Aboriginal communities and one way to do this is to participate in the health research agenda. Capacity building in health research is essential for Aboriginal communities to define their health issues, implement culturally relevant research strategies, and implement appropriate solutions for their own health issues. Aboriginal populations have reached a critical mass in terms of the illness wrought by colonization. Working towards

The values and ethics that stem from Aboriginal epistemology create a responsibility for the educator, student, and practitioner to 'walk the talk' of wellness. That means embarking on personal healing and wellness in order to help others.

health, in the context of neocolonial modernity, has become a modern Indigenous cultural imperative.

Conclusion

Aboriginal social work education has evolved out of a critical need for training of helpers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who will have the skills and abilities to meet the needs of Aboriginal people. The training that has emerged incorporates critiques of colonial history in order to contextualize the contemporary reality of Aboriginal ill health and social pathology. Aboriginal social work education is not cross-cultural social work where the assumption is that benevolence is extended to the less fortunate minority or disenfranchised group member of which the educator or practitioner is usually not a member. Rather, it is premised on Indigenous knowledge that encompasses Aboriginal philosophical and healing methods that can be incorporated into contemporary social work approaches to wellness. The values and ethics that stem from Aboriginal epistemology create a responsibility for the educator, student, and practitioner to 'walk the talk' of wellness. That means embarking on personal healing and wellness in order to help others. As Aboriginal social work pedagogy develops in order to continue the task of redressing the effects of colonization and neocolonialism, the commitment to a decolonizing pedagogy is a daunting and challenging, but necessary task. Our duty to the seventh generation demands it.

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Talking about the Aboriginal Community: Child Protection Practitioners' Views

Christopher Walmsley

Abstract

Child protection practitioners view Aboriginal communities as victim, adversary, participant, partner, and protector of children. These representations of communities are derived from interview data with 19 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child protection social workers in British Columbia, Canada. The representations of the community are informed by the practitioner's geographic relationship to the community and the length of community residency (including whether it's the practitioner's community of origin). Practitioners view communities as a victim or adversary when no relationship of trust exists with the community. Practitioners view communities having a participative or partnership role in child protection when trust has developed. When communities take full responsibility for children's welfare, practitioners view the community as the protector of children. No clear association was found between the different representations of the community and the practitioner's culture or organizational auspices. The practitioner's own vision of practice is believed to significantly influence the relationship that develops with the community.

Introduction

The community context has significant effects on children's welfare and can represent risk factors to wellbeing or contributions to resilience (Booth & Crouter, 1999; Werna, Dzikus, Ochola, Kumarasuriyar, 1999). Child welfare theorists stress the importance of community-based intervention to effective child protection practice (Burford & Hudson, 2000, Macdonald, 1997; Wharf, 2002). Family group conferencing, for example, involves community members in effective planning for the child's welfare (Burford & Hudson, 2000). Social network intervention at the neighbourhood level increases social support and decreases the risk of child maltreatment (Fuchs, 1995, p. 121). Community empowerment approaches to child welfare see solutions to community problems coming from the community and not "well-meaning outsiders" (Brown, Haddock, & Kovach, 2002, p. 147). Community social workers, it is argued, enhance community competence and create a positive social environment (Fellin, 1995, p. 264). While theorists and researchers stress the significance of community to practice, it is unclear how child protection practitioners think about community in practice. To what extent do practitioners consider the community when practicing child protection? More particularly, when community is a minority within the dominant society, and the practitioner is a member of the dominant society how is "community" represented in the practitioner's thinking? When the practitioner is a member of the minority community is it represented differently? This article outlines five ways in which child protection practitioners think about the community in the context of their protection practice with Aboriginal children and families.

Method

Participants

The sample comprised 19 participants recruited through the researcher's contacts with British Columbia (BC) child protection social workers. The participants met the following criteria: (1) a completed bachelor or master of social work degree, (2) at least two years full-time work experience as a child protection social worker, (3) employed by either

The study is informed by the social representations perspective that argues social representations structure and orient practitioners' thinking about action, and thereby constitute an important conceptual guide to practice action.

the BC Ministry for Child and Family Development (MCFD) or an Aboriginal child welfare organization in British Columbia, (4) had job responsibility to assess a child's risk of harm and the authority to remove a child from the family, (5) had extensive professional contact with Aboriginal communities. Specifically, the sample included seven Aboriginal women, eight non-Aboriginal women, and four non-Aboriginal men. Practice experience ranged from 2 to 20 years. Of the 19 participants, three had MSW degrees and 16 had BSW degrees. Six were first-level supervisors and 13 were "front-line" practitioners. Seven were employed at Aboriginal child welfare organizations and 12 were employed at MCFD. The participants lived and worked in small urban centres, rural communities and reserve communities in British Columbia, Canada. Eight local offices of the BC Ministry for Child and Family Development and four Aboriginal child welfare organizations in the province were represented.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at various work sites between June 1998 and October 1999, lasting 1.5 to 2 hours following an interview guide designed to explore, in part, the influence of the community context on practitioner's thinking about practice (other practice dimensions were also explored in the interview).

Data Analysis

A professional secretary transcribed the interviews and the researcher verified the accuracy of the transcription. The data were entered into the NUD*IST software program, and coded using: (1) the questions from the interview guide, and (2) naturally emerging categories from the data. Each interview was re-coded a second time at an interval of 2 to 6 weeks and the new coding verified against the initial coding. Reports were printed for each code and the data

analyzed for similarities, differences, variations, and negative instances. A summary of results was written for each code noting similarities and differences as well as themes and silences. The data were summarized and interpreted, and a draft of the study's findings given to each participant to review for accuracy, quality of interpretation and completeness. Participants had the opportunity to provide oral or written feedback. They were also invited to participate in two focus groups, one comprised of Aboriginal social workers and the other of non-Aboriginal social workers, to discuss and validate the findings. Revisions were made to incorporate participants' feedback and the data analysis process concluded.

The study is informed by the social representations perspective that argues social representations structure and orient practitioners' thinking about action, and thereby constitute an important conceptual guide to practice action. A social representation is defined as "a system of values, ideas, and practices that establish a consensual order among phenomena" and "enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange" (Moscovici in Duveen and Lloyd, 1993, p. 91).

Results

The Geography of Practice

Those interviewed for this study live in a variety of community contexts ranging from isolated reserve communities to regional town centres. The context in which practice occurs for some is circumscribed within a 3 kilometre radius of the office. Others practice within a series of small communities found in an 8 hour driving radius from the office by gravel road. Some communities are accessible only by air, whereas others require a combination of air and road travel. The differing geographical relationships to practice impact the way practitioners view the "community" as

When practitioners and community members live in distant geographical relationships to each other, a level of social distance and formality enters the practitioner-community relationship.

well as the community's understanding of child protection practice.

When practitioners and community members live and work in close proximity, the possibility of reciprocity in child protection is enhanced. Informal, non-crisis oriented interactions are possible as this Aboriginal practitioner in an Aboriginal organization describes:

> …we have very much an open door policy, although, you know, we try to schedule appointments and stuff, they never work, people are always popping in, and I think that's really good and people are coming in, they're asking why we're doing what we're doing and asking us to stand behind our decisions and…not only questioning how do we do the work that we do but giving direction as to where we should be going.

A MCFD practitioner in a small community confirms this sense of reciprocity:

> …we even got to the point where families themselves would be phoning and identifying when they felt they needed services or when they'd need respite or they were feeling that they were slipping and they wanted to come up with a plan ahead of time and they felt comfortable enough phoning us and talking to us directly.

If the practitioner is a member of the community, the sense of reciprocity is almost taken for granted as this Aboriginal practitioner in an Aboriginal organization reports:

> In the community we know everyone, we don't have to introduce ourselves. We go in, we know what the background is, we know the history…we go into the home, we know the family, we work out a plan…. With our community…everyone knows us, and they know the job we do, so the respect is there. The trust is there….

The Practitioner as Outsider

When practitioners and community members live in distant geographical relationships to each other, a level of

social distance and formality enters the practitioner-community relationship. To the community, the practitioner is the distant outsider who appears in the community as the external "other" to complete an investigation and determine whether a child is in need of protection. When the practitioner "goes in" for a short period of time, the community tends to view the practitioner as a temporary visitor:

> …a lot of time you'll hear comments from the community, "Well, oh yah, here they come, flying in, flying out".

The focus of work is the completion of a task -- often the assessment of a child's safety and the negotiation of an alternate care arrangement. But when the time allotted for the community visit is 1/2 to 1 day, little time remains for relationship development. The possibility of reciprocity in the community-practitioner relationship is much less when the focus of practice is investigation to determine a child's safety, and removal to ensure safety—usually outside the community.

The Practitioner as Community Resident

When a practitioner resides in the community, a different kind of child protection relationship is possible. While the practitioner knows community members and is visible in the community, the child protection possibility also contains a paradox. The practitioner's increased visibility and accompanying credibility brings decreased anonymity. There is a loss of personal privacy. The life of the practitioner is increasingly lived "in a glass bubble" or "fishbowl" and the distinction between public/professional life and a private/personal life becomes blurred. Life is lived with the community's full knowledge and this heightened visibility creates stresses and demands of its own.

Aboriginal practitioners who live and work in their communities of origin

Within the community, child protection is a practice by outsiders who investigate and remove children when safety is at risk. In this representation, practitioners have minimal relationships with the community; the community doesn't participate in child protection and has no identifiable role.

describe opportunities for supportive informal intervention outside the office, and the possibility of bringing a lifelong knowledge of the person to the interaction. But the lack of anonymity places demands on the practitioner for a lifestyle that conforms to community norms and is congruent with professional practice. An Aboriginal practitioner describes it this way:

> …everything we do here is basically seen by the communities. We are like in a fish bowl, you know, the life style we live in and outside the office people see. It has an impact and, I think that is also why we are looking at the type of life styles people have after hours. If they continue to go and 'party hardy' with some of their clients that doesn't sit well with who we are as an agency and come Monday morning I have to deal with that family.

One MCFD practitioner in a small community describes his "glass bubble" experience in a similar way:

> …you're working even when you're in the grocery store. You're working if you're walking down the street. You're perceived as working, you're known as the social worker to the town and your actions reflect on the work that you do.

The loss of anonymity in small communities creates opportunities for a greater level of reciprocity in community life as well as in the protection of children, but it brings with it a loss of privacy. It can also bring a strong sense of isolation for practitioners who are 'in but not of' the community, and can be a contributing factor to the high turnover of staff in isolated communities

In summary, the practitioner's geographic relationship to the community, and their status within the community as either a lifelong community member, an outsider, or a community resident informs the social worker's thinking about the Aboriginal community and its relationship

to child protection. The balance of the article describes practitioners' ways of viewing the Aboriginal community.

The Community as Victim

Some represent the community as a victim in child protection. They see a relationship of powerless dependency to the state and view their practice reinforcing the community's victimization. They find a lack of community interest or participation in child protection decision-making, and neither community leaders nor members take identifiable responsibility for children's welfare. A high level of internal community disorganization may exist and this translates into an absence of support services and alternate caregivers in the community. One community member may use the intervention of an external child protection practitioner as a threat against another member --perhaps as an expression of lateral violence. Within the community, child protection is a practice by outsiders who investigate and remove children when safety is at risk. In this representation, practitioners have minimal relationships with the community; the community doesn't participate in child protection and has no identifiable role. The condition of victimization is re-created for the community each time a social worker parachutes into a community, makes a brief assessment, and leaves with all the children at risk. This form of practice often reactivates the image of the "60s scoop" in the minds of the community. One MCFD practitioner comments:

> …you're going into these small Aboriginal communities and removing their children, you know. I don't like doing that, but you're also setting up or perpetuating something that has occurred for generations so the relationship that you're forming, well you're not forming a relationship, all you're doing is antagonizing what relationship may be there….it's just like a continuation of the 60's scoop….You'd get a call, say in a more disorganized

With an absence of community-based resources, the child is deemed at risk, and the practitioner sees no alternative but to remove the child from the community.

community…(that) a child's at risk, you go in and investigate. There would be very little involvement from community leaders, resource personnel that might be in the community such as a teacher or nurse or alcohol drug counsellor, and you'd be left to your own devices basically to plan for the child.

With an absence of community-based resources, the child is deemed at risk, and the practitioner sees no alternative but to remove the child from the community.

The Community as Adversary

Some represent communities as adversaries in child protection. The community is perceived as closed to outsiders, including the child protection practitioner, and an adversarial relationship with child protection intervention exists. Usually this is expressed as anger at the B.C. Ministry for Child and Family Development, and confrontation with its representatives. A minimal level of reciprocity with the child protection practitioner exists and there is a formal relationship with the community for the completion of investigation, removal, and alternative placement tasks. There are few opportunities to establish working relationships. When the community is represented as an adversary, the practitioner may serve as a lightening rod for the community's anger at child protection removals. An Aboriginal practitioner employed at MCFD describes walking onto a reserve in a community that wasn't her own:

There is a family that I have gone to on reserve, it's just almost the same. "You're coming here to take the kids". When I took the white social worker to the reserve…they said, "You're not allowed on the reserve". And I thought, "Holy Cow", but we were able to calm them down and let them know why we were there….

An MCFD practitioner describes her experience in the following way:

…when I worked up north, it was a

clear understanding…that you did not go onto the reserve unless you were invited and when they invited us it was for a protection concern and it always ended up as a result of a removal. We weren't ever able to put in family supports or child care workers or whatever.

Sometimes, the confrontation becomes politicized as one MCFD practitioner describes:

…when we do come out there…some homes may say, "No, you're not allowed in". "You've got to go get the Chief or whatever". And then depending upon the family, if they have political pull or not it will depend upon whether or not the Chief actually supports us and helps us or if he says, "No, you can't, I'm making some phone calls". And then it goes from there. Some families it depends upon who you are on the reserves. Some of the Bands don't care at all about them, you can do whatever with them, go and investigate, but if there's some political pull, it takes a lot with the lawyers and all that to get anywhere near the children and parents.

