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COMING TO THE TABLE:

PEACEMAKING AND TRUANCY RATES

IN SCHOOLS WITH A HIGH ENROLLMENT OF AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

by

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B.S.Ed. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, United States of America, 2001

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana-Missoula

May 2006

Approved by:

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Rivenbark, D. Abigail, M.A., May 2006 Intercultural Youth & Family Development

COMING TO THE TABLE: PEACEMAKING AND TRUANCY RATES IN SCHOOLS WITH A HIGH ENROLLMENT OF AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

Chairperson: Lynne Sanford Koester LSK

The purpose of this project is to examine the relationship between school-based conflict resolution education and truancy rates in middle schools with high American Indian populations. The examination is conceptually-oriented and proposes a methodology for conducting a community needs assessment study of truancy to ascertain the need and potential effectiveness of introducing conflict resolution education into a specific school. Based on a review of the literature, three primary hypotheses are proposed. First, students absent themselves from school regularly when there is significant conflict at school, either with other students or with faculty. Second, the introduction of conflict resolution education greatly reduces truancy rates because students are taught to look at conflict as normal and as an opportunity for positive change. Third, conflict resolution education is a culturally appropriate method of truancy prevention in schools with high American Indian populations.

To test these hypotheses self-report surveys are given to all students, teachers, and administrators to capture their perspectives and attitudes regarding absenteeism among students. The results of these surveys in conjunction with other qualitative measures—interviews, naturalistic observation, participatory observation—should corroborate the findings of conflict resolution education studies conducted by Johnson and Johnson (2002). That is, students absent themselves from school when faced with a significant amount of conflict, though it is not the sole reason for truancy. Also, the introduction of conflict resolution education may reduce truancy rates particularly when students absent themselves because of school-based conflict.

The importance of this project rests on the premise that to fulfill both the ideals of multicultural education and national educational policy each student in a school must be counted, and when students absent themselves from school on a regular basis they cannot be counted. Therefore, truancy issues must be addressed as schools continue to work towards equity of educational opportunities for all students. Reasons for keeping this thesis on a conceptual level are provided, with explanations based on the need for culturally appropriate methodology especially when gathering data about sensitive topics.

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Acknowledgements

The inspiration for this project began with the impassioned words of a few seventh graders two years ago in one of my first peacemaking trainings. Since then, these thoughts and feelings have been echoed by countless other students, teachers, counselors, and administrators with whom I have worked. Ultimately it is because of those seventh grade students, and for those students, that this project is done. Herbert Spencer said "The great aim of education is not knowledge but action," and it is my hope that action arises from the information presented within these pages.

For guiding and supporting me through the processes of professional development I am indebted and truly grateful to my advisors, mentors, and supporters at The University of Montana-Missoula and beyond.

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Chapter I: Introduction and Review of Literature

The United States of America is a country whose rich diversity is reflected in its geography, people, politics, and education systems. Spanning between two oceans and the width of a continent, the U.S. boasts every geographical phenomenon imaginable from the deserts of the southwest to the soaring peaks of the Rocky Mountains in the west, across vast plains in the Midwest and into the rich farmland and ancient forests of the Appalachian. When one includes the volcanic islands of Hawaii and the arctic glaciers of Alaska one can begin to appreciate the uniqueness of each place and the enormous challenge a country must undertake in order to accurately represent and respect each facet of its constitution. The composition of people who call this immense country home is no less diverse. From the naissance of what is now the U.S. cross-cultural contact, conflict, understanding, and collaboration have been at the forefront of major events including wars, the creation of governments, the establishment (and revamping) of policies, as well as interactions with foreign states. Far from the inaccurate metaphor of a melting pot of cultures, the U.S. is a political entity continuously challenged, shaped, redefined, and strengthened by its populations who simultaneously grasp firmly to unique cultural heritages and worldviews. The same can be said for its schools and the way the U.S. educates its children.

It is this seemingly complicated paradox that makes the U.S. and its public education system unique. United States laws—including but not limited to Supreme Court rulings such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the Indian Education Act (1972), the Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education

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Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)—assure each child the right to a free and equal educational opportunity regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, primary language, religious belief, mental or physical ability, socioeconomic status, or geographic location (Banks & Banks, 1993). According to Harris, Brown, Ford, and Richardson (2004) fifty percent of the elementary and secondary public school population in the United States will belong to ethnic or racial minority groups by 2009. In fact, in many urban public schools Whites are already the numeric minority.

But what about rural public schools and public schools with high American Indian populations—which are sometimes one and the same? What do we know about diversity and multiculturalism in these schools? For all of the research and writing done on multicultural education, a startling gap of inquiry exists regarding rural schools, and more specifically schools with high American Indian populations. This thesis will attempt to address this insufficiency by focusing on public schools with high American Indian populations.

Today, many schools claim to adhere to a multicultural educational approach in an attempt to provide equal educational opportunities to all learners within the context of an increasingly diverse educational system. Multicultural education is best described as a three-pronged approach—a philosophy, a goal, and an ongoing process (Banks & Banks, 1993; Harris et al., 2004). As a philosophy it proclaims that all people have intrinsic worth, the right of equal opportunity to a meaningful education at school, that some students have an advantage based on the school structure, and that *all* students will benefit from multicultural education. As a goal, multicultural education seeks to improve the academic success of all learners by affirming individual differences and reflecting all

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learners in the curriculum. As a process, it is an ongoing instructional practice that permeates all facets of a school environment and seeks an encompassing, integrative method of inclusion for all learners. Ultimately, multicultural education seeks to honor and respect the worldviews of each student. This is an enormous task that is critical to the success of a school's children.

Current research in multicultural education focuses mostly on racial and ethnic minorities and learners with special needs, especially within the context of assessment. But one of the issues that has received much less attention is the problem of truancy. What if the student is never assessed because he or she is perpetually truant? If he or she is absent from school, will he or she be counted? It is easy to dismiss the truant student as a delinquent who is outside the school's influence; delinquency is a family problem and not that of the school, according to many school officials and administrators. This line of reasoning has two fundamental flaws, however. First, it does not take into account the causes for truancy nor that the school itself may be the cause and/or untapped remedy of the delinquent behavior. Second, it assumes that definitions and attitudes about truancy and delinquency are universal. In the majority of public schools truancy is seen as delinquent behavior, implying criminal behavior done in the spirit of law-breaking and misbehaving; students who are truant are deliberate in their actions. Gibbens & Ahrenfeldt (1966) argue that definitions of delinquency are culture-bound, meaning that "truancy may not even be listed as a possible offense in some [cultures]" (p. 166). In schools with high American Indian populations, where multiple cultures are represented in one building, the fact that delinquency is culture-bound—that it may or may not be an offense, but rather a symptom of a larger community or family problem—provides the

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space in which a school can ask itself whether or not truancy is a problem. More importantly, it begs the question of whether or not the consequences for truancy are perhaps perpetuating the cycle of perceived delinquency.

In order to satisfy public education's mission of providing equal educational opportunity to all learners, it is important that schools also assess the extent to which 'tried and true' practices might be culture-bound. School populations ebb and flow as people move from one place to another throughout the United States. Like the U.S. itself, schools change. They must rise to the challenges of diversity and embrace all of the worldviews represented, as each of those worldviews contains great strength. Perhaps, like the U.S., schools will be asked to step outside normalized practices and try new policies and practices. These changes will be hard at first but, once integrated, will only serve to enhance the whole by drawing on the uniqueness of each entity.

This thesis will focus on the unique situation of schools with high American Indian populations. Within that context, it proposes that one culturally appropriate method of reducing truancy rates is through the introduction of school-wide conflict resolution education programs based on a philosophy of restorative justice, including peer-mediation. Mirsky (2004) defines restorative justice as a "Native American and First Nation justice philosophy and practice, healing [and] reintegrating individuals into their community [which is] more important than punishment" (p.1). It is a process in which victims, offenders, and supporters are all brought together to understand and work through a conflict. Restorative justice-based conflict education, as opposed to Eurocentric punitive justice, might be more appropriate in schools with high American Indian populations because restitution as a system is more closely aligned with Native

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worldviews (Ross, 1998). The thesis includes discussion of the relationship between truancy and conflict resolution education within the context of schools with high American Indian populations. It also offers a concise and sound methodology for schools to assess the truancy situation at their school. In light of this study, schools might be encouraged to reshape their policies and practices in the spirit and philosophy of multicultural education.

The remainder of this chapter critically reviews the current literature in both school-based conflict resolution education and the unique situation of schools with high American Indian populations. In the area of conflict resolution education and its relationship to truancy rates, much of the literature concludes that the introduction of some form of conflict resolution education in schools reduces overall truancy rates, especially when the worldviews of the student populations are taken into account (Walker, 2004). Literature specifically discussing schools with high American Indian populations concludes that these schools are indeed unique politically and culturally. Much more specific research is needed in the area of American Indian education. This review of literature discusses first the relationship of conflict and truancy, then theory and practice of conflict resolution education, and finally the reality of schools with high American Indian populations.

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Bad habits are like a comfortable bed, easy to get into,
but hard to get out of. – *Anonymous*

Conflict and conflict resolution defined

How one defines conflict influences how one will react to and choose to resolve a situation that brings about conflict. Conflict exists in all societies and all cultures, though it may be viewed differently in each society or culture. Two common definitions of conflict exist. The first, proposed by Lewis Coser in *The Functions of Social Conflict,* defines conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources, a struggle in which the aim of each opponents is to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals" (as cited in Avruch, 1998, p.24). The second, put forward by Jeffrey Rubin, Dean Pruitt, and Sung Hee Lee in *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement,* identifies conflict as "a perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously" (as cited in Avruch, 1998, p. 24). Taken together, these definitions of conflict become a struggle over values, claims, and perceptions, and a more complete definition of conflict in Western societies emerges. The goal of conflict resolution is to reach an agreement between the disputing parties that will, at a minimum, lessen the conflict by increasing understanding between the parties. In Western resolution processes—negotiation, mediation, or arbitration—only those parties directly involved are present. Resolution is reached when a conflict is disassembled into its parts (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Walker, 2004). If a facilitator is involved, he or she is generally a third party that is removed from the conflict itself. With the exception of transformative conflict resolution (where the goal is to teach the

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parties to settle all future as well as the current conflict) the process of conflict resolution is perceived as a short-term solution.

Alternatively, many indigenous cultures view conflict as disruption of overall harmony (Arsenault, 2000; Mirsky, 2004; Walker, 2004). Restoration of harmony and healing of relationships in the group become the goals. Walker (2004) states that "indigenous approaches to addressing conflict are more accurately described as conflict transformation" (p. 528). It may be that everyone in the community, not just those directly in conflict, is involved in the process and the facilitator is not a remote third party, but someone from the community who is deeply respected and knowledgeable about the conflict at hand (Arsenault, 2000; Mirsky, 2004; Walker, 2004). As Walker (2004) suggests, the processing of conflict is transformative rather than resolute in many indigenous cultures and, indigenous concepts of time are cyclical and measured according to meaning. The Honorable Robert Yazzie, Chief Justice Emeritus of the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, explains that "the Navajo peacemaking process helps an offender realize that what he or she has done is incorrect," and that "America responds to crime after the fact, not before the fact," while the Navajo believe in prevention through the training and teaching of the children (cited in Mirsky, 2004, pp. 1-2). The deep connection between justice and spirituality underscores the importance of either maintaining or restoring harmony and balance. Often referred to as peacemaking, the processing of conflict in many indigenous cultures is "designed to implement long-term sustainable change" (Walker, 2004, p. 543).

In subsequent discussions of conflict resolution or peacemaking programs in schools with high American Indian populations, it is imperative to return to these diverse

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perspectives on conflict and conflict processing. Perspective is rooted in worldview and cannot be negotiated, changed, or necessarily meshed. In considering schools with populations that represent different worldviews it is essential that each worldview is honored. Communication becomes integral to implementation.

Truancy defined

Gibbens & Ahrenfeldt (1966) posit that the way a culture defines a child and childhood contributes directly to that culture's definition of juvenile delinquency. While truancy (staying away from school without permission) ranks fairly low on a scale of harmful juvenile behaviors, it is a significant predictive indicator of those students who are at high risk for dropping out of school (National Dropout Prevention Center, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education (USDE), n.d.). *Join Together*, a project of the Boston University School of Public Health, in its report "Keeping Kids In School" (1998) states that youth who are truant are not only more likely to drop out of school, but are also more likely to use drugs, commit crimes, be involved in gangs, and experience a host of other problems. However, this list is not exhaustive nor is it applicable in all situations. Many times youth miss school due to a lack of transportation, family problems, or a family's financial situations that requires the youth to work (Join Together, 1998; National Dropout Prevention Center, n.d.).