This practitioner continues:

…in some cases they'll go up the higher ranks and then we have to bow out and it becomes a big political mess rather than just going through the investigation. They get a lot of the higher Aboriginals involved, our management gets involved and a lot times people higher up may not know the actual what's going on…it just gets stuck up in politics rather than where it should be down below.

At its more politicized levels, the adversarial confrontation involves the police and the media.

The Community as Participant

Some practitioners represent communities as a participant in the protection of children. At its most minimal level, this is expressed when community

…because the family relationships are so intertwined and connected and strong in this community, we know that the work that we do has a rippling effect throughout the community.

members take responsibility to report child protection concerns to an Aboriginal child welfare organization or the Ministry for Child and Family Development. One MCFD practitioner describes this occurring once trust has been established with the community:

> …the calls we were receiving to investigate increased over the two years that I was there so that's also, to me, saying there is an increase in trust.

The community becomes a participant in child protection when social workers consult with the community in assessment and intervention planning. Sometimes this occurs through informal conversations with Band leaders, the Band social development worker, teachers, nurses, or daycare workers. An Aboriginal practitioner describes her approach this way:

> If I was going into a community I would phone and say, "Well who do I need to speak to about this?" I want to get some information on this and I am going to be coming out there in a couple of days, who do I need to touch base with?

At other times, consultation with the community is more formal through the organization of a case conference. The community is involved in child protection, but responsibility rests largely with the formal agency, although there is the beginning of a reciprocal relationship. Reciprocity in child protection practice can be expressed through community initiative to find or create alternate care resources. One MCFD practitioner describes it this way:

> …in some of the Aboriginal communities, there's a lot more use of extended family in times of crisis. There was, I mean, (a) lot of people were drinking, there was an acknowledgement that usually there was somebody who was sober enough and able enough to look out for the kids…. There was somewhere for the kids to go or some means of

protecting those kids…. We involved a lot of our people in the community in what we were doing.

The Community as Partner

Practitioners represent some communities as a partner in child protection suggesting mutual responsibility for child protection, and a reciprocal relationship based on mutual respect. Child protection intervention is acknowledged to have an effect on the entire community:

> …because the family relationships are so intertwined and connected and strong in this community, we know that the work that we do has a rippling effect throughout the community.

Social workers make conscious efforts to share decision-making with the community:

> We were going to follow through on what we said we were going to do, that our planning involved the Bands, involved extended family, if the family wanted that to happen, and we'd involve the school in the planning. So these types of things would take place and the input was valued and it was appreciated and that if at all possible, if we had any way possible of implementing it we would do so.

Another characteristic of the partnership is that members of the community contact the agency at non-crisis times to discuss child protection issues:

> We have also had teachers phone us, just to say, "You know, I think this family needs some support here, they need a visit from your office.

Sometimes children and youth contact the agency directly to make their needs known:

> We have had kids come in here and say, "Mom and Dad are drinking. They are fighting. There is no food. I am scared, I don't want to go home." They are feeling safe enough to come

Some communities have developed committee structures to enable the community to have an ongoing role in child protection.

in here and tell us that and so we would say, "OK, we will help, where do you want to be?".... We had a 17 year old come in and state that, "My Mom has been drinking for the past week. She parties and stuff. I need places to go and rest where there is no alcohol and no drugs". So we say, "OK, where do you want to be?" She says, "Well I want to be out of the community…where I can get some quiet and some rest". That is what we try and give them.

When a partnership exists, the agency and community share responsibility for child protection such as the creation of new childcare resources. An Aboriginal practitioner in an Aboriginal organization describes:

> …before we place children in there to ensure that they are going to be safe and taken care and not abused and used while they're in their home…we also get feedback from community members. Like we usually go through the Band social worker, and check with them or if they have… child welfare committees or social development committees, we'll ask them if they would support this home as a resource because it is going to be within their community and they will be best to know whether or not that would be a good place for the children to be in.

Some communities have developed committee structures to enable the community to have an ongoing role in child protection. One Aboriginal practitioner describes a committee and it's relationship to an Aboriginal child welfare organization:

> …they have a child welfare committee…we have been meeting with them a month at a time. You know, once per month in which they reviewed all of their cases that were ongoing with us, as well as the Bands GFA to find out if there are some issues, who is doing it and what needs to be done and, you know, what recommendations could we make…

Here there is clearly a reciprocal relationship between the community and the agency to ensure the protection of children.

The Community as Protector

Some practitioners represent the community as the principal protector of children with external child protection agencies playing a minimal to non-existent role. This representation is most often expressed by Aboriginal practitioners, and may re-create earlier representations of the Aboriginal community's approach to childcare before child welfare legislation was introduced. One Aboriginal practitioner sums it up this way:

> …traditionally, it wasn't uncommon for other members of the community to look after your kids and basically that's all that we're doing now.

Responsibility for children's welfare becomes a collective responsibility and community members intervene to create alternative care arrangements for children as needed. Grandparents, aunts and uncles are recognized as playing significant childcare roles. An Aboriginal participant describes it in the following way:

> …long ago our community was always community orientated. We were always, you know, I guess a community. Our connections are there. We know everyone, we're related. We help out…. We always knew how to look after our children, our extended family would come in, the grandparents would come in. It always happened, I mean the community got together and said, "Hey, we have a problem here. Our aunt over here needs a break from her children. Can someone in the family take over?" That happened. We didn't need a child welfare act and all that stuff….

A non-Aboriginal MCFD practitioner confirms this by describing how a community intervenes to protect children when the parents are unable:

Practitioners' thinking about the community is influenced by the community's openness to collaboration, the availability of support services, the distance the practitioner needs to travel to reach the community, the practitioner's vision of child protection practice and the practitioner's relationship history with the community.

Some of those families…still have a far stronger traditional sense so a number of things happen when they see unseemly behaviour or inappropriate behaviour. Mom and Dad are drinking, Mom and Dad are allowing a sexual abuser in the home, they will speak to them because that's the role of the Matriarch or the Chief, is they'll have a talk with them. Ah, you are not behaving properly, you need to do this. This is your job. And if the parents don't respond, they'll take the kids and I'll hear of it later. They'll say, "Oh, by the way, we have John and Jessie's kids now, in case you are looking they're here. And they're not getting them back until they straighten out." And you know, the funny thing, John and Jessie never say boo. They don't go to court. They don't phone the cops, they don't say peep, you know, they go, "Oh, ok", and either they keep drinking or they sober up real fast, but that's a strong family doing it's traditional role, child protection.

Conclusion

This study, an interpretation of practitioners' representations of the Aboriginal community, suggests actual relationships between child protection practitioners and Aboriginal communities are informed by these representations. Practitioners' thinking about the community is influenced by the community's openness to collaboration, the availability of support services, the distance the practitioner needs to travel to reach the community, the practitioner's vision of child protection practice and the practitioner's relationship history with the community. The community is often viewed as a victim or adversary when a relationship of trust has not developed between the community and the practitioner. When there is a relationship of trust, practitioners view community participation and partnership as possible in child protection. Practitioners may view the community as the children's protector when a community takes full responsibility for children's welfare.

In this study, no clear association was found between the differing representations of the community and the practitioner's culture or organizational auspices. This suggests the ways in which practitioners see the Aboriginal community is complex and requires further research. If the practitioner is living and practicing child protection in their community of origin, the complexities of practice may not yet be adequately understood. While this study identified the loss of personal privacy, the opportunity for informal intervention, and the possibility of bringing a lifelong knowledge of the person to the work, it did not discuss the challenge of dual relationships. To what extent do practitioners' relationships with extended family members and the family's history within the community create situations of conflicting loyalty for an Aboriginal practitioner in their community of origin? At the same time, if a non-Aboriginal practitioner lives in a distant geographic relationship to an Aboriginal community, but has an approach to practice that values community participation, is a different community-practitioner relationship possible? This study was limited by a small sample, one semi-structured interview for data collection, and interpretation by a non-Aboriginal researcher. Further research needs to be conducted by Aboriginal researchers focused on Aboriginal practitioners working within their community of origin to develop a fuller understanding of the ways in which child protection practitioners view the community.

An understanding of the significance of community within Aboriginal child welfare is important for all child protection practitioners. Teaching the significance of community to practice is needed to introduce social workers to different ways of protecting Aboriginal children, and to develop a commitment to the inclusion of community in practice.

An understanding of the significance of community within Aboriginal child welfare is important for all child protection practitioners.

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Abstract

A follow up to a two-year study of abuse and neglect of American Indian children looks at differences in perceptions of neglect of American Indian children found in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). Findings from an analysis of 17,000 cases of neglect of white or American Indian children were that the neglect of American Indian children, compared to Caucasian children, was more often associated with foster care placement, juvenile court petition, alcohol abuse of child or caretaker, violence in the family, and family receipt of public assistance. The neglect of Caucasian children, when compared to American Indian children, was more often associated with family preservation services, child or adult mental or physical problem, and inadequate housing. These data, from the 1995-1999 NCANDS, appear to confirm stereotypical assignations of neglect to American Indian families. This study supports the need for the direct participation of sovereign Indian nations in child protective investigation, treatment, and data collection, in order to create a more complete data system that will provide accurate numbers and characteristics of abused and neglected American Indian children.

Are They Really Neglected? A Look at Worker Perceptions of Neglect Through the Eyes of a National Data System

Kathleen Earle Fox

Introduction

Problems experienced by American Indian families date back to the first encounters with Europeans. Duran and Duran (1995) quote Jung in regard to the effect that Europeans had on other cultures:

> From Europe, that half-island, the white man came in ships, bringing awful diseases and firewater, and even intentionally selling infected clothing to destroy the population. . . Wherever the white man went, there was hell for the other nations; one has to be outside to understand (Jung, in Duran & Duran, 1995, p. 18).

Over the last four centuries of colonization, Americans of European descent attempted to eradicate or assimilate American Indian people, while individual Americans occasionally tried to idolize them. Bennet Dowler, M.D. (1857) decried the "Indian utopia" depicted in the "gorgeous fiction of Cooper, and the poetry of Longfellow, not to mention Catlin's flattering delineations" (p. 336). Included in Dowler's "documentary evidence" that Indians were not to be idolized were communications that stated:

- Very old persons are seldom seen among them; there is no doubt that a very large number of children fall victim to the 'hardening process,' to which they are unavoidably subjected who, in civilized life, would have been reared to useful maturity (Hanson, 1856, in Dowler, p. 339).

- They seem to possess very little stamina, and when disease once takes hold they succumb . . . One fruitful cause of disease among them, I think, is their manner of dressing (Haden, 1853, in Dowler, p. 342).

These statements, which today seem outrageous, were made within the decade before the Civil War, close to the low point of American Indian survival, when numbers of Native people had reached, from an estimated high of 10 million, an estimated low of approximately 250,000. Indian authors agree that the decimation of, conservatively estimated, two-thirds of the original inhabitants of North America (Weaver & Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1999) was due primarily to diseases

Throughout these years of despair and destruction, Native people have clung to the teachings of their ancestors in order to survive. Central to their teachings and survival is the understood sovereignty of American Indian nations. As sovereign nations, tribes should not be subjected to the child welfare policies of the U.S. government; rather, they should be solely responsible for the care of their children.

brought by Europeans and the forced relocation, starvation, and neglect of Indian people by the conquerors.

The destruction of American Indian people and families that began with diseases and outright warfare continued with the forced assimilation of primarily children, but of adults and families as well. Children were adopted, placed in foster families, or literally rounded up (Coolidge, 1977) and sent to boarding schools where their Native ways were discouraged and sometimes forcibly expunged through beatings or other punitive measures (George, 1997). A survey of states with large American Indian populations by the Association on American Indian Affairs between 1969 and 1974 found that 25%-35% of American Indian children had been removed from their homes of origin and placed in foster care, boarding schools, or adoptive homes (Byler, 1977; George, 1997). Many of the boarding school survivors returned to their tribes/nations and were unable to pick up the thread of family life, inadvertently continuing the legacy of abuse they themselves had experienced away from home (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1999).

Throughout these years of despair and destruction, Native people have clung to the teachings of their ancestors in order to survive. Central to their teachings and survival is the understood sovereignty of American Indian nations. As sovereign nations, tribes should not be subjected to the child welfare policies of the U.S. government; rather, they should be solely responsible for the care of their children. However, tribal sovereignty, which was written into the US Constitution and confirmed by court cases throughout American history (Canby, 1998), has been weakened by federal policy and practice. Only during the past few decades, with the passage of laws and policies such as the landmark Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, have tribes been able to once again assume the responsibilities taken from them. ICWA "calls for tribal

heritage protection and family preservation by mandating an end to the out-of-culture placements of Native American children" (George, 1997, p.173).

Modern citizens and agencies of the United States tend to downplay the negative aspects of joint American Indian/U.S. history. Thus the U.S. Department of Defense web site includes the following statement, from a public briefing in 1998:

> The trust relationship between the United States and American Indian tribes has many unique features that influence, in some fashion, most aspects of Indian law. Although this relationship may have begun as a force to control tribes, even to subjugate them, it now provides federal protection for Indian resources and federal aid of various kinds in development of these resources (U.S. Department of Defense, 1998, on line).

Indeed, there have been several beneficial programs designed to assist Indian nations in recreating the infrastructure needed to support child welfare and mental health programs. One example is the Promising Practices grant program of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which provided funds for the creation of culturally traditional mental health programs for children that have become models for other tribal communities (Cross, Earle, Echo-Hawk Solie and Manness, 2000). However, a statement that the trust relationship provides protection for Indian resources and federal aid for their development may be considered misleading and even inaccurate by many, as the amount of protection and federal aid varies dramatically with the political climate. Senator Tom Daschle, for example, recently reported that:

> According to the National Congress of American Indians, the President's proposed budget cuts Indian hospital and clinic construction by 56 percent, Indian school construction by 19

In summary, American policies, practice, and habits regarding Indian children have led to variations in attitudes toward and treatment of Native children and families by mainstream child welfare workers.

percent, and tribal college funding by 11.5 percent. The tribal COPS program is slated to be cut by 20 percent, the tribal courts program by 26 percent, and the Indian Housing Loan Guarantee Program by 83 percent… (Daschle, 2004)

Inaccurate and misleading statements regarding American Indians are found not only in official pronouncements from the U.S. government, but in history books and even in everyday conversation. An example is provided by the continued use of inaccurate terms such as Huron, which "appears to have originated among French persons as an aspersion on the hairstyle of Wendat or Wyandot[te] ancestors" (p. 103). Continued use of such terms is based, not on historical accuracy, but on habit (Miller, 1998). Indeed, the designation "Indian" itself is one such inaccurate term.