Why are youth truant? Krohn & Thornberry (2003) maintain that "children spend a substantial portion of their lives in school; low school performance and commitment to school are constant predictors of delinquency and other problem behaviors" (p. 317). Gibbens & Ahrenfeldt (1966) state that the culture of the school is an important factor in assessing causes of delinquency because the school is one of the first contacts a youth has

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outside his or her family. If the school culture does not support or is in direct conflict with the values and behaviors taught in the youth's family, the youth often feels "outside" of the school culture and is more likely to engage in delinquent behavior (Gibbens & Ahrenfeldt, 1966; National Dropout Prevention Center, n.d.). Ross (1998) cites institutional racism in schools as the cause of high push-out rates, which she differentiates from dropout rates by attributing push-out rates to system deficiencies and dropout rates to individuals who voluntarily withdraw from school. The National Dropout Prevention Center (n.d.) identifies two of the top three reasons tenth grade students gave for leaving school (with the top reason being "did not like school") as "could not get along with teachers" and "could not get along with students."

A unifying theme of truancy is that it is most often a symptom of an underlying problem and a signal of something amiss in the youth's life. One viewpoint is that truancy is a symptom of inability to communicate about or to handle conflict constructively, on the part of both the student and the school (LeBoeuf & DeShabazz, 1997; National Dropout Prevention Center, n.d.). Johnson and Johnson (2000) state that part of the obstacle for students in learning to treat conflict as an opportunity is that schools are often conflict-avoidant. This behavior models that students should do the same while also implying that conflict is negative. Thus, students learn to avoid conflict, and when that is impossible they fight against the conflict or the source of the conflict in the belief that there must be a winner and a loser. In situations where this win-lose mindset is destructive or ineffective, for example when a student is incessantly bullied by a group of other students, the only other option readily available to the student may be to avoid the conflict altogether. If the bullying happens at school then the student simply

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avoids school; he or she becomes a truant. One potential reason he chooses to avoid school rather than seek assistance from the school or someone at home is because he has been acculturated into the idea that conflict is properly dealt with through avoidance. This concept will again be explored in Chapter IV of this thesis.

The relationship between conflict and truancy

If truancy is a symptom of a youth's inability to handle conflict constructively it follows that, to combat truancy, one must educate youth on how to manage conflict. Johnson & Johnson (1995) assert that changing patterns in family, community, and societal life have resulted in generations of youth who are not educated or socialized, either directly or by example, to constructively handle conflict. Growing numbers of youth in the United States are spending large amounts of time unsupervised because parents and guardians work increasingly long hours outside of the home. In many cases, the youth lives in a single-parent household due to divorce or the parent's co-habitation choice. Mass media influences how the general population, especially youth, perceive delinquent behavior, violence, and conflict. In some instances societies condone violence as acceptable and sometimes just resolution to conflicts (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Lincoln, 2002; Welsh, 2001). Between the ages of 5 and 16, youth are required to spend roughly 40 hours a week in school for nine months out of the year, and they are bringing into the schools their aggression, violence, and poor conflict management skills. But is it the responsibility of the school to teach students how to constructively handle conflict?

The school's responsibility. Whether or not one agrees that the school has a social responsibility to teach students to be productive and contributing members of society is irrelevant in this case. The school does have responsibility is to provide a safe

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environment for all students where they are able to learn free of fear—"concentrating on math is hard if students are apprehensive about their safety" (Johnson & Johnson, 1995, p. 5). For purposes of this thesis safety refers both to physical safety and psychological well-being. While conflict resolution education can be effective in intervening and healing situations in which youth feel physically threatened, where serious violence—weapons, physical beatings, verbal abuse—is present, those issues also require specialized attention from sources inside and outside of the school. Youth may also feel unsafe in schools when they are the victims of bullying, teasing, feel they are the target of a teacher's anger, or feel they are a victim of discrimination. More insidious than overt physical threats, the result can be equally as devastating and can lead youth to take more forceful actions, such as bringing a weapon to school (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Lincoln, 2002). This thesis is concerned with the subtle issues of safety that make truancy an enticing option for some youth.

The responsibility of the school is to provide students with a safe environment, both physically and mentally. Johnson & Johnson (1995) found that more and more public school teachers and administrators are facing an increasing number of situations involving conflict between students and faculty and among students, making the school environment unsafe. Schools are adopting conflict resolution programs to combat and prevent violence, but are finding that these programs also improve education. For those youth who are truant because they are bored or do not like school, these programs address their needs as well because youth who learn to manage conflict constructively have also been found to demonstrate increased attention, motivation to learn, intellectual curiosity, and creativity in problem-solving (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Whether or not the school

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is responsible for the social development of youth is an issue that is inherently addressed when the school implements conflict resolution education programs as part of a way to make the school a safe environment and increase quality of education.

Conflict Resolution Education and its Effects on Truancy

> If we are to reach real peace in this world, we shall have to begin teaching cooperation to the children. — *Mahatma Gandhi*

Characteristics of conflict resolution education

Though conflict resolution education can take many forms, there are some universal characteristics and principles. The first is the belief in non-violent resolution. While some cultures do promote violence as a means to solve conflicts, the fundamental tenet of a conflict education program must be the promotion of nonviolence. Lincoln (2002) lists four other precepts of conflict resolution education: conflict is normal and natural; differences can be acknowledged and appreciated; conflict is an opportunity that leads to positive change if viewed as solution-building; and a climate that nurtures individual self-worth and fulfillment of needs is created when parties build on one another's strengths to resolve a conflict. When conflict is understood as a natural and necessary part of life, parties in conflict begin to see it as a moment of opportunity rather than a terminal point. Conflict education programs are most effective when implemented as a proactive part of violence and truancy prevention programs, but are too often implemented reactively.

Cooperation among the affected parties and faith in the processes taught in conflict resolution education are essential elements to successful programs. It is the

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adults in the schools who must be the most explicit in their support because it is they who serve as role models for the students. Programs at schools where the administration or faculty rely heavily on external reward/punishment systems (suspensions, detentions, being sent to the principal's office, stern lectures) teach and model for students that "adults or authority figures are needed to resolve conflicts. Such programs work only as long as students are under surveillance" (Johnson & Johnson, 1995, p. 23). These programs are disempowering for students and do not offer students the skills needed to resolve conflicts in their personal lives where supervision and authority figures may not be present.

At the other end of the spectrum from punitive disciplinary systems are conflict resolution education programs in which adults teach students self-regulation and give them an opportunity to practice socially acceptable ways of resolving conflict in a safe environment without supervision. These programs, such as peer mediation, Peaceable Classrooms, and Peaceable Schools, empower students and promote respect of self and others. They address the conflicts that do not necessarily produce physical scars—teasing, bullying, harassing, taunting. They deal with conflicts that create emotional scars—often the very conflicts from which students seek to escape when they are repeatedly truant.

The history of conflict resolution education in schools

Johnson & Johnson (1995) identify the major moments in the history of conflict resolution from ancient China to present-day peer mediation in their book *Reducing School Violence through Conflict Resolution*. In ancient China many people practiced the Confucian way of resolving conflicts through moral persuasion and agreement.

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Village leaders in Japan used mediation to assist community members in disputes. In Malawi—a small country in south-central Africa—respected members of the community, usually chiefs or elders, help parties resolve conflict in a town meeting forum. American Indian peacemaking processes bring together victims, offenders, and supporters to holistically restore harmony and balance to the community. For centuries and across continents, local religious leaders have served as community mediators.

Even though these community mediation programs have existed for time immemorial, public school-based programs are relatively recent (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Four main sources of these programs are: researchers in the field of conflict resolution; groups committed to nonviolence (i.e. Quaker Church); lawyers; and groups concerned about the rise of violence among children and teenagers (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers* was one of the first programs in school-based conflict resolution and peer mediation, arising in the 1960s from the University of Minnesota. It was followed in the 1970s by *Children's Creative Response to Conflict*, in the 1980s by *Educators for Social Responsibility*, and in the 1990s by the *Community Boards of San Francisco Conflict Managers Program* (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Currently school-based conflict resolution programs are either holistic in approach, where they incorporate the entire student body, or use a cadre approach whereby they train a select group of students. Each approach has both benefits and drawbacks and there are situations and arenas where one approach may be more appropriate than the other.

Of all these approaches, only *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers Program* has had extensive international implementation and research-based successes (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Johnson and Johnson (2000) conducted seventeen studies between 1988

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and 2000 on the effectiveness of conflict resolution. These studies were carried out in grades kindergarten through ninth grade with students in eight different schools and two countries. Studies concerned two different approaches to peer mediation, either involvement of the entire student body or the training of a cadre of students; training sessions lasted from nine to fifteen hours in length (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). The findings of this research were: students engage in many conflicts each day; trained students are successful in learning and maintaining conflict resolution strategies throughout the year; students apply these strategies both within and outside of the school setting; given the choice of using interest-based negotiation versus distributive negotiation, students tend to use interest-based negotiations; peacemaker processes can be successfully integrated into academic units to increase academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). As little other research exists on the effectiveness of conflict resolution education, these findings are important.

Conflict resolution education programs

LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz (1997) outlined four general approaches to conflict resolution education in schools: process curriculum, peer mediation, Peaceable Classroom, and Peaceable School. Each of these programs combats truancy as they teach youth constructive and creative problem-solving skills. Conflict resolution education programs are most effective when the entire school community and faculty are involved; when they are integrated into institutional policies and curriculum; and when they are linked to, and bring in, family and community initiatives (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Join Together, 1998; LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997; Lincoln, 2002).

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Described below, these four approaches to conflict education in schools are often combined in some form to meet individual schools' needs.

Process curriculum. This approach, where educators teach the principles and processes of conflict resolution education as a distinct lesson or course, is typified by the *Program for Young Negotiators* based on the Harvard Negotiation Project (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997). Students, faculty, and staff are taught interest-based negotiation techniques and theories as a method of resolving conflicts and achieving goals. Interest-based negotiation (win-win), as opposed to distributive negotiation (win-lose, zero sum), is a communicative approach wherein parties bargain based on their interests rather than positions. The method has four main parts: separating the people from the problem, focusing on interests rather than positions, inventing options for mutual gain, and insisting on using objective criteria to evaluate the options (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Once youth learn and practice the principles of interest-based negotiation it becomes a real alternative to fighting with peers or simply "giving in." Initial results indicate that youth are more successful in discussing disputes and avoiding fights with their peers and parents and faculty intervene less in conflicts among students (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997; Sera Learning, 2006; Welsh, 2001).

In addressing truancy issues, process curriculum teaches youth how to handle conflict constructively, which in turn makes the truant youth more likely to stay in school. The youth learns how to identify his or her real interests, express his or her views, and seek options that are mutually acceptable. Faculty and staff also learn to regard truancy as a position the student is taking rather than an underlying issue and they

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become more able to address that underlying issue. Once the underlying need to take a position is identified and resolved the youth is much less likely to be truant.

Peer mediation. Many schools train youth mediators to be directly involved in school procedures as part of a comprehensive strategy for violence and truancy prevention. These peer mediators, trained in the theory and process of mediation, work together with their peers to find mutually acceptable resolutions to conflict. A widely cited study of peer mediation in one middle school and three elementary schools (2,500 students) in Las Vegas, Nevada, found that peer mediators successfully resolved 86 percent of the disputes mediated and resulted in fewer fights on the school grounds (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997; Welsh, 2001). In peer mediation programs students are involved in the disciplinary process of a school where conflicts are taken to a mediator rather than to an external authority source (teacher, administrator). Students in conflict are given the space and tools to discuss their interests with the assistance of the peer mediators. Students are able to reach options that are mutually acceptable and self-regulated, and to which they are more likely to adhere.