Native people are likely to ignore or overlook these misconceptions, while some members of mainstream society may use them as the basis of new, also inaccurate perceptions (Miller, 1998). This is true in the case of child neglect. Various authors over the past few decades have noted that perceptions of abuse and neglect vary depending on the observer. This has sometimes lead to unfounded allegations of abuse against American Indian parents, who have been labeled neglectful when there was no clear evidence of neglect in the eyes of the Indian community (Byler, 1977; Ishisaka, 1978; Horejsi, Heavy Runner Craig, & Pablo, 1992; Westermeyer, 1977). These authors suggest that untrained workers use their own cultural values to decide whether or not a child's home setting is the most appropriate place for him or her to live.

Within the past few decades, the child welfare system has been accused of racism due to insufficient and inequitable polices and services, slower responses to problems and less access to services for families of color (Hogan & Siu, 1988). Researchers continue to identify differences in perception between professional staff and

family members regarding behavior and other problems among American Indian youth (Fisher, Bacon & Storck, 1998), which continue to lead to differences in perception as to what constitutes abuse and/or neglect among American Indian families.

Workers' decisions to remove an American Indian child may be based on such things as the poverty of the household, alcoholism of one or both parents, or the absence of a parent. Workers may not appreciate the lack of value ascribed by Native people to material things and may not look farther than the household for other persons who may be involved with caring for the child, despite the large extended families characteristic of tribal communities (Red Horse, 1980). This may have led to significantly higher rates of reported neglect for American Indian children when compared to children of other races (Earle & Cross, 2001).

However, it is not the case that there are no problems of neglect in American Indian families. Nelson, Cross, Landsman and Tyler (1996) found in a study of 77 American Indian families from Oregon and Iowa that neglectful parents differed from those who were not neglectful on several variables. Parents who were neglectful were statistically significantly more likely to: have their first child as a teenager; have children outside marriage; have children with more than one father; have one more child than the comparison group; be divorced or separated; have multiple family problems; have substance abuse problems, criminal charges, and psychiatric treatment. However, caregiver history of neglect and having a heavy drinker in the house were not found to differ between the two groups, although over half the families in each group had these problems.

In summary, American policies, practice, and habits regarding Indian children have led to variations in attitudes toward and treatment of Native children and families by mainstream child welfare workers. This study was designed to

This study was designed to review mainstream attitudes toward the neglect of American Indian children through an analysis of 17,000 cases of neglect founded by mainstream child protective workers, in the largest abuse and neglect database maintained in the United States, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System.

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Methodology

Background of the Current Study

In 2000-2001, Casey Family Programs of Seattle sponsored a study of the abuse and/or neglect of American Indian children. This was one of five projects funded under the National Indian Children's Alliance (NICA) between Casey and the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). During Year 1 of the abuse/neglect study a survey was conducted of a 10% sample of Indian tribes/nations. Fifty-seven randomly selected[1] tribal workers were interviewed, along with twenty-one state Indian child welfare workers. Workers were asked to describe the child protective service in their tribe and state, what data are collected, and where the data reside. Findings indicate that data in the national reporting system were collected by state and county workers, and that these workers were only involved in approximately 60% of the incidents of abuse and neglect of American Indian children. The conclusion was that, since 40% of the cases were not included, data from Indian Country were inaccurate and misleading, and incidents of abuse and neglect were probably much higher than reported in the national database (Earle, 2000; Fox, 2003).

Year 2 of the study (Earle & Cross,

2001) consisted of an analysis of readily available data on abuse/neglect of American Indian children from major studies and large databases. As part of this study, a review of data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System[2] (NCANDS) was completed. The NCANDS was created in 1988 through an amendment to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA). CAPTA required that each state define abuse and neglect and collect data on all cases in the state. P.L. 100-294 (1988) amended CAPTA to establish a national data collection and analysis program on child abuse and neglect. NCANDS produced its first annual report in 1992, based on data from 1990. By 1998, all states were reporting some data to NCANDS (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

NCANDS data were analyzed by the author in 2001 using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data available to researchers in 2001 included data from the years 1995-1999 from all fifty states, but this information consisted entirely of state totals such as, for example, the total number of physical and sexual abuse cases reported by each state. Data on individual cases that could be used to look for relationships between variables such as race/ethnicity and type of abuse were available from only sixteen states (Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming). Although these states are not (except for Oklahoma) states that contain large numbers of American Indian children,

[1] Tribes were selected randomly from groups of different sizes, to provide a representative sample.

[2] Data made available by the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY have been used by permission. These data were originally supplied by the State Child Protective Service agencies and the Children's Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Neither the collectors of the original data, the funder, the archive, Cornell University or its agents or employees bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

Using the matched set of data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, it was found that Indian children were more likely than white children to be placed in foster care, to be the subject of a juvenile court petition; Indian children and their caretakers were more likely to have a problem with alcohol: Indian children were more likely than white children to come from families with violence among caretakers and who are receiving public assistance; and Indian children were less likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse and more likely to be victims of neglect than white children.

these data formed the basis of national reports of abuse and neglect on American Indian children through the year 2000 (Earle & Cross, 2001).

Statistical comparisons were made between white and American Indian children using chi-square tests for nominal data and t-tests for continuous data. An early finding was that reports regarding the abuse/neglect of American Indian children were inflated by the greater statistical likelihood of an American Indian child appearing more than once in the data base. This problem was addressed by choosing only the first case for each child, leading to a reduction in the total number of American Indian cases of abuse/neglect from 15,203 to 12,164 individuals. A matched set of white and American Indian children was then created. Children were matched by age, state, gender, Hispanic ethnicity and year of abuse/neglect incident. Using the matched set of data from the NCANDS, it was found that Indian children were more likely than white children to be placed in foster care, to be the subject of a juvenile court petition; Indian children and their caretakers were more likely to have a problem with alcohol: Indian children were more likely than white children to come from families with violence among caretakers and who are receiving public assistance; and Indian children were less likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse and more likely to be victims of neglect than white children.

The Current Study

In July of 2002, the NCANDS data retrieved from the 1995-1999 matched Indian/white data set were subjected to some additional analyses. Of the 24,237 detailed cases reviewed from the NCANDS, 71.6% were victims of neglect, 20.9% of physical abuse, and 7.6% sexual abuse. Approximately 52% (n=9080) of the neglected children were American Indian, and 48% (n=8268) white. The current report is the result of the analysis of the 8268 white and 9080 American Indian children who were neglected. SPSS was used to compare these cases, and chi square tests were used to measure statistical significance.[3]

Results

A comparison of the approximately 17,000 children who were neglected found that services provided varied significantly by race. As shown in Table 1, a higher percentage of American Indian children than white children were put in foster homes ($X2$ [1, N = 16,366[4]] = 49.578, p<.001)[5], and a higher percentage of American Indian children were the subject of a juvenile court petition ($X2$ [1, N = 15,950] = 11.271, p<.001). White children were more likely than American Indian children to be provided family preservation services ($X2$ [1, N = 15,674] = 4.645, p<.05).

[3] It is important to note that, due to the large number of cases, statistical significance was found even with differences of a few percentage points between white and American Indian children on some variables. This still indicates, however, that differences between the two groups did not occur by chance, and must be taken seriously as true indicators of characteristics that diverge.

[4] The number of cases is based on the number that included information on both race and, in this case, foster care. Blank cases were not included; this means that the number of cases varies for each finding.

[5] Chi-square results are read as follows: chi-square ['1', the degrees of freedom, means that the size of the crosstabulation table is 2rows by 2columns, Number of cases is 16,366] = the actual chi square value of 49.578, 'p' means the probability that results are due to chance, in this case 1 in 1000). Since results are not due to chance, these results indicate that there is a meaningful relationship between, in this case, white or American Indian race and placement in foster care.

TABLE 1

Services provided to neglected White and
American Indian Children 1995-1999

Variable	White (n=8268)	American Indian (n=9080)
Foster care services provided ***	22.6%	27.3%
Family Preservation services provided*	3.2%	2.6%
Juvenile court petition ***	14.7%	16.9%

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

Findings from the original study were that American Indian children are more likely than white children to come from homes where there is violence among caretakers and where the family receives public assistance.

Children who were reported as neglected also varied by mental or physical problem. As shown in Table 2, American Indian children were significantly more likely than whites to have a problem with alcohol (X2 [1, N = 10,800] = 18.496, p<.001). White children were significantly more likely to have a mental or physical problem (X2 [1, N = 2082] = 12.35, p<.001), to be emotionally disturbed (X2 [1, N= 15,553] = 9.974, p=.001), to have a learning disability (X2 [1, N = 15,466] = 9.383, p=.001), or to have a behavior problem (X2 [1, N = 15,451] = 13.877, p<.001).

TABLE 2

Selected Problems of Neglected White and
American Indian Children 1995-1999

Variable	White (n=8268)	American Indian (n=9080)
Child problem, mental or physical*	27.9%	21.3%
Child Problem with Alcohol***	.6%	1.5%
Child Emotionally Disturbed***	.9%	.5%
Child Learning Disability***	1.2%	.7%
Child Behavior Problem***	1.9%	1.2%

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

A similar trend was found among caretakers of children who were reported to be neglected. As shown in Table 3, caretakers of American Indian children were significantly more likely to have problems with alcohol (X2 [1, N = 11,342] = 125.033, p<.001), while caretakers of white children were significantly more likely to have a mental or physical problem (X2 [1, N = 977] = 33.246, p<.001), to be mentally retarded (X2 [1, N = 11,249] = 3.794, p<.05) or emotionally disturbed (X2 [1, N = 10,318] = 17.979, p<.001), to have a learning disability (X2 [1, N = 10,318] = 3.599, p<.05), or to have another medical problem (X2 [1, N = 841] = 14.165, p<.001).

TABLE 3

Caretaker Characteristics of Neglected White
and American Indian Children 1995-1999

Variable	White (n=8268)	American Indian (n=9080)
Caretaker mental or physical problem***	34.5%	18.3%
Caretaker problem with alcohol***	6.3%	12.5%
Caretaker mentally retarded*	1.1%	.8%
Caretaker emotionally disturbed***	1%	.3%
Caretaker learning disability*	.3%	.1%
Caretaker other medical problem***	11.2%	4.4%

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

Findings from the original study were that American Indian children are more likely than white children to come from homes where there is violence among caretakers and where the family receives public assistance. As shown in Table 4, the current analysis also found that among children who were reported victims of neglect, American Indian children were more likely than white children to come from homes where there was violence among caretakers (X2 [1, N = 1916]

= 5.841, p<.01), and where the family received public assistance (X2 [1, N = 11,459] = 5.518, p=.01). A new and surprising finding is that, in this database, the white children were significantly more likely to have inadequate housing than American Indian children (X2 [1, N = 1841] = 6.894, p<.01).

The only problem that was significantly more likely to be found among American Indian victims of neglect and their families was alcohol abuse. Various studies have reported a purported link between Native people and alcohol abuse. It is important to note, however, that "not all American Indians drink and not all who drink do so excessively."

TABLE 4

Home Characteristics of Neglected White and American Indian Children 1995-1999

Variable	White (n=8268)	American Indian (n=9080)
Violence between caretakers**	12.7%	16.6%
Inadequate housing**	20.5%	15.8%
Family receives public assistance**	21.5%	23.4%

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

Discussion

These findings rest on the accuracy and completeness of the national Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The NCANDS, despite its limitations, is considered the primary data source for information on the abuse and neglect of all children in the United States. The utility of NCANDS to determine levels of neglect in Indian Country is limited first, by the method of data collection. Since information is collected by state/county rather then by tribal workers, American Indian cases that occur on tribal land are not always included. Also, the findings of neglect or abuse are based on the perceptions of non-Native workers who may be unfamiliar with the culture. In addition, the Detailed Case Record data used for this review is only from 16, primarily non-Indian states. One large Indian state, Oklahoma, had over half of the Indian cases but in a separate analysis of data from Oklahoma in the NICA study, Oklahoma's results were similar to those from the other 15 states (Earle & Cross, 2001), strengthening the argument that the sample may be generalized to other states as well.

Despite this fact, it must be stated that results from the NCANDS regarding the neglect of Indian children are probably not accurate. What these results may show, however, is that there is a difference, by race, in how these cases are assessed and handled. Since data are collected by state and county (usually non-Indian) workers, they provide some insight into the view and actions of mainstream workers who make the determination of whether or not an American Indian child is a victim of neglect.

First, American Indian children who were found to be victims of neglect appear from this study to have been treated differently from white children. More Indian children received foster care services and were the subject of a juvenile court petition, while more white children received family preservation services.

Secondly, American Indian child victims of neglect and their caretakers were found to have fewer mental or physical problems than white victims and caretakers. Clearly, (white) caretakers who are emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, or who have a learning disability or medical problem are probably more likely to engage in neglectful behavior. The only problem that was significantly more likely to be found among American Indian victims of neglect and their families was alcohol abuse. Various studies have reported a purported link between Native people and alcohol abuse. It is important to note, however, that "not all American Indians drink and not all who drink do so excessively" (Gill, Eagle Elk, & Deitrich, 1997, p. 41), and that there are wide variations in rate among and within different Native tribes/nations. However, high rates of alcohol use and alcohol related accidents among American Indian adults and youth (US Dept Justice, 1999), and lifestyle differences such as peer-related binge drinking on a regular basis (Mail & Johnson, 1993; May, 1994), may

As stated by Hogan and Siu "Current treatment of minority children continues to reflect racial bias: the system responds more slowly to crises in minority families; such families have less access to support services such as day care and homemaker services . . ;and parents of color have been viewed as less able to profit from support services". Families and persons of color, they write, are more likely to be punished and Caucasian families helped when crises arise.

lead to a perception of higher rates of alcoholism anywhere in Indian Country. It is possible that this perception clouds the vision of a worker investigating an American Indian home where an allegation of neglect has been made.