With regard to truancy, peer mediation is similar to process curriculum in that youth are taught to constructively handle conflicts. One limitation to peer mediation addressing truancy is that those youth who are perpetually truant, unless they are also trained as peer mediators, will not necessarily be involved in or receive the essential skills. One solution to this limitation is for teachers or administrators to be cognizant of this fact and invite perpetually truant youth to be peer mediators. This accomplishes two things: the youth's self-esteem is increased by his or her involvement in the process and

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in the responsibility he or she has been given, and the process requires the student to learn and use conflict resolution skills on a daily basis.

Peaceable Classroom. According to LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz (1997), Peaceable Classroom is "a whole-classroom methodology that includes teaching students the foundation abilities, principles, and one or more of the three problem-solving processes of conflict resolution" (p. 1). Each core subject of the curriculum, as well as the classroom management strategies, incorporates conflict resolution education. The Peaceable Classrooms approach is different than process curriculum in that the Peaceable Classroom approach is integrated rather than a separate lesson or course. An important consequence of this distinction is that students learn to employ conflict resolution strategies and theories in all aspects of school life. It is likely that students will use the problem-solving processes and skills both inside and outside of the classroom because these skills and processes becomes a way of living rather than a class objective.

Peaceable School. These programs expand the Peaceable Classroom program by interweaving conflict resolution education into every aspect and every member of the institution (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997). Welsh (2001) states that most problems are the result of conflict between people regarding standards of conduct and that students can be taught to manage these types of conflicts. Peaceable School programs go one step farther and ask that all school members, both adults and youth, continuously believe in and act on the principles of conflict resolution education. Peaceable School programs seek to permanently alter the climate of a school based on the fundamental belief that a "diverse, nonviolent society is a realistic goal" (LeBoeuf & Delany-Shabazz, 1997, p. 2).

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Outcomes of conflict resolution education programs. After twelve years of research, Johnson and Johnson (2000) found that students were involved in daily conflicts and responded to those conflicts in non-constructive ways. The conflicts were usually referred to teachers or were manifested through destructive actions (repeating requests or attempting to force the other person to give in) that only escalated the conflict. Johnson and Johnson (2000) stated that "before the trainings students viewed fights as conflicts that always resulted in a winner and a loser" (Results of Our Studies section, para. 1). At the conclusion of the studies students who had undergone the training perceived conflict as positive or slightly negative; a vast improvement from trained students' previous views (and untrained students' current views) of conflict as highly negative. Teachers also reported that conflicts were referred to them 80% less frequently and zero conflicts were reported to the principals; parents reported that students mediated conflicts at home and in other contexts outside of school. Many parents who were not part of the project requested their children receive the training the next year (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Overall, the results of research on conflict resolution education were positive and the major barriers to effective conflict resolution in schools that did not have these trainings were twofold. The first was that schools are often conflict avoidant and therefore do not process the conflicts that do occur. This teaches students to view conflict as negative or to avoid conflict altogether. The second was that students and teachers often have individualized procedures for dealing with conflict that do not always mesh well and sometimes cause chaos; Johnson and Johnson (2000) identify this as a particular concern when students are from different cultural, ethnic, social, and language backgrounds. Johnson and Johnson (2000) conclude that the introduction of a uniform

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process for handling and understanding conflict in schools makes life easier for every student and increases the levels of academic performance at the school.

Schools with High American Indian Populations

> One understands the meaning of an event in a novel by locating it within the story being told; one understands a line of poetry or a poetic image through relating it to the poem as a whole; and one understands the meaning of a human action by knowing the reason it was done. (Bernstein, 1995, p. 44)

> It is impossible to understand American Indians in their contemporary setting without first gaining some knowledge of their history as it has been formed and shaped by the Indian experience with Western civilization. . . . Indians must continuously choose to follow the dictates of their traditions or to accept the values of the outsider. History, therefore, cannot be divorced from an analysis of American Indian life.
> (Deloria & Lytle, 1983, p. 1-2).

A sociohistorical context of American Indian education.

As a critical theorist, Bernstein (1995) recognizes the relativity of meaning and that everything happens within the context of broader historical discourses. From Native American and legal scholars' perspectives Deloria and Lytle (1983) illuminate the distinct importance of locating American Indians' stories within a larger historical context. Inextricably tied to the social history of American Indian education is the unique and interdependent relationship between Indian tribes and the United States federal government; it is impossible to evaluate American Indian education at any point in United States history without also considering the federal Indian policies of the time.

Deloria and Lytle (1983) detail the five recognized and distinct periods of federal Indian policy in the United States: Treaty-making and Removal (1492–1878); Allotment and Forced Assimilation (1878-1928); Indian Reorganization (1928-1945); Termination

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(1945-1961); Self-Determination (1961 to present). In each of these federal policy periods the prevailing public attitude at the time shaped the specific educational policies that were either born or modified. In the Treaty-making period education was primarily left up to the tribes themselves. The first westernized education to impact Indian communities arrived with Christian missionaries in the early part of the nineteenth century. These missionaries, with the assistance of the federal government's 'Civilization Fund,' established schools throughout Indian Country[i] "to promote civilization among the savages" (Noel, 2002, p.20). In the Forced Assimilation period education was used primarily as a tool to assimilate American Indians; during this time the U.S. government made a major commitment to the education of Indian children through the establishment of government sponsored schools (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Deloria & Lytle, 1983; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Noel, 2002; Pewewardy, 2002).

Off-reservation boarding schools were established so that American Indian children would be removed from their cultures and brought into Euro-American 'civilization' as a means of assimilating American Indians into Euro-American ways of life. American Indian children were literally taken from their homes, re-named (with an arbitrary Euro-American name), and sent to schools where they were stripped of their "Indianness." Native languages, traditional customs, manners of dress, and religious practices were outlawed. Jackie Parsons wrote that the "work of civilizing Indian children required much more than constant drilling in the three R's. It required painstaking indoctrination in the basic fundamentals of the white man's culture" (cited in Noel, 2002, p. 23). Over 12,000 children had attended one of the most infamous

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American Indian boarding schools, The Carlisle Indian School, until it closed its doors in 1918. Richard Pratt, founder of The Carlisle Indian School, stated the rationale behind his now well-known policy of "Kill the Indian and save the man":

> The school at Carlisle is an attempt on the part of the government to do this. Carlisle has always preached treason to the tribe and loyalty to the nation at large. It has preached against colonizing Indians, and in favor of individualizing them. It has demanded for them the same multiplicity of chances which all others in the country enjoy. Carlisle fills young Indians with the spirit of loyalty to the stars and stripes, and then moves them out into our communities to show by their conduct and ability that Indian is no different from white or colored, that he has the same inalienable rights to liberty and opportunity that the white and the negro have. Carlisle does not dictate to him what line of life he should fill, so it is an honest one. It says to him that, if he gets his living by the sweat of his brow, and demonstrates to the nation that he is a man, he does more good for his race than hundreds of his fellows who cling to their tribal communistic surroundings. (Pratt 1892/1973, para. 8).

Boarding schools robbed American Indian communities of their children and, by doing so, also served as a tool to systematically destroy Indian cultures one generation at a time. D.W. Adams, author of *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* stated:

> The beginning of American Indian/Alaskan Native education is the story of how Euro-American policy-makers sought to use the schoolhouse—

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> specifically the boarding schools—as an instrument for annihilating and acculturating many Indian youth to "American" ways of thinking and living. (cited in Pewewardy, 2002, p. 26)

Thus, educational policy for American Indian children had two objectives. The first was to assimilate American Indian children into the Euro-American lifestyle. The second, which came to bear even more in the Termination policy period, was to dismantle the trust relationship between the U.S. and the tribes as "Indian education changed from a sporadic activity restricted to those tribes who had educational provisions in their treaties to a national program that policy-makers hoped would hasten the day of complete Indian independence from the government" (Deloria & Lytle, 1983, p. 11). Throughout the decades a culture of mistrust between American Indians and Anglo-Americans developed and persisted as communication between the two groups was difficult and sometimes non-existent. The long-rooted mistrust American Indians feel towards educational practices continues to influence present-day communication and interaction between American Indian families and educational institutions.

In 1928, the Meriam Report—a study conducted by social scientists on the state of Indian Affairs, which also marked the beginning of the Indian Reorganization period, outlined the catastrophic failure of the U.S. federal government as a trustee to American Indian peoples and cited boarding schools, along with policies such as allotment[ii] and inadequate health services as some of the most influential factors in the impoverishment of the American Indians. As federal policy changed so did the educational experience of American Indian children who were moved from boarding schools into public schools. Noel (2002) states that "with Indian children attending the same schools with White

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children, there was an increasing desire to ensure that the Indian children could, in fact, live by the same cultural rules and expectations as those in the mainstream American society" (p. 28). By 1958 the federal government was extensively involved in American Indian education and realized that Termination policies (terminating the trust relationship with tribes in an attempt, after World War II, to cut down on federal expenditures) were inapplicable in the arena of education.

Though tribes have always been recognized as sovereign nations, the limitations and definition of that sovereignty have changed throughout the centuries. Current federal Indian policy claims the title of "Self-Determination," meaning that tribes have greater jurisdiction, authority, and input than in the past over affairs that happen in their designated piece of Indian Country. The first formal educational policy at the federal level providing for unique educational interests of American Indian children (much like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) will do later) was the Indian Education Act of 1972 based on the findings of Senator Edward Kennedy's 1968 Subcommittee on Indian Education. The Kennedy Report, as it came to be known, "characterized Indian education as a national tragedy" (Deloria & Lytle, 1983, p. 240). Drawing on attitudes of the past century and setting a tone for the next half-century of Indian educational policy, the report "emphasiz[ed] the cultural differences that exist between Indian people and other groups in American society, [but] assumed without critical reflection that, given the same opportunities of access to educational institutions as the white majority, Indians would adopt the same values and come to achieve the same results" (Deloria & Lytle, 1983, p. 240). The language of laws and policies may have changed throughout the years, and formalization of anti-discrimination laws may have occurred, but inherent

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naturalized and legitimatized values of Euro-American culture—that Indian people will not succeed until they think, feel, and live like the white majority—perpetually dominated and silenced the voices of American Indian people.

Historical implications. While generalizing about any group of people is dangerous, some common implications of American Indian history with regard to American Indian students can be illuminated in an attempt to promote culturally responsive practices in schools. Hunt, Gooden, & Barkdull (2001) describe three key historical implications that should be kept in mind when working with American Indian populations. First, schools with high American Indian populations must acknowledge the diversity among Native Americans. There are over 558 federally recognized tribes in the United States, and this total does not include those additional tribes that are state-recognized or self-identified. Second, the colonization of American Indians in the United States left a legacy of historical trauma (child removal and assimilation, boarding schools, displacement), which remains part of each American Indian child's life in some aspect. Third, American Indian tribes in the United States have a unique relationship with the U.S. federal government that guarantees a degree of sovereignty and trust responsibilities. For analytical purposes, these implications are easy to separate into neat categories, but in the reality of a school, they are confounded. Culturally responsive practices must therefore seek to understand implications within themselves and as an intricate web of repercussions.

Indian education and truancy in Montana

Montana is in a unique position in American public education in that state legislation, *Indian Education for All,* recognizes the unique cultural heritage of American

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Indians and "is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity" (Office of Public Instruction [OPI], 2000). However, Montana is facing a clear crisis of retention of American Indian students in its schools. Because truancy rates are not measured directly, the actual truancy rate must be inferred by looking at student dropout rate. In Montana a student is considered to be a dropout if he or she misses 14 days of school with unexcused absences (OPI, 2004). Thus, those students who are habitually truant are eventually categorized as dropouts. No distinction is made between these truants and students that actively drop out. In Montana American Indian students are at high risk for dropping out of school. The Montana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2001) stated:

> Indian children in Montana public schools are in a crisis situation, as evidenced by disparities in education, including dropout rates that are double those of non-Indian students, low achievement levels and test scores, and few high school graduates with little advancement to higher education (cited in OPI, 2002, p. 2).

In the latest published report available from the Office of Public Instruction (2004), American Indian students are dropping out of high school at a rate three times greater than their white peers; in middle school at a rate 12 times greater. American Indians account for only 10.4 percent of the total school enrollment in Montana and 25 percent of its dropout rate. And, while there is a trend of decreasing dropout rates statewide, American Indian dropout rates in Montana remain constant.