American Indian victims of neglect were more likely to come from a violent home and/or a home where public assistance is being received, while white victims of neglect were more likely to come from a home where housing was considered inadequate. These findings may be interpreted either that poverty and violence are signs of neglect more often in American Indian homes, or that they are simply found more often in American Indian homes. Inadequate housing is certainly a problem for many American Indian families; yet it is not significantly related to a designation of neglect, when compared to white children.

Summary

These data, collected by state and county workers, seem to indicate that American Indian children are more likely than whites to be considered by mainstream social workers to be neglected if they or their caregivers use alcohol, receive public assistance, and come from a violent home. Poverty and alcohol use may be more common among the families of all American Indian children, and may not be indications of neglect. Similarly, the presence of violence in the home does not necessarily indicate neglect.

The factors associated with a designation of neglect of a Caucasian child are more various and tend to include mental and physical problems of caretaker and child that both limit the ability of an adult to care for a child and, in a child, that may lead to parental inattention and neglect of the child's needs.

Unlike emotional or medical problems, the use of alcohol found in Native communities is not always a constant characteristic. That is, one may

use alcohol freely for a period of time and then not use it. In addition there may be caretakers other than a child's parents who are involved with the child when the parent is unavailable. The extended family, clan, and community responsibility for children in American Indian society is well documented (Cross, 1986; Dykeman, Nelson & Appleton, 1995; Red Horse 1980).

This study also found that the American Indian children who are reported by mainstream workers to be neglected were more likely than whites to be placed in punitive circumstances (foster care; juvenile court). As stated by Hogan and Siu (1998) "Current treatment of minority children continues to reflect racial bias: the system responds more slowly to crises in minority families; such families have less access to support services such as day care and homemaker services . . ; and parents of color have been viewed as less able to profit from support services" (p. 493). Families and persons of color, they write, are more likely to be punished and Caucasian families helped when crises arise.

In Dowler's 1857 analysis, one of the studies he was trying to refute had been completed by Benjamin Rush. Dowler quoted Rush as follows:

> The treatment of children among the Indians tends to secure their hereditary firmness of constitution . . . The state of society among the Indians excludes the influence of most of those passions which disorder the body . . . Envy and ambition are excluded by their equality of power and property . . . There are no deformed Indians. Fevers constitute their only diseases. . . They appear strangers to diseases and pains of the teeth. If their remedies are simple, they are, like their eloquence, full of strength . . . (In Dowler, p. 336).

Dr. Rush, who was one of the signers of the American Declaration of Independence, knew and studied American Indian people almost a century

Since the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978, social workers and other professionals have begun to understand and even embrace American Indian sovereignty and responsibility for the rearing and care of their own children. This study highlights the need to further this understanding, and to encourage the continued greater participation of Indian people in decisions regarding the welfare of their children.

before Dowler. Perhaps by the 1850s the "benefits" of civilization had begun to take their toll on Native people's lives and psyches. Only within the past few decades has society come to recognize and accept that the mainstream approach to care may not be the most beneficial approach for American Indian families and children.

Since the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978, social workers and other professionals have begun to understand and even embrace American Indian sovereignty and responsibility for the rearing and care of their own children. This study highlights the need to further this understanding, and to encourage the continued greater participation of Indian people in decisions regarding the welfare of their children. It also supports the need for the involvement of American Indian people in the child protective system, as investigators, clinicians and data collectors. Only by the direct participation of sovereign Indian nations in child protective investigation, treatment, and data collection can a true measure of child abuse and neglect in Indian Country be obtained.

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Effects of an Aboriginal Cultural Enrichment Program on Adolescent Mothers' Self-Perceptions

Kathy Bent, Wendy Josephson, and Barry Kelly

Abstract

This study explored the effects of an Aboriginal cultural enrichment initiative on the self-concept of ten pregnant or parenting adolescent women, all but one of whom were of Aboriginal descent. The cultural enrichment activities were integrated into a program of support for adolescent mothers. Questionnaires were administered to the participants at the beginning and after six weeks of participating in the cultural enrichment component of the program. The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988) was used to measure global self-worth and self-perception across eight domains. Overall cultural identity, cultural identity achievement, cultural behaviours and sense of affirmation and belonging were measured using the 20-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Questionnaire (Phinney, 1998b). Individual audio-taped interviews were also undertaken following completion of the post-tests. After six weeks of the cultural enrichment program, the participants' cultural identity achievement scores increased significantly, and participants who had achieved a strong cultural identity also had higher levels of global self-worth. Average self-concept became more positive in the specific domains of job competence and behavioural conduct. In the interviews, participants expressed positive reactions to the cultural component of the program, and attributed positive personal changes to the cultural experiences it provided. The results support the conclusion that it is highly beneficial to incorporate a cultural component into services for Aboriginal youth.

The consequences of colonization and assimilation policies have included displacement, poverty, and disruption of families and communities among the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Policies such as land expropriation, residential schooling, and child welfare based on assimilation into mainstream Canadian society have had direct and concrete effects on Aboriginal peoples' physical, emotional and financial well-being (e.g., Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; York, 1990; Lee, 1992). These policies have also interfered with Aboriginal peoples' enculturation, the process of learning and experiencing their cultural identities and sharing their culture with their children. The disruption of enculturation has extended the damaging effects of colonization to later generations in a variety of ways, and has been identified as a contributor to high rates of incarceration and suicide among Aboriginal youth (e.g., Aboriginal Justice Implementation Committee, 1999; Proulx & Perrault, 2000; Strickland, 1997; Tester & McNicoll, 2004; Walters, Simoni & Evans-Campbell, 2002).

It is hypothesized that enculturation promotes the development of pride in one's heritage, which in turn can increase an individual's overall sense of self-worth. Thus, policies based on assimilation into mainstream Canadian society may systematically undermine the self-worth of Aboriginal individuals. This would compound the economic and social damage done by such policies, because self-worth can be an important source of personal strength and resilience (e.g., Berlin, 1987; Rosenthal, 1974; Schinke, 1996; Zimmerman, Ramirez, Washienko, Walter & Dyer, 1998). In recognition of this,

Adolescence is a time marked by identity formation. Identity formation is thought to be one of the most important psychosocial developmental processes that occur, because once identity is established, a firmer sense of self evolves.

Aboriginal communities have successfully established a trend toward incorporating cultural perspectives into services for Aboriginal people, in areas as diverse as child and family services, health, justice, and education (see Bennett & Blackstock, 2002; Proulx & Perrault, 2000). For example, an alternative Aboriginal justice program has been developed in which Aboriginal offenders have the opportunity to participate in a diversion process that includes a retribution component made up of traditional activities (Mallett, Bent & Josephson, 2000).

Although a sense of pride in one's heritage is likely to be important during any stage in life (Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 1996), the transition from childhood to adulthood involves social, emotional, physical and cognitive changes that can make this stage of life particularly difficult for some adolescents, even under the best of conditions (Harter, 2003). Adolescence is a time marked by identity formation. Identity formation is thought to be one of the most important psychosocial developmental processes that occur, because once identity is established, a firmer sense of self evolves. A stronger sense of self has been linked to healthier functioning (e.g., Bruner, 1997).

The most prominent identity formation theory has been that of Erik H. Erikson (1963, 1968). Erikson used the term *identity crisis* to describe the state of confusion experienced by adolescents as they grapple with the notion of who they are as a person. Erikson's theory of identity formation alluded to the existence of cultural influences on the process of identity formation but did not examine them specifically. Later research (Phinney, 1998a; DuBois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale & Hardesty, 2002) has found evidence of a series of stages in ethnic or cultural identity that parallels and supports adolescents' progress toward a meaningful sense of personal identity. Phinney (1998a) summarizes the process as beginning with a lack of concern

with cultural identity. At this point, the young person will be in a state of *identity diffusion*, in which there is little interest in cultural identity, or a state of *foreclosure*, in which cultural identity is merely based on the opinions of others. This is followed by a period of *moratorium*, exploration and search for deeper and more personal meaning in important aspects of the adolescent's culture. The stage that then emerges, called *identity achievement*, is characterized by a clear, confident and personally meaningful sense of cultural identity. Phinney's review of the research evidence supports the proposition that minority group adolescents who reach the stage of cultural identity achievement also develop a stronger sense of self and a more positive self-concept, compared with other adolescents in that minority group. Not surprisingly, though, there has been considerable variation from one cultural group to another in this effect, and it is unfortunate that Aboriginal peoples have rarely been included in these studies. (Phinney, 1996, 1998a).

For adolescent single mothers, the task of coping with the challenges of adolescent development and early parenting simultaneously can be daunting. Indeed, some researchers state that this can create stress levels that exceed "the additive stresses of each life phase" (Pasley, Langfield & Kreutzer, 1993, p. 329). This increased stress can lead to a multitude of serious psychosocial problems. Incidences of child abuse by the adolescent parent, drug abuse, poverty, poor educational attainment, suicide and depression are just some of the problems mentioned in the research literature (Altman Klein & Cordell, 1987; Kissman, 1990; Mylod, Borkowski & Whitman, 1997). Adolescent mothers who have a negative self–concept appear to be especially at risk for these problems, and also have more difficulties raising their children (Hurlbut, McDonald, Jambunathan, & Butler, 1997; Hess, Papas & Black, 2002; Meyers & Battistoni, 2003). The effects of all these stressors may be further exacerbated for Aboriginal

Regardless of culture, these social changes have made little difference to the economic disadvantages and psychosocial problems that most sole support female adolescent parents must endure.

adolescent mothers, due to the additional life stressors that result from experiencing prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives (Dion, 2003). Enculturation could, therefore, be especially important to them.

Research reveals a steady increase in sole support female adolescent families over the past three decades (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). This phenomenon is reported to be largely due to a number of social and economic changes that have occurred in Canadian society since the 1960s. The most notable changes are the increased acceptance of having a baby out of wedlock and the increase in the number of women in the labour force. Regardless of culture, these social changes have made little difference to the economic disadvantages and psychosocial problems that most sole support female adolescent parents must endure. For that reason, a number of programs designed to address some of the issues faced by adolescent parents have been implemented in the City of Winnipeg (APIN, 1999).

One of these programs, Resources for Adolescent Parents (RAP), was developed by New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families (formerly Children's Home of Winnipeg). New Directions is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1885. The mission of New Directions is constantly evolving as the needs of its community change, guided by operating principles based on integrity, honour, holism and respect. At the time when we became involved in this research project, the mission was articulated as being "to develop the potential of children, youth and families in their communities and to foster social, emotional and educational health" (New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families, 2000; 2004). To accomplish this mission, New Directions has developed more than a dozen programs to provide services to various segments of the population.

RAP was designed to provide adolescents under the age of 18 with

services in areas that include academics, pre/post natal education, parenting education and resources, employment search, counselling, advocacy, transportation and nutrition support, and cultural programming. It was developed and implemented in 1983 in response to the needs arising from a growing number of sole support female adolescent families in the City of Winnipeg (Taylor, 1990). The RAP program changes in response to needs in the community and the individual needs of its participants, but typically includes three service objectives. The first is to provide assistance to clients in obtaining meaningful full-time or part-time employment, or developing a career plan and becoming enrolled in an educational program. The second objective is to help the client attain an increased sense of self-worth and personal empowerment in order to take control over the events in her life. The third objective is to help clients develop and enhance parenting skills, life skills and social skills.

Over the 16 years of its operation, there always has been an Aboriginal[1] cultural component because of the high number of Aboriginal adolescents utilizing the program. At program inception, 60% of the participants were of Aboriginal descent (Kipperstein & Taylor, 1986). Those numbers later increased to 90%. Therefore, the program has developed a more activity-based, in-depth Aboriginal cultural component. This program component consists of traditional ceremonies such as circles, smudges, feasts, pow wows and sweats. These traditional ceremonies are integrated into all aspects of the RAP curriculum so that the participants engage in these activities on an ongoing basis. As well, traditional teachings are delivered by an Aboriginal facilitator and an on-site Elder, who is also available for consultations when needed. In this manner, the participants have the opportunity to learn about and participate actively in their Aboriginal culture.

The purpose of this study was to

Nine of the ten research participants were of Aboriginal descent. The one participant who said that she did not consider herself to be of Aboriginal descent nevertheless chose to participate in the Aboriginal cultural component of the program, and reported personal circumstances that included extensive interest and involvement in Aboriginal culture prior to attending the program. We therefore included her in the research program.

explore the effects of the Aboriginal cultural enrichment component of the RAP program on its participants. We investigated the relationship of cultural identity to overall self-worth and to self-perception across eight specific domains. We predicted that adolescents who had a strong level of cultural identity would also have higher levels of global self-esteem than those who had a lower level of cultural identity. Further, we predicted that participating in the Aboriginal cultural enrichment component of RAP program would lead to an increase in participants' sense of cultural identity and also have positive effects on the participants' overall sense of self worth.

Method

Questionnaire measures of self perception and level of identification with Aboriginal culture were administered to RAP participants before they began the cultural enrichment activities of the program, and again six weeks later. Half hour individual interviews were also conducted after six weeks of participation in cultural activities. Prior to the study, all instruments were tested on a group of adult single mothers from another New Directions program, Resources for Women, to determine the appropriateness of the questions. One of the questionnaires was altered, but no items were deleted. In the questionnaire that was altered, the word "ethnic" was changed to "cultural" because it more adequately reflected the nature of the study.

Participants

Participants in the RAP program are referred through Child and Family Services, other Social Service agencies, or through word of mouth by past program participants. Intake into the program is continuous, and participants remain in the program for as long as they choose to, up to the age of 18. After turning 18, participants sometimes make use of another New Directions program,

such as the Parent Support Program. RAP participants are unmarried and not employed. Their educational levels have ranged from grade six to grade eleven. Participants receive a weekly training allowance while attending RAP.

The sample for this study was drawn from the twenty pregnant or parenting adolescent women who were voluntarily participating in the RAP program at the time and had not yet begun the Aboriginal cultural component. Fifteen of them agreed to participate in the research project, had consent for participation from their parents or guardians, and completed pre-test questionnaires. However, five of them left the program before the 6-week post-test.

The remaining ten research participants completed pre-test and post-test questionnaires and participated in the interview component of the study. The participants ranged in age from 15 to 17 years: Seven were 17, two were 16 and one was 15. All ten were living in the home of parents or guardians, including one who was living in a foster home. Five participants were pregnant and the other five had one or more children under the age of six. Nine of the ten research participants were of Aboriginal descent. The one participant who said that she did not consider herself to be of Aboriginal descent nevertheless chose to participate in the Aboriginal cultural component of the program, and reported personal circumstances that included extensive interest and involvement in Aboriginal culture prior to attending the program. We therefore included her in the research program.

Materials

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Questionnaire (Phinney, 1998b) was used to measure the adolescents' level of identification with Aboriginal culture. It contains twenty items, which respondents answer on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4, with labels ranging from 1 =

The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988) has participants describe their self-concept in each of eight domains: scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, job competence, romantic appeal, behavioural conduct and close friendship.

strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Two of the questions are worded in a negative direction and reverse scored (e.g., "I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my cultural group.") Respondents' average score on the items is used to assess the strength of their overall cultural identity. Higher scores indicate a stronger level of cultural identity. Subsets of items are also averaged to yield subscale scores on *cultural identity achievement* (7 items; e.g., "I have a clear sense of my cultural background and what it means to me."), *cultural behaviours* (2 items; e.g., "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs."), and *affirmation and belonging* (5 items; e.g., "I have a lot of pride in my cultural group and its accomplishments").

The Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988) has participants describe their self-concept in each of eight domains: scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, job competence, romantic appeal, behavioural conduct and close friendship. There are 5 questions associated with each of the eight domains. Participants answer 5 additional questions about their global self-worth, how generally happy they are with themselves as a person, for a total of 45 questions. Respondents express either a positive or a negative self-perception in response to each of the 45 questions, and also report the degree to which they hold that perception. For example, one question from the behavioural conduct subscale is "Some teenagers usually do the right thing BUT Other teenagers often don't do what they know is right." Participants first decide which of the two statements is more true for them and then mark whether that statement is "Sort of true for me" or "Really true for me." Responses are scored on a 4-point scale, from 1 (a strongly held negative self-perception) to 4 (a strongly held positive self-perception).

In a second part of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents, there are 16 items in which participants indicate how important each of the eight specific self-concept domains is to them. An example of a question from the close friendship subscale is "Some teenagers don't care that much about having a close friend they can trust BUT Other teenagers think its important to have a really close friend you can trust." Participants used the same "Really true for me" and "Sort of true for me" response choices to indicate how important or unimportant they found each of the domains to be.

Three different raters (2 classroom facilitators and 1 case manager) each completed a teacher's rating scale containing 16 items that corresponded to the eight different domains found in the self-perception questionnaire. These ratings are included to allow for a comparison of the adolescents' self-perceptions with the perceptions of other observers of their behaviour.

An example of an item from the romantic appeal subscale is "This individual is not dating someone she is romantically interested in OR This individual is dating someone she is interested in." Raters chose the statement that they considered to be more true of the individual in question, and then indicated whether the statement was "Really true" or "Sort of true."

Seventeen questions relating to cultural identity and the participants' self-perception were constructed for the interview component of the study. Questions were open ended to allow the participants to express themselves as freely as possible. The questions addressed five areas of interest: the RAP program generally (2 questions) and the cultural enrichment program (6 questions), Aboriginal culture (2 questions), relationships with children, family and hers (4 questions), and self-perceptions (3 questions).

Procedure

The study was explained verbally to the adolescents in a group setting and their participation was requested. A written outline of the project that contained an informed consent form was then distributed to the adolescents. The participants were asked to sign the consent form and to have their parent or guardian sign the form, if they agreed to participate. The adolescents were provided with clear instructions to read the material carefully and return the consent form by a particular date. They were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time if the presented questions made them feel uncomfortable. Upon receiving informed consent, the questionnaires were administered to the participants at the beginning and after six weeks of involvement in the cultural enrichment component of the RAP program. The individual audio-taped interviews were undertaken following completion of the post-tests. They lasted approximately one half hour. Participants were given $10 at each testing to reimburse them for their expenses (e.g. child care). All data were coded to ensure anonymity and the recorded tapes were destroyed once the data were analyzed.

Results

Cultural Identity

Participants' average scores for the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Questionnaire are presented in Table 1. Single sample t tests were conducted, comparing participants' average scores to the scale value for "average" on the Multigroup Cultural Identity scores (Phinney, 1998a). Participants were significantly higher than this standard for affirmation and belonging, and on their overall cultural identity score, even before beginning the cultural activities at New Directions. After six weeks of Aboriginal cultural activities, participants were significantly higher than the standard average on all of the cultural identity scores except cultural behaviour.

To see if any of these measures of self-concept had changed significantly after 6 weeks of participation in the cultural component of the RAP program, a series of one-tailed paired t tests was conducted[2]. Significant increases were found in participants' level of cultural identity achievement, but not in their overall cultural identity or either of the other two subscales.

TABLE 1

Average Cultural Identity Scores, Before Beginning the Cultural Program and Six Weeks Later

Score	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Cultural Identity Achievement	2.43 (.85)	2.73* (.62)
Cultural Behaviours	2.60 (1.17)	2.40 (.84)
Affirmation and Belonging	2.98 (.77)	3.06 (.58)
Overall Cultural Identity	2.61 (.67)	2.75 (.45)

Note: Values in parenthesis are standard deviations. Underlined values differ from the established scale average of 2.0, at the level of p<.05. All differences from pre-test to post-test were tested for significance with a one-tailed t test, df = 9, * p <.05 for this test.

Global Self-Worth and Self-Perception

Participants' average self-perception scores are displayed in Table 2, which also includes the importance ratings for the specific domains of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents. One-tailed paired t tests were conducted to determine whether overall cultural identity and its subscales had changed significantly in the six weeks that had elapsed between the pre-test and the post-test. Global self-worth changed in a positive direction, but this change was not statistically significant.

The study was explained verbally to the adolescents in a group setting and their participation was requested. A written outline of the project that contained an informed consent form was then distributed to the adolescents. The participants were asked to sign the consent form and to have their parent or guardian sign the form, if they agreed to participate.

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[2] Because of the small sample size, a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was also conducted to determine whether non-parametric statistics would have been more appropriate. The results were virtually identical.

TABLE 2

Average Self-Perception and Importance for Eight Domains and Globally,
Before Beginning the Cultural Program and Six Weeks Later

Domain	Importance		Self-Perception	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Scholastic Competence	**3.25** (.54)	**3.35** (.54)	**2.52** (.53)	**2.52** (.59)
Social Acceptance	**2.25** (.86)	**2.35** (.82)	**2.92** (.53)	**2.84** (.68)
Athletic Competence	**2.05** (.55)	**2.30** (.63)	**2.40** (.69)	**2.30** (.46)
Physical Appearance	**2.70** (.86)	**2.80** (.63)	**2.26** (.41)	**2.36** (.57)
Job Competence	**3.20** (.71)	**3.50** (.53)*	**2.66** (.63)	**3.02** (.39)*
Romantic Appeal	**3.15** (.71)	**3.30** (.67)	**2.76** (.48)	**2.76** (.54)
Behavioural Conduct	**2.90** (.70)	**3.05** (.60)	**2.68** (.58)	**3.04** (.56)**
Close Friendship	**3.05** (.72)	**2.85** (.23)	**3.10** (.51)	**2.82** (1.03)
Global Self-Worth			**2.96** (.56)	**3.02** (.48)

Note: Values in parentheses are standard deviations. All differences from pre-test to post-test were tested for significance with a one-tailed t test, df=9.

* p <.05   ** p<.001

Statistically significant improvements in self-concept were evident in two domains, job competence and behavioural conduct. The value that participants placed on the job competence domain also increased significantly over the six weeks of the study.

Because changes in self-perception may reflect actual changes in competence and behaviour, we wanted to see how well the participants' self-perceptions corresponded to others' observations of their outward behaviour. The ratings that had been provided by the three RAP staff members were averaged for each participant in each domain. These were correlated with the adolescents' self-perception scores for that domain in the post-test, which referred to the same time period that staff members' observations would have covered. The correlations are presented in Table 3.

Participants' self-perceptions corresponded very closely to their teachers' and case-workers' observations in the areas of behavioural conduct and job competence, the domains of their lives that these young women might have been most likely to demonstrate in the RAP program. A somewhat more modest, but marginally significant[3], correspondence also existed between participants' self-perception and those of staff in the domains of scholastic competence and romantic appeal. Academic services are a part of the RAP program, so is not surprising that staff and participant ratings in the scholastic domain would correspond well. It is less obvious why romantic appeal self-perceptions might correspond so well with staff ratings. However, since an objective of the RAP program is to help clients develop and enhance their social and parenting skills, it seemed likely that romantic relationships

[3] The small sample size in this study reduces the power of the statistical tests to detect effects that exist in the population. Therefore, results that have a chance probability level of .10 to .05, usually considered to be of "marginal" significance, are reported along with those that have a chance probability of .05 or less, the traditionally accepted level for statistical significance. It is appropriate to treat marginal results with more caution, subject to replication with a larger sample of participants.

would have been discussed with staff, especially because of the challenges of balancing romantic relationships with parenting commitments.

Cultural identity achievement was significantly related to another important domain, romantic appeal.

TABLE 3

Correlation Between Participants' Self-Perception Scores and Staff Perceptions

Domain	Correlation
Scholastic Competence	**.43** †
Social Acceptance	.07
Athletic Competence	-.24
Physical Appearance	.27
Job Competence	**.84** **
Romantic Appeal	**.51** †
Behavioural Competence	**.90** **
Close Friendships	.23

† p<.10   * p<.001

The Relationship of Cultural Identity to Self-Concept

It was predicted that adolescents with higher levels of cultural identity would experience a more positive self-concept. Prior to beginning the cultural component of the RAP program, none of the aspects of cultural identity was a significant contributor to global self-worth for these young women. On the other hand, cultural identity did appear to make a positive contribution to self-concept in the areas of relationships and social acceptance. Overall cultural identity and all of its component subscales were significantly related to self-concept in the very important domain of close friendships. Cultural identity achievement was significantly related to another important domain, romantic appeal. Overall cultural identity had a marginally significant relationship to both romantic appeal and social acceptance. It also had a marginally significant negative relationship with self-perception in the domain of job competence.

After six weeks, patterns were markedly different, as predicted. Global self-worth had a significant correlation with cultural identity achievement and marginal positive correlations with both

TABLE 4

Correlation Matrix for Self-Concept and Cultural Identity Before Beginning the Cultural Program and Six Weeks Later

Self-Concept Domain	Cultural Identity Achievement		Cultural Behaviours		Affirmation and Belonging		Overall Cultural Identity	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Scholastic	.11	.27	.14	.32	.08	.18	.21	.38
Social Accept.	.45	.34	.32	**.45**†	.40	.33	**.54**†	**.45**†
Athletic	-.18	-.11	.11	-.12	.02	-.23	-.10	-.21
Physical Appearance	.12	**.54**†	.17	.34	.12	.34	.04	**.50**†
Job Competence	-.35	.27	-.39	.01	-.37	.17	**-.44**†	.23
Romantic	**.57***	**.60***	.30	.41	.37	**.46**†	**.50**†	**.61***
Behavioural	.40	.15	.26	.15	.39	.01	.42	.10
Close Friendship	**.58***	**.51**†	**.59***	**.53**†	**.63***	.37	**.57***	**.58***
Global Self-Worth	.00	**.56***	-.06	.28	.07	**.49**†	-.06	**.50**†

Note: N=10

† p<.10   *p<.05

Participants were asked how they felt about the Aboriginal cultural activities, whether they considered themselves to be Aboriginal, whether the ceremonies and the elder had been helpful to them, what aspects of the Aboriginal culture component they found most interesting, and which they would like to see changed.

overall cultural identity and the affirmation and belonging subscale. Physical attractiveness went from being unrelated to culture to being marginally related after exposure to the cultural enrichment program. The marginally significant relationship of overall cultural identity to social acceptance was replicated after six weeks, and social acceptance also developed a relationship with the cultural behaviour subscale. In the area of job competence, the pattern of change went from a marginally negative relationship to being unrelated or, if anything, positively related to culture. Close friendship generally retained a strong connection with cultural identity scores, although the pattern was not quite as strong as it had been at the beginning of the program.

Interview Results

Interviews with such a small sample are necessarily impressionistic. Therefore dominant themes expressed by the majority of participants were identified. A content analysis was conducted to identify common themes. The results, including some direct quotations of the respondents, follow.

Reactions to the RAP Program.
Participants were asked what they found most interesting about the program, and what they would like to see changed. On the whole, the participants found the entire RAP program to be interesting and reported enjoying the outings most. The most frequently reported aspect of the program that the adolescents would like to see changed was the academic component, in that they would have liked to receive high school credit for the work they did in this area.