The uniqueness of public schools on allotted Indian Reservations begins with the way in which the school is funded. As is the case with all public schools, the federal

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government uses Impact Aid—money that is set aside for schools whose tax base is affected by Indian land held in trust, military bases, and federal building sites. L. Caye (personal communication, March 27, 2006) elaborates that schools on reservations count all land that does not generate tax revenue and uses a formula that gives the school additional revenue to operate; the more land held in trust, the more additional revenue a school receives. The purpose of the Impact Aid is to level the disparity between the amount of money local taxpayers pay and what the federal government pays for land in local taxable areas they are holding for military bases, federal buildings, and Indian land held in trust (L. Caye, personal communication, March 27, 2006). All schools receive Impact Aid, but at different rates; a public school on a reservation that is 100% Indian trust land receives more Aid than a public school in a city as the city may have little to no land held by the federal government. While there is significant controversy surrounding this Impact Aid, schools located in areas with considerable amounts of land held by the federal government need the Impact Aid to function.

Many American Indian families who own trust land on the reservations may send their children to public schools because there is a sense of belonging to those schools that receive Impact Aid monies associated with their land. Many local taxpayers, especially in highly race-induced polarized communities, may feel that American Indians are 'getting away' with not paying taxes and sending their students to school for 'free.' Conflict within the community at large arises in these situations, partly because those in control of this revenue, usually the school board and administrators, are predominately Euro-American. Each group in a polarized community seeks to control the resources that belong to it, and in this case, the monies from the Impact Aid. A school board may feel it

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has sole jurisdiction over the monies while the American Indian population may feel they also have authority. If the conflict becomes aggravated each side may infer that the other's children need not be in the school, which causes tension in the school between the students along racial lines. If this tension, or the conflict that arise from it, is not handled constructively, polarization of the community and school become inevitable. Indeed this is a unique situation for public schools located on Indian Reservations whose schools are already struggling to create environments that are in line with the philosophies of multicultural education.

Another distinctive feature of many of Montana's schools located on (and off) Indian Reservations is the bucolic setting, which usually translates to a lack of educational choices for students and their parents or guardians. In many pastoral communities there are fewer opportunities for parents and guardians to avail themselves of education because private, parochial, or alternative schools may be non-existent. In terms of NCLB's mandate of choice for parents whose child attends a failing school, it may be a moot discussion because there are no other schools from which the parent may choose. Thus, parents are forced to send their students to the local public school. In rural communities that have an alternative to the public schools one must ask the reason for their existence as such alternatives are rarely needed when the mainstream institutions, in this case the public schools, are meeting the communities' needs.

As a result of present-day realities and the historical residue from boarding schools, a severe mistrust of public schools exists among many American Indian people. American Indian parents or guardians may feel obligated to send their children to the public schools for a variety of reasons, but they may also feel a deep sense of apathy

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towards an institution that has historically been harmful. American Indian parents and guardians may not put as much emphasis on attending school for these reasons; American Indian students may be counted (and treated) as truants though their reasons for not attending have little to do with antisocial behavior and much more to do with cultural legacies and expectations.

In order for Montana, as a state, to meet its stated Constitutional obligations to provide free and fair education for all students and to retain the cultural integrity of its American Indian population, Montana schools must address the issues of truancy and dropout in public schools. One way to address this crisis is to implement conflict resolution programs in schools with high American Indian populations

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Chapter II: Rationale and Statement of the Problem

Why conflict resolution education?

Since there are many different approaches to addressing truancy problems in a community, why specifically is conflict resolution education an appropriate approach in schools with high American Indian populations? As previously stated, this is one proposed solution to the problems of truancy and it is highly encouraged that communities assess their unique situations. Join Together (1998), a policy, prevention, and treatment research project focusing on school age youth out of Boston University School of Public Health, identified several factors—aside from conflict at school—that can contribute to truancy in schools. These include, but are not limited to, transportation issues, family trouble, inability to keep up with school work, other laws such as curfews or fines for truancy that may actually exacerbate the problem, necessity for youth to work in order to help support their families, and adequate after-school activities that are accessible to all youth (some youth may be discouraged by associated fees or costs).

Chapter IV of this thesis elaborates in detail the appropriateness of conflict resolution education in schools with high American Indian populations; the rationale is that peacemaking and collaborative conflict resolution are in harmony with many shared traditional values in American Indian cultures. Hunt, Gooden, & Barkdull (2001) identify these traditional values as: autonomy (each person is valued as an individual, children are given opportunities to be self-reliant), solidarity (each person is first a member of a specific tribe), competence, spirituality, balance, and wisdom. Conflict resolution education programs are congruent with these values in that they seek to: promote autonomy and competence when asking students to resolve their own conflicts;

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create solidarity among peers through a balanced view of conflict as both inevitable and an opportunity for change; and honor the wisdom and spirituality of each student through respecting his or her viewpoints, personal values, and stories.

Limitations of this thesis

The need for more research-based literature. The most pressing limitation of this thesis is the gap in research-based literature concerning conflict resolution in the context of American-Indian education and the confluence of the two. In the case of conflict resolution education, most of the research is based in either suburban or urban school systems. As mediation and conflict resolution become more prominent in the international and national legal arenas, more research on the effects of conflict resolution in non-educational settings is being done. One can expect more studies on the effects of conflict resolution education programs in schools to be forthcoming, but research-based studies of conflict resolution within American-Indian communities remain extremely limited.

Another limitation of this thesis is that the author herself is not American Indian. This is not to say that research or literature written from a non-Indian perspective has no place, but research and literature from within a community gives a unique perspective bound in that culture. As a white woman I can write about American Indian education in a culturally responsive way, but as a white woman I am not intimately familiar with the nuances and deeper contextualized understanding of American Indian cultures. I do not know the impact, or non-impact, of historical trauma except academically and empathetically.

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To be sure, as a non-Indian this author sought to overcome some of these limitations, but I encountered extreme difficulty obtaining access to schools with high American Indian populations. In the process of using a scientifically sound method to collect the necessary empirical data, I found that the process was not only difficult and time-consuming, but was considered inappropriate and culturally unacceptable at times. The method proposed in this study was accepted by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Montana-Missoula on the condition that signed permission slips be obtained from all parents and students prior to participation. While it is certainly important to protect the rights of minors in a research study, in all likelihood this requirement would have compromised the data set. It is hard to imagine that parents (Native and non-Native alike) who reside in homes where conflict is high would readily agree to have their child(ren) participate in a study about conflict resolution, especially if there are any doubts about how such information might eventually be used. The results could therefore have been misleading or even inaccurate.