Q1. The activities that participants said they found to be of greatest interest included:

- going on field trips (e.g. Children of the Earth High School, Indian and Métis Friendship Center and Aboriginal Center, pool hall, YWCA)

- Native studies (e.g. participating in a sharing circle, sweats, sweet grass, sage)

- learning about new things (e.g. birth control, doing a resume)

- We can talk about stuff here we can't talk about in a regular classroom

- the crafts; we made bags, beading, stuff like that

- when you get to meet the people [other participants] in the class

- when Bo comes here. She's the health nurse; the activities she does, she's suppose to be doing one on Monday about the drunk Barbie

Q2. When asked what areas of the RAP program they would like to see changed:

- four participants reported they were satisfied with the entire RAP program and would not change anything

- five participants reported they would like to get high school credit for the academic work

Two other participants made the following comments, respectively:

- they say they're going to do something and they don't (e.g. resume making)

- they are not very strict here; there is like no rules here, people just sit around and socialize

Cultural Enrichment Component. Six questions were asked in this area. Participants were asked how they felt about the Aboriginal cultural activities, whether they considered themselves to be Aboriginal, whether the ceremonies and the elder had been helpful to them, what aspects of the Aboriginal culture component they found most interesting, and which they would like to see changed.

Q3. Most of the participants (seven of the ten) responded positively regarding how they felt about the Aboriginal cultural component. The positive responses included:

- I don't know much about my culture and I'm finding things out, what happened before, how our people were treated

- cause it's interesting

9 participants said they did not know how participating in Aboriginal ceremonies might have helped them.

- I like learning about other cultures
- because I haven't lived with my family all my life so ever since I've been here I'm starting to learn about the culture
- It's [culture is] important because it's a big part of your life

Three participants gave negative responses. At least one of the negative response appeared to be due to the respondent's father's past negative experiences with Aboriginal culture and therefore did not seem to not reflect the participant's own impressions. Indeed, she mentioned that she would like to draw her own conclusions in the future, but currently she did not think very highly of the cultural activities. The negative comments were:

- I don't really care much about it because I was brought up to not believe in it too much, my Dad says it was nothing but bad stuff
- It's fun but I don't make too much about it
- when we went to the Aboriginal Center I didn't like what the lady [elder] was saying, giving us heck for not wearing dresses
- they talk about them but I haven't seen anything yet, just went to the Aboriginal center

Q5. When asked how participating in the Aboriginal ceremonies had helped them, one participant reported that the cultural component helped her learn more about her culture.

- just to be learning about it, I didn't know anything about it before

The other 9 participants said they did not know how participating in Aboriginal ceremonies might have helped them. This may have been because the question did not refer to specific ceremonies or activities, leaving some respondents uncertain of its meaning. To the extent that participants' reactions could be assessed, there seems to have been a mixture of positive and negative reactions. Their additional comments were:

- don't know, the elder just got back so

haven't participated in too much

- haven't really done any ceremonies here, but have outside the program and it helped a lot
- don't feel it [going to the Aboriginal center] was useful, didn't learn anything
- we just did smudging, that's about it; it makes me feel closer to my culture

Q6. All but two of the participants enjoyed participating in the Aboriginal cultural activities. The activities reported to be most interesting were:

- beading, the crafts
- the outings, went to the Aboriginal center, played pool
- making posters about our culture, had to look up culture stuff on the computer; I found some stuff about how high their voices go when they sing

Q7. Six participants felt the Elder had not been very helpful. This was likely due to the fact that the Elder happened to have been away for much of the time they had spent in the program. Besides two, who simply said "no" to question 7, three mentioned that they had not had individual contact with her, or had not spoken to her

- no, she speaks to us in a group
- yes, she's the one who does all the native stuff. I have not spoken to her one-on-one

The other four participants reported positive responses to the Elder

- yeah, you can tell her anything and she'll just tell you what to do about it
- yeah, when she comes in, just her being here, and the way she speaks; she is really humble, like she's nice
- I guess so, she has talked to us in class and stuff, when she talks to us, she gives us a lot of information. She tells us about videos and we watch them. Not personal problems.

Q8. Eight participants reported that the cultural component did not need any changes. The other two gave the following responses:

I would like to see more powwows, hoop dancing, stuff like that

Interview responses indicated that most participants had positive feelings towards the cultural teachings and activities. Participants reported gaining a deeper and more personally meaningful understanding of their culture, and appeared to be integrating it into their new role as mothers.

- that they get into more detailed stuff, like this is just about a little taste of Aboriginal culture

Q10. When asked how they thought they would use the cultural information from the program, most participants (seven of the ten) reported that they would use it to teach their children about their culture. Responses included:

- some day my child will ask me and I don't want to just sit there and know nothing

- I can teach my child about the culture

- There is too much racism out there so I'll tell my child about it

- I want my child to know as much as he can about his culture

Three participants offered other suggestions for how they would use the information.

- to educate other people who don't know

- probably just to make dream catchers and stuff like that

- so I can understand the culture

Interview responses indicated that most participants had positive feelings towards the cultural teachings and activities. Participants reported gaining a deeper and more personally meaningful understanding of their culture, and appeared to be integrating it into their new role as mothers. These results are consistent with the quantitative findings, which show a stronger linkage between cultural identity and the adolescents' self-worth after six weeks of exposure to the RAP program.

Responses About Aboriginal Culture. Two questions were asked regarding how the participants felt about Aboriginal people and their cultures, and whether they participated in Aboriginal cultural activities outside the program.

Q9. Eight of ten respondents said they participated in Aboriginal cultural activities outside the RAP program. The other two did not currently participate in Aboriginal cultural activities outside the program, but had done so at least once during childhood.

- No; when I was 6 or 7, I went to a powwow through school

- I used to, when I was about six, my aunties and uncle took me, I haven't gone to anything else since I was six; parents don't participate

Q16. When asked about their feelings toward Aboriginal people, five participants said that they felt the same toward Aboriginal people as toward anyone else.

- It depends on what kind of people, I don't like rowdy ones [Aboriginal people], sometimes I met rowdy ones on my reserve

- I just see them as people. Before I didn't realize about the culture and now I do.

- everyone has problems, white people too

- The same as I feel toward anyone else, when people put Aboriginal people down, sometimes it's true so it doesn't bother me

- the same as with other people

One participant said she felt better around Aboriginal people. The other three respondents commented instead about how they felt when people put down Aboriginal people in a racist manner.

- The area I lived in was very bad for that, it was hard for me to go to school there, like I stuck out in a whole crowd of white kids, kids called me names when I walked down the halls at school

- It disgusts me when people say bad things about Aboriginals, I don't see why they think they are better, they are probably worse

- I get along well with all Aboriginal people that I know; sometimes it makes me feel like they are putting me down when they say bad things about Aboriginals

- I just think, it's stupid that people do that, they have a culture themselves

Overall, these adolescents seemed aware of the presence of a good deal of racism.

Relationships with Children, Family and Others. Participants were asked how their relationships with their children, friends, and other people had changed since

"I get along well with all Aboriginal people that I know; sometimes it makes me feel like they are putting me down when they say bad things about Aboriginals."

participating in the RAP program. They were also asked whom they would go to if they had a problem and needed advice.

Q12. Five participants had children, and three of them said that their relationships with their children had not changed in any way since they were in the RAP program. Two participants reported positive changes:

- I am more patient with my daughter now that I am not with her all the time
- Just that he's happy when I wake him up in the morning; says "going to school Mom"

Q13. All but one participant reported that they had stopped seeing their friends when they became pregnant. Some of their responses included:

- stopped hanging around with friends because they were doing things that I didn't really do anymore
- don't see my friends as much because they want to go to parties and stuff and I don't
- I'm a lot closer to my friends here [RAP program] than my friends outside the program
- I don't stay out as late as I used to, I'm too tired to stay up late.
- I don't socialize as much with my friends, I haven't been going out very much in the last couple of years, just staying home
- I dropped all my friends because they were a bad influence so I don't have much relationships with people these days
- I really don't have much time to hang around anymore; it makes me happy because some of my friends were bad influences
- don't have any friends
- have a lot of friends; lots of them have children, not all

Q14. Four participants reported that their relationships with their family and other people in their life had not changed since starting the program. One participant reported that she talked more now to other people and wasn't so shy. Another participant said

- I guess I am more responsible and my Mom is happy about that because I'm

learning how to handle money. I used to spend my money on whatever, and now I have to spend it on my baby, try to make it last and stuff like that.

- One participant reported that she doesn't see her boyfriend as much.
- One participant reported that she tried to be nicer and was probably more patient now.

One participant said

- they're happy for me; my cousins are getting closer because they are coming here too

Another participant stated:

- they look at me more positively because I'm going back to school and I made the effort myself

Q11. Four participants reported that they would go to their mothers, or in one case foster mother, if they had a problem and needed advice. Some of the reasons for choosing their mothers included:

- because she is a good listener
- she has been down the same road as I have so she is easy to talk to
- she's my best friend
- because I trust her

Three participants reported that they would go to their best friend if they had a problem and needed advice because the friend was easier to talk to, could be trusted, or had a long history with the participant. One participant reported that she would go her sister and Dad because her Mom passed away

One participant reported that she would go to her boyfriend's mother because

- she's my spiritual guider

One participant reported that she would go to one of the counsellors at the RAP program because

- they're here and I see them every day

This data revealed that for most participants their relationship with their children, family members and others have changed to a certain degree since attending

Seven participants reported feeling good or happy about themselves and one participant reported feeling good about herself most of the time. One said she did not always feel good about herself.

the program. Only three adolescents stated that their relationships had not changed. These results also show that most of the adolescents reported being disconnected from friends, which may have some negative implications regarding the adolescents' self-esteem.

Comments About Self-Perception. Participants were asked how they felt about themselves, and how participating in the cultural activities had made them feel about themselves

Q17. Seven participants reported feeling good or happy about themselves and one participant reported feeling good about herself most of the time. One said she did not always feel good about herself.

Positive responses include:

- some people say that when you are pregnant you don't feel happy about yourself but I do

- pretty good

- most of the time I am happy

- I feel good about myself, what I'm doing. Once I have this baby, I'll probably go back to finish high school, then probably go to university

- good because I'm attending school, learning about my culture

- I like everything about myself. I want to finish school and get a job to support my son. I want to be a cop.

- Good; I feel fine, happy.

Negative responses:

- I could do better, I could have finished school

- Sometimes I don't like the way I look

Most participants reported feeling good about themselves, which corresponds to their average global self-worth scores both before they started the RAP program and six weeks later. Indeed, their average scores at both times, (2.96 and 3.02, respectively) are almost identical to the average for other adolescents from a main stream junior and high school sample (Harter, 1988).

Q15. Four participants said they could not articulate how participating in the Aboriginal cultural activities made them feel about themselves. One said that her feelings about herself had not changed. Two reported feeling good about themselves because of the activities.

- It makes me understand like who I am, and where I come from and proud of it.

- it made me feel better about participating in cultural activities

One participant said she felt weird at times, and another one reported that she didn't care.

Thematic Analysis of the interview data

Three major themes were identified through the content analysis.

Theme 1: Positive response to learning about Aboriginal culture. All of these young women had participated in at least one Aboriginal cultural activity prior to coming to the program and seven of ten reported favourable responses to the cultural component of the RAP program. Most respondents found the cultural component to be the most interesting area of the entire program. It appears that the adolescents are motivated to participate in the cultural activities. Because of these positive feelings towards the enrichment program, the participants would likely accept more exposure to cultural traditions. Most of the young women have reported this part of the RAP program to be "fun" and many have articulated that it is an important part of their identity as they take on the tasks of parenting.

Theme 2: Recognition of the Importance of Academic Accomplishment. Most participants were concerned about their academic performance and were intent on finishing high school. Indeed, receiving credit for the academic component of the program was the response that was given most often when asked if there was any area of the entire RAP program they would change.

By the end of the six weeks, young women with a stronger cultural identity also felt better about their physical appearance and, most importantly, had a stronger overall sense of self-worth. It appears that the program is not only teaching the adolescents about aspects of their cultural identity but is also teaching them that their culture is a basis for self-worth. The more they embrace their culture, the more they feel worthwhile.

Theme 3: Pregnancy and Motherhood Disrupt Established Connections to Friends. All participants reported severing ties with old friends since becoming pregnant and having children.

Discussion

Both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of the current study support the conclusion that Aboriginal cultural identity had a substantial positive effect on the self-concept of participants in the RAP program. Participants who had a strong cultural identity upon entering the program already had a more positive self-concept in some important areas of their lives: romantic relationships, close friendships and social acceptance. Although only marginally significant, there was one area in which cultural identity was negatively related to self-concept, that of job competence. Although we do not know for sure why this would be so, it is possible that these young women were responding to stereotypes in mainstream Canadian culture about Aboriginal people. Given their youth, they are likely to have had little job experience. Consequently, this may have been one area of life in which they had not yet had much direct experience to help them disconfirm mainstream stereotypes.

Fortunately, identifying highly with Aboriginal culture no longer predicted self-perceptions of low job competence by the end of six weeks in the RAP program. Cultural identification continued to be associated with positive self-concept in the domains of close friendship, romantic relationships and social acceptance over the six weeks under investigation. By the end of the six weeks, young women with a stronger cultural identity also felt better about their physical appearance and, most importantly, had a stronger overall sense of self-worth. It appears that the program is not only teaching the adolescents about aspects of their cultural identity but is also teaching them that their culture is a basis for self-worth. The more they

embrace their culture, the more they feel worthwhile. This finding clearly supports the enculturation hypothesis (Zimmerman, et al., 1998) and is in accordance with the research literature on this topic (Kato, 1997; McCubbin, Thompson & Thompson, 1998; Organista, Chun & Marin, 1998).

Phinney and others (e.g., Phinney, 1998a) have described the adolescent's journey toward cultural identity as going from a lack of interest in one's culture, or a willingness to have one's cultural identity defined by others (foreclosure), through intense and personal exploration, to the stage of cultural identity achievement. In the current study, cultural identity achievement was the only area in which participants increased their cultural identification significantly. This is the aspect of cultural identity that refers to the depth and personal meaningfulness of cultural teachings and traditions to the person, and the extent to which culture is integrated into the person's overall self-concept. It is considered to be the most mature stage of cultural identification and the one that is most likely to facilitate the development of a stable and secure identity and enhanced self-worth, even in circumstances of severe stress.

Consistent with this model, one way of interpreting the changes that were found in the relationship between cultural identity and self-perception of job competence is that participants went from a stage of foreclosed cultural identity to one of cultural identity achievement. That is, some of these young women may have had a cultural identity partly informed by unchallenged racist stereotypes about Aboriginal people when they began the RAP program. RAP program experiences that combined cultural experiences and teachings, job information, and the positive example of successful Aboriginal program staff, may have led participants to reject that foreclosed definition of their culture and replace it with a more positive one based on their own knowledge and experiences.

The results of the current study have shown that self-concept in the domains of romantic relationships and close friendships are closely and positively related to cultural identity, which may therefore be a source of resilience to the stress of disrupted friendships during the transition to motherhood.

Participants in the New Directions RAP program showed significant positive increases in two domains of self-concept, job competence and behavioural conduct. That the participants perceived themselves as more competent in the area of job readiness and reported feeling better toward the way they behave (e.g. doing what they know is right, avoiding getting into trouble) suggests that two main objectives of the RAP program are being addressed -- that is, to eventually obtain meaningful employment and to develop skills to take control over the events in their lives. Moreover, the observers' ratings, which reflected changes in the adolescents' actual abilities and behaviours, show that the adolescents do not merely think they're changing in these areas, because other people have also noticed the changes.

Global self-worth at the end of the six week period was the highest among those young women who had high levels of cultural identity achievement, but the average increase in global self-worth after six weeks in the program was not significant in the group, overall. Self-perception in the areas of job competence and behavioural conduct, although somewhat more important to participants after the RAP program, apparently were not sufficiently important to have a significant impact on global self-worth. The patterns of importance ratings for domains such as romantic appeal and close friendship makes it clear that, like most adolescents, these young women have an important set of influences on their self-concept that are based on their personal lives outside the program. The impact of pregnancy and parenthood appear to have had a negative effect on at least one of those domains, as they described in their interviews. Although this small sample of adolescent mothers does seem to have had supportive relationships with family members such as their mother or father, almost all of them reported a loss of their connections with their friends as they approached motherhood. This is of

concern, since previous research has found that social support plays a significant role in helping adolescent mothers to adapt to motherhood (Dalla & Gamble, 1998; Pasley et al., 1993). The results of the current study have shown that self-concept in the domains of romantic relationships and close friendships are closely and positively related to cultural identity, which may therefore be a source of resilience to the stress of disrupted friendships during the transition to motherhood. Although average scores in those domains did not increase significantly over the six week period of the study, neither did they decrease significantly, despite the stress on their friendships that they reported in their interviews.

The current study may have underestimated the impact of the culture on self-concept because of certain limitations. Harter's (1988) Self-perception Profile has been used widely with other cultures but not with Canadian Aboriginal groups. The Multigroup Cultural Identity questionnaire has also not been used with this specific population. These instruments may not have been as sensitive to changes in aspects of the Canadian Aboriginal culture as would be desired. In addition, this study was based on the results of only ten participants which means the power to detect changes was very limited. As well, the interview results revealed that the elder had to be absent for much of the program for this group of participants. Therefore, stronger effects may be found for other future groups who participate in the program. It is important to keep in mind that the six weeks over which this study was conducted is probably too little time to assess the magnitude of the effects. A longer- term follow-up of these participants might have identified changes that had just begun by the end of six weeks, and which one would expect to see increasing over time. It is possible, for example, that the most important contribution of the cultural component of the RAP program will have been to start the process of a life-long involvement in

The results of the current study appear to be a strong confirmation of the importance of incorporating cultural knowledge and experience into programs for Aboriginal adolescents. The interviews revealed that, by and large, the young women in the program were hungry for knowledge of their culture, for their own personal development and in order to teach their children about it.

their culture. Unfortunately, we do not know whether that happened for these participants, although most did report participating in cultural activities outside of the program.

Because all of the participants were in the RAP program and participated in the cultural component, we cannot be certain that it was the RAP program or its cultural component that is responsible for the changes these young women went through. Other things, of course, were happening in the participant's lives, which may have contributed to the changes that were found. Although the design of the study does not allow us to be absolutely certain about the causes, the nature of the changes and the participants' own remarks in the interview support the conclusion that it was the cultural component of the RAP program that caused them.

The results of the current study appear to be a strong confirmation of the importance of incorporating cultural knowledge and experience into programs for Aboriginal adolescents. The interviews revealed that, by and large, the young women in the program were hungry for knowledge of their culture, for their own personal development and in order to teach their children about it. Furthermore, the progress that they made in achieving the objectives of the program appears to have been closely related to the achievement of cultural identity, which they frequently attributed to the cultural component of the program. Although learning about their culture in a more natural setting might well be a better way to learn, many young Aboriginal people have not had the opportunity to live in a natural setting that reflected the traditions and knowledge of their culture. This study supports the conclusion that, if cultural teaching and experiences are systematically incorporated into a service program, young people will benefit from those experiences and teachings, and may not benefit from the program if the cultural component is not there.

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Abstract

This article focuses on the author's experience and observations respecting the appropriateness of adopting Aboriginal children into non-Aboriginal settings, and its impact on children, youth and parents receiving services from an Aboriginal child and family services agency in Toronto.

A Commentary Against Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal Adoption

Kenn Richard

Introduction

The issue of the appropriateness of adoption of Aboriginal children by non-Aboriginal people is one that has been hotly debated for many years. Despite court battles on individual cases, human rights tribunals related to class action from both sides, and many newspaper and related media attention to the issue, there exists no consensus on what is in the best interests of Aboriginal children in need of long term care.

This commentary presents an argument against the adoption of Aboriginal children by non-Aboriginal families. The arguments as presented are from a cultural perspective, not the political, and thus also does not flow so much from hard research as much as it does from practical experience. The major thrust of my argument is based primarily on the cultural issues at play as I have observed in my experience as the executive director of an urban Aboriginal service agency.

Aboriginal children are presented within their cultural context with their best interests tied to cultural considerations. These in turn attach to the difficulties of Aboriginal children in non-Aboriginal care in managing critical milestones such as identity formation during adolescence. It is observed that many Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal adoptions break down at that time and it's concluded that the interplay of cultural dynamics and identity formation play a significant role in this process. Bonding, continuity of care, cultural maintenance of Aboriginal children in non-Aboriginal care is also discussed within the cultural domain. These principles are referenced repeatedly in the journalistic and academic discourse yet they are of questionable value given their bias in favor of Anglo European world views.

I am informed primarily by my experience in child welfare, an experience which dates back to 1973. I am further informed through my work at the University of Toronto where I have taught Cross Cultural Social Work Practice for a number of years. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I am informed by the "stories" I have heard over the past years,

The "best interests of the child" principle has evolved over time, through policy, social work practice and the courts, to become the primary consideration in planning for a child. While the principle seems self evident and culturally neutral it is defined subjectively through a value, knowledge and practice context that is decidedly Anglo European. The notion of the child and her best interests, as separate and distinct from her family, community and culture, is one that has its roots in the individualist orientation of European culture.

stories that are not always written down but nevertheless are compelling arguments in support of intra-cultural placements of Aboriginal children.

The Broader Context

With revisions to the *Indian Act* in 1951 and the implementation of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966, came significant changes regarding the delivery of Child Welfare services to Aboriginal and First Nation communities. Prior to 1951 few resources were dedicated to delivering services on reserves and staff from off reserve Child Welfare authorities were generally directed to enter reserve communities in their official capacity only if it was a matter of "life or death."

With the above changes came the need to settle issues of jurisdiction and responsibility. Provinces were granted authority on reserve and federal cost sharing to offset Provincial costs was instituted. As a result provincial Child Welfare authorities became more active within First Nations communities and children began to be apprehended at rates dramatically disproportionate to the size of the First Nations child population. By the end of the sixties, according to research cited by Fournier and Crey (1997), up to 40% of all children in care were status Indian children despite the fact that these children represented less than 4% of the population.

With the apprehension of Aboriginal children comes the issue of state directed care arrangements. Most children were not placed with Aboriginal families and they were least likely to be returned to their families in their home communities. Aboriginal children are also least likely to be adopted and most likely to have multiple foster care placements until the state relinquished its responsibility at the child's age of majority (Fournier and Crey, 1997).

With regard to adoption the total number of First Nations children adopted

by non-Aboriginal families increased five fold from the early 60`s to the late 70`s. From 1969 to 1979, 78% of all First Nations children who were adopted were adopted by non-Aboriginal families (Fournier and Crey, 1997: 3).

The Best Interests of the Child

The "best interests of the child" principle has evolved over time, through policy, social work practice and the courts, to become the primary consideration in planning for a child. While the principle seems self evident and culturally neutral it is defined subjectively through a value, knowledge and practice context that is decidedly Anglo European. The notion of the child and her best interests, as separate and distinct from her family, community and culture, is one that has its roots in the individualist orientation of European culture. Here the child is seen as a discrete unit and her relationships are measured in accordance with the degree to which they are harmful or helpful to her well-being and welfare.

This view stands in contrast to the world views of tribal societies, including First Nations in Canada. Within the tribal world view, individuals, while acknowledged and valued, are contextualized within families, communities and cultures. Here the best interests of a child are inexorably linked to the best interests of the community and vice versa. As the child is seen as the embodiment of her culture she is as a result required to be nurtured within it. Given this symbiotic relationship the community is thereby compelled to do its best in producing well adjusted and productive adults to further strengthen the collective through the generations. This is not only good for the child but necessary for the overall survival of the community of which she is an integral part. The notion of rights of any one party is subservient to the notion of responsibility to care for children. The children, because cultural and community survival depend on them,

While Aboriginal child welfare is still in the early stages of development, many believe that Aboriginal children are now better off in the newer developing Aboriginal controlled systems than in the mainstream context.

are considered sacred. The idea of the child being considered apart from her context simply cannot be easily fathomed by collectivists (Fournier and Crey, 1997).

For the child, the collective approach not only nurtures but also provides a clear identity and a sense of belonging. This is a critical indicator of successful adjustment in adult life. Anglo European ideology, on the other hand, may consider culture and community as a factor but its fundamental linkages to the child's best interests are often superseded by considerations more compatible with their world views. Here "objective" reality prevails although that reality is colored significantly by the culture through which it is interpreted. Child developmental psychology, as written primarily by those with an individualist orientation and tested with non-Aboriginal children, is given credence over non-scientific beliefs about a child's best interests and beliefs based on practical experience over time and through multiple generations within the tribal context.

While both tribal societies and Anglo European cultures would be concerned with the best interests of the child, the defining of best interests and the consideration of factors related to it are culture bound. Given that the Canadian child welfare system, its legislations, standards, practices and processes, were crafted by Anglo European settlers it is not surprising that the cultural context of the Aboriginal child bears little weight. What is given the greatest weight is that which conforms to the dominant paradigm. Thus " bonding" and "continuity of care" are often cited by the courts as key considerations in decisions as to the child's best interests as they attend to what is considered important from the individualist's orientation. While bonding and continuity of care are also considered important within the tribal perspective, it is balanced by other considerations related to the cultural context of the child and her best interests within it.

The dichotomy identified here is not merely academic argument; it has had profound effects on judgments related to the best interest of Aboriginal children. By emphasizing one world view and marginalizing another, the child welfare system has historically missed or discounted critical components in the assessment of Aboriginal children. Aboriginal specific provisions in legislation, among other measures, serve to shift the mind set of the practitioner towards a more inclusive and holistic framework for the assessment to the best interests of the Aboriginal child. We are informed by practice that culture is important, and legislation now enables it to take its place in the totality of considerations in best interest considerations.

While studies need to be done, practical experience within the Aboriginal sector indicates that, in the adoption arena, the Aboriginal child is one child where the presence of culture is a strong indicator of adoptive success. With the arrival of Aboriginal child welfare authorities and the resultant paradigm shift fewer Aboriginal children are being removed from communities and more are benefiting from stable community placements. A report from the Federal Department of Indian Affairs indicates a progressive drop in the number of placements from 6.5% in the mid seventies to just 3.6% in 1995/96 (DIAND, 1997:5).

Among many professionals, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, there is emerging consensus that the shift toward the control of Aboriginal child welfare to Aboriginal communities holds more promise than the status quo as exemplified by historical mainstream child welfare practices. While Aboriginal child welfare is still in the early stages of development, many believe that Aboriginal children are now better off in the newer developing Aboriginal controlled systems than in the mainstream context.

Often, the adopted child, whether Aboriginal or not, must deal with what may be viewed as a chronic doubt as to their individual worth. No matter how sensitive adoptive parents may be to the issue, the child often questions why her own family of origin let her go.

Bonding and its Relationship to Future Success

Anglo European frames of reference, when applied to Aboriginal children, often fail in their efforts at predicting successful outcomes. Bonding, that tie between an individual care giver and her child that implies an in depth and deeply attached emotional relationship, has increasingly been a primary consideration guiding both practitioners and the courts in their efforts to make appropriate decisions in the best interests of a child. This, not surprisingly, is also more consistent with the individualistic ideology of Anglo European culture. It is also reinforced by a generic knowledge base informed almost exclusively through the study of non Aboriginal children and families.

While on the surface this consideration seems valid and appropriate, the fact remains that an Aboriginal child bonded to her non Aboriginal care giver is not (and many cases will attest to this) necessarily going to maintain the bonded relationship over time. Often the well bonded four year old becomes the raging adolescent bent on both personal and familial self destruction. While bonding is believed by many to be an accurate predictor of adoption success, no studies carried out with Aboriginal children in adoptive homes can be referenced to substantiate this belief. Again practical experience in the field leads me to conclude that bonding as an accurate predictor of success in adoptions is clearly challenged by reality, at least in reference to the experience of Aboriginal children.

The Aboriginal adolescent adopted into a non-Aboriginal family is a child that has almost insurmountable challenges facing her in her path toward adulthood. She must not only deal with the problems associated with adolescence, she must attend to the fact that she is adopted and the reality that she is an Aboriginal child in a non-Aboriginal world.

Child development, as articulated by western theorists, is predicated on the successful completion of various life stages all leading to the creation of an emotionally intact and functioning adult. One of the most challenging stages occurs in adolescence when a child must resolve all issues related to identity formation. In this stage a child is compelled to "individuate" or, put more simply, to develop a sense of self separate and apart from her parents. Self esteem, the ability to trust, a sense of where one is placed in the broader scheme of things, a history that can guide and inform; all these are import components of the process toward adulthood.

While the goal is to separate oneself from parents the process is informed by the parents themselves, the environment in which they live and what the child sees in the mirror. If the information appears contradictory or confusing, or is experienced in a negative way by the child, then problems may well emerge having serious consequences for both the child and her parents.

Often, the adopted child, whether Aboriginal or not, must deal with what may be viewed as a chronic doubt as to their individual worth. No matter how sensitive adoptive parents may be to the issue, the child often questions why her own family of origin let her go. She may feel she did something wrong or that she was not wanted in the first place. Each child will have doubts based on their own interpretation of the facts but many conclude that they were at least partially at fault. Being at fault implies a huge challenge to the child's self esteem, a challenge many do not deal with adequately. Add feelings of abandonment felt by many and it's a bigger challenge than many can handle.

The Aboriginal adoptee in a non-Aboriginal family is further challenged by their Aboriginal status. They have little information as to what this really means and rely on messages from their parents and the broader environment in which she lives. Subtle and not so subtle messages

The world is very diverse in its ways of organizing systems of child care. No one culture is recognized to be better than the next in producing well adjusted, happy and productive adults.

will often tell her that she is lucky to be out of her birth culture and that the Aboriginal community is not capable in providing good care for children. She rarely sees the diversity of Aboriginal life and absorbs the stereotyping, often negatively, that abounds in North American society.

Dr. Leo Steiner, former director of the Aboriginal Community Crisis Team at the Toronto East General Hospital, in an affidavit to the Family Court in Toronto in 1990, said the following in a case regarding cross cultural Aboriginal adoption:

> A child who is conflicted about his identity is severely handicapped. He may have developed a host of functional skills, but he is also subject to a gnawing, chronic self questioning. The child becomes a victim of a self fulfilling prophecy, self sabotaging his own attempts at success for he strongly believes he is doomed to failure. With low self esteem and a confused sense of self, the child is ill equipped to form healthy and mature relationships with others. He is then more likely to seek short term pleasures rather than more productive realistic long term goals. Unable to interact meaningfully in adulthood, he often develops a self centered, impulse pleasing self destructive life style.

Continuity of Care from the Aboriginal Perspective

The primary assumption underlying this principle is that every child needs consistency regarding his or her care arrangements. In many ways this principle serves as a vehicle that will promote the positive bond that is seen as critical in healthy child development. When consideration is given this principle the focus of analysis is on individual nuclear families usually with one set of parents. Grand parents and other related care givers are sometimes factored into the assessment but only if they have taken an active role in parenting the child. This principle,

like that of the best interests of the child, has been defined and elaborated almost exclusively within the Anglo European cultural context. As with the practical interpretation of the best interest principle continuity of care is interpreted only in a manner consistent with those holding an individualist world view.

The traditional Aboriginal family is no family at all by Anglo European standards. Aboriginal families are in fact a child centered and caring community of people, some related by blood, some tied by clan or other indigenous social structures, who all have responsibility for the good and welfare of the community's children. As such a child may be cared for by her natural mother, an aunty, and a cousin at different points in the child's life. This is not a problem within traditional Aboriginal culture. In fact this has traditionally been seen as desirable in order to produce a child who embodies the totality of tribal experience, its values, knowledge and ways of behaving.

Thus what may have been misunderstood and judged by non-Aboriginals as "inconsistent parenting" or a "disorganized family life" is culture taking its course in an Aboriginal context and not the expression of problems. Judgments from one cultural context over another will always be flawed as they are not informed by the culture of the other. Non-Aboriginal systems use standards rooted in world views that are essentially foreign and judges miss important considerations as a result. The world is very diverse in its ways of organizing systems of child care. No one culture is recognized to be better than the next in producing well adjusted, happy and productive adults. To think otherwise would expose the colonial mind set since judged to be racist in its underpinnings and historically damaging to Aboriginal people in this country.

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, founded in 1985, provides child welfare related services to an estimated 40,000 Aboriginal people in the Greater Toronto area. It has a full range of prevention programs, provides treatment and healing services, and is a licensed foster care provider. It manages a large Aboriginal child welfare caseload and has an extensive program for youth on the street. In July 2004 the agency will become the fourth Children's Aid Society in Toronto and as a result becomes the first fully operational off reserve Aboriginal child welfare authority in Canada.

Aboriginal Cultural Maintenance in the Non-Aboriginal Context

Adoptive parents of Aboriginal children inevitably agree to make efforts towards nurturing the child's cultural self as an Aboriginal person. While well intended this is almost impossible to achieve and may in fact exacerbate the problems of identity. Culture is complex but its transmission is simple. Put a child within a certain cultural milieu and an organic process of acculturation occurs. It is through everyday living that the values, beliefs and culturally prescribed behaviors are learned. This immersion in culture is the vehicle of acculturation. The agents of it are primary relationships in the child's life, parents, relatives, educators and the like. If an Aboriginal child is being raised in a non-Aboriginal environment they will acculturate within its cultural context. I have met full blooded Aboriginal children who were culturally Dutch, British and Swiss.

Exposing an Aboriginal child who has been brought up outside her birth culture to Aboriginal life can exacerbate identity formation problems further. If the child has identity confusion or is otherwise conflicted then exposure to Aboriginal culture may trigger chronic anxiety and all its consequences. She is reminded of her estranged status and is told, sometimes subtly, sometimes not, that she is not really an Aboriginal person. If she also feels that she is not legitimately part of her adoptive family's cultural heritage, which many do, then she is in real danger of being stuck with an insurmountable task regarding her identity formation. She is not as a result comfortable in her relationships and feels alienated and is alienated from those who care about her. While Aboriginal children may be exposed to their cultural heritage this exposure may only amount to enhanced cultural literacy. These children may know only a few words of the language, have developed skills in certain crafts, but fundamentally they are estranged from their heritage and may be

viewed as tourists in their Aboriginal land. As one father put it whose sons returned to their home reserve after years in adoptive care:

> It was not easy … they showed no respect for their mother, they expected to be looked after, they expected their meals on time, they swore in front of the girls, they talked "man" this and "man" that … They couldn't fit into our life. They are strangers … (*To Serve and Provide: A Case Study in Planning Indian Community Services for Children and their Families, p. 17,* cited in Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Stevenato and Associates and Budgell, p. 66).

Experience at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

Toronto has experienced first hand the legacy of best interest of child decisions made some 20 years ago simply because it is situated in the centre of a large population into which many Aboriginal children were adopted. While numbers are elusive, many Aboriginal children from all over Canada were adopted to non-Aboriginal families in southern Ontario. Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, founded in 1985, provides child welfare related services to an estimated 40,000 Aboriginal people in the Greater Toronto area. It has a full range of prevention programs, provides treatment and healing services, and is a licensed foster care provider. It manages a large Aboriginal child welfare caseload and has an extensive program for youth on the street. In July 2004 the agency will become the fourth Children's Aid Society in Toronto and as a result becomes the first fully operational off reserve Aboriginal child welfare authority in Canada.

Of significance is the number of people served by Native Child and Family Services who have experienced adoptive breakdowns. Adoptive breakdowns are simply those adoptions where the child leaves the home prior to their reaching the

A profile of the typical Aboriginal youth on the street in Toronto is that of a young male, often a runaway from an adoption home, who has been on the street since he was 14 years of age. ... He likely carries considerable unhealed trauma related to physical and/or sexual abuse and has probably contemplated and perhaps attempted suicide at least once. He is not likely to avail himself of services unless he has no choice and he is one who rarely follows through on any formulated case plans.

age of majority. We have found that with regard to the women assisted through our child welfare related services, treatment and healing programs, the majority have not been raised by their natural extended families in their home communities. The majority of these women were either raised by the government in both foster care and/or institutions or they were adopted at an early age and sent far from their home territories. Within this population at least half have been adopted.

Within the adopted population, many have experienced a breakdown in their placement resulting with them leaving their adoptive placements prior to reaching the age of majority. Native Child and Family Services of Toronto provides child welfare, treatment and healing services to approximately 300 women of this population at any point in time. It is estimated that almost 200 of these women will have been raised in places other than their own home or community. Of these 100 women, at least half have experienced breakdowns in their placement.

What happens to these women? Typically, they do not return to their home communities nor do they establish relationships with their natural families. Some become chronic runaways or are drawn to the streets of large urban cities such Toronto. Many finish their adolescence in a series of placements provided by the child welfare system and are simply discharged with little or no follow up on reaching the age of majority, sixteen years as defined by the Child and Family Services Act in Ontario. All are alienated from both their adoptive family and from their home communities. Many carry significant unhealed trauma that contributes to higher addiction rates and a tendency to enter and stay in abusive relationships. Many of these women get pregnant young and quickly slide into a life of isolation, loneliness and despair. Almost all of these women live in poverty and many will lose their own children to the child welfare system. The irony here is

that somewhere, when these mothers were children, a well intentioned social worker made a decision in the child's best interests that, in reality and over time, led to the a replication of the very circumstances that led to their own apprehensions. This time it's their own children and the cycle repeats itself into yet another generation.

The situation is even bleaker for Aboriginal youth on the street. According to a study done by the Addiction Research Foundation in the early 1990s, Aboriginal youth represent 20% of all youth chronically on the streets of Toronto. This number is high considering that Aboriginal youth represent less than 2% of the total Toronto youth population. A profile of the typical Aboriginal youth on the street in Toronto is that of a young male, often a runaway from an adoption home, who has been on the street since he was 14 years of age. He will likely have some involvement with the criminal justice system and will often be cross addicted to both alcohol and street drugs. He likely carries considerable unhealed trauma related to physical and/or sexual abuse and has probably contemplated and perhaps attempted suicide at least once. He is not likely to avail himself of services unless he has no choice and he is one who rarely follows through on any formulated case plans. He is either a loner or is part of group of other Aboriginal youth in similar circumstance and from similar backgrounds. He has little hope and knows that his fate is likely to be jail or, as is sometimes is the case, a violent death on the street.

In our experience these youth, without assistance, will follow a predictable pattern. Being on the street at an early age, they become, over time, the hard core and hardest to serve of all youth on the street. They do not utilize conventional services available and are to a large degree alienated even from conventional street culture. These youth are highly visible when in an intoxicated state, as they often are, yet at the same time make themselves almost invisible when sober. They tend to

Too many of our youth have died since we began our youth focused programs. With the advent of devolving mandates to Aboriginal authorities it is imperative that the full scope of child welfare related problems associated with Aboriginal children is adequately researched and documented. The new Aboriginal authorities not only need good research on the nature of the problems but also articulation on promising solutions that are informed by culturally competent forms of best practice models of service that do and/or may exist elsewhere in Canada.

exist in this state for years until they either die violently of lifestyle related causes, graduate to being adult street people, or are incarcerated, often for petty crimes that are repetitive and thus dealt harshly by the courts.

Too many of our youth have died since we began our youth focused programs. Some of the youth involved in our programs have died of AIDS; four died violently on the street and there have been suicides. One youth died in Ottawa after being beaten and dowsed with cooking sherry and set on fire by two other Aboriginal street youth. This youth experienced an adoption breakdown. He had done well in our program but moved to Ottawa to start anew. Without supports such as that provided by Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, he went back to the street and died.

Another young man, again an adopted child, lived an uneventful life in his adoptive placement until he reached twelve years of age. As a child he and his brother were removed from his family in northern Ontario and adopted by a school principal and his wife in a small southern Ontario community. Upon reaching adolescence he and his brother began acting out. They both began skipping school and getting involved in petty theft. While the family, who by all accounts were loving and caring to these children, tried to understand what had happened to these boys. The boys' behavior escalated to the point where they began running away for days at a time. The two boys often went to Niagara Falls or Toronto where they were drawn into life on the streets. Alcohol, drugs and violence became the prominent themes in their everyday lives. In due course, the older brother killed himself by leaping into the Niagara River just below the famous falls. The young brother eventually left his adoptive home soon after, and made his way to Toronto where he became involved in Native Child and Family Services of Toronto youth program. While he appeared to be making progress, he died

in suspicious circumstance on the street one year ago. His family as well as our program staff still mourn his loss.

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto have a photograph of four young men, all smiles and good looks at our summer residential camp. All four had been adopted into non Aboriginal homes as young children. Of the four, three are dead and one is still on the streets, addicted to both heroine and alcohol.

Conclusion

Aboriginal provisions in child welfare legislation, those that recognize the significance and importance of Aboriginal culture within the best interest of child consideration provide some optimism. Based on emerging knowledge and considerable practice experience, the evidence, clinical and otherwise, however tells me that equal weight must be given to the cultural context of the child as has been given to culturally biased interpretations of bonding or continuity of care. Remarkably there is a lack of research associated with the issues to which I have outlined in this commentary. With the advent of devolving mandates to Aboriginal authorities it is imperative that the full scope of child welfare related problems associated with Aboriginal children is adequately researched and documented. The new Aboriginal authorities not only need good research on the nature of the problems but also articulation on promising solutions that are informed by culturally competent forms of best practice models of service that do and/or may exist elsewhere in Canada.

Currently significant funds are being spent in court battles where the lives of vulnerable Aboriginal children are being decided based on incomplete, biased, and subjective information touted as hard science. A fraction of the dollars spent on lengthy litigation, if routed toward quality research, could serve to get the field beyond the rhetoric and emotionalism that further characterizes the current discourse

on the issue of cross-cultural adoption. Finding consensus is the challenge to all stakeholders and one that deserves to be addressed not for the sake of argument but for the sake of the children affected.

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