In addition, it was very difficult for me as a non-Indian and university researcher to gain access into the schools. Though I had worked in the schools with conflict resolution education programs over a period of eight months, I was not trusted to collect data that would accurately reflect the situation at the school. There was suspicion from both American Indians and non-Indians that whatever data collected would be accusatory in nature. As this was not my intent I decided that data collection was inappropriate at this time.

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Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between school-based conflict resolution education and truancy rates in schools with high American Indian populations. Given the limitations stated above, this examination is conceptually-oriented and proposes a methodology for conducting a community needs assessment study of truancy without actually having gathered the data. As stated above, it is this author's belief that, at this moment in time and in the current political environments (national, state, and local), it is inappropriate to collect data as a white woman looking into American Indian communities. In the spirit of a truly interest-based approach, the decision not to collect data, but to instead produce a conceptual analysis, was the agreement mutually accepted by the author, the faculty members of my advisory committee at the University of Montana, and members of the tribal education departments. It is the author's hope that this conceptually-oriented thesis will provide a springboard—in terms of its proposed methodology and anticipated findings—from which Montana communities can actively assess potential truancy problems in their own communities.

Statement of the hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature, three primary hypotheses are proposed. The first hypothesis is that students absent themselves from school regularly when there is significant conflict at school, either with other students or with faculty. Truancy becomes a chronic problem because most youth are not taught to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, and because most youth perceive conflict as negative. The second hypothesis is that the introduction of conflict resolution education greatly reduces the truancy rates

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because students are taught to look at conflict as normal and as an opportunity for positive change. The final hypothesis is that conflict resolution education is a very culturally appropriate method of truancy prevention in schools with high American Indian populations.

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Chapter III: Proposed Design and Methodology

The design and methodology for this particular project was proposed to The University of Montana-Missoula Institutional Review Board (IRB) in September 2005. It was approved on the condition that written parental consent and student assent forms be obtained from all participants. That request made the data collection portion of this project unfeasible given time constraints and the high likelihood that many students would not return either the consent or assent forms. The probability that the collected data would inaccurately reflect the current situation in the community was high, which led the author to reconsider data collection. For this reason, and for previously stated limitations, this thesis is conceptually-oriented. However, this chapter provides a detailed guide for conducting an empirical study on the relationship between truancy and conflict resolution education. Also included is comprehensive information on proposed participants, instruments, design, and procedure. Chapter IV provides further in-depth discussion of anticipated findings and the implications of potential results. The following description is based on the design, methods and instruments presented to The University of Montana-Missoula's Institutional Review Board.

Design

The design best suited for this project is a mixed-method participatory research design. This would involve collaboration between the principal investigator, the school community, and the primary tribal education department on the reservation, which alleviates many obstacles and has a greater chance of successful data collection because each member of the team adds insight and expertise from his or her background, professional experience, and personal knowledge. As the principal investigator's desire

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is to collect data regarding the attendance habits of the students, it is necessary for the principal investigator to spend a significant amount of time in the school and community. Especially if the principal investigator is from outside of the school community, a realistic timeline for this project is between two and three years in which the principal investigator spends at least one of those years participating in the school on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

The reason for recommending a two to three year time-frame is based on my findings that gaining access to a school for this kind of study is a slow process, particularly when the school serves a vulnerable population or is located in a politically volatile community. In a biracial community where American Indians and Anglo-Americans are the prominent groups of people, such as one located on an allotted Indian reservation, historical tensions and mistrusts play a significant role in whether or not an investigator will be trusted to accurately report on findings from a research study. To gain this trust and build a cadre of community members engaged in the project—a requirement for the participatory design—the investigator must commit significant time (one or two years) to working, living, and participating in the community. It is only then that this type of project can be conducted accurately and sensitively.

The investigator's participation will be varied throughout the year beginning with naturalistic observation, which allows the investigator to understand the students' behavior and attendance patterns in an unaltered environment (Gay and Airasian, 2003). Later forms of observation are more participatory in nature and include activities such as teaching assistance, student supervision, or guest-teaching (or something applicable to the principal investigator's expertise and the school's needs) for at least one semester. This

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level of participation, particularly when spread throughout the year, shows the principal investigator's commitment to learning and interacting with students and the school culture while also providing the school community with an opportunity to establish trust with the principal investigator. Partially structured or unstructured interviews with students, teachers, administrators, and other community members may also be done throughout the investigator's time within the school community.

In schools with high populations of American Indian students and schools located on Indian Reservations the metaphor to this exchange of knowledge and skills is one of gift-giving—each participant brings a gift to the table and that gift is his or her strengths or expertise that can be shared and incorporated into the group (G. Swaney, personal communication, April 26, 2006). The community, which includes the students, teachers, administrators, schools boards, parents and the tribal education department bring their lives and their expertise about the culture as their gift. This gift is shared with the investigator to assist him or her meet specific research goals set forth in the study. The participation of the investigator in the school is the gift he or she brings to the table to share with the community.

Participants

As proposed to the Institutional Review Board, the participants of this project would be students, full-time teachers, or on-site administrators in the selected school. The proposed school itself is a rural, public middle school with a total population of 368 sixth through eighth grade students, 51% male and 49% female. The population is 56% American Indian, 41% White, and 1% Hispanic, Asian, and Black, respectively. Fifty-

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three percent of the school population qualifies for free lunch and 12% qualified for reduced lunch.

There are 23 full-time teachers at the school, an administrative staff and a school board, the majority of which is Anglo-American. The school is located on an allotted Indian Reservation where multiple American Indian tribes are represented, each with its own history and culture. There are also a number of American Indian and First Nation students from tribes located in other regions of the United States and Canada. All enrolled students, full-time teachers, and on-site administrators would be given the opportunity to participate, though participation was not mandatory. Students would not be recruited based upon membership in physically, psychologically, socially, or culturally vulnerable populations though a large number of the participants are American Indian and therefore members of a culturally vulnerable group.

Instruments

All participants in the study would be asked to complete a 39-item self-report survey measure either during a homeroom period (students) or at their earliest convenience (teachers and administrators). There are two versions of the self-report survey, one to be given to students and one to be given to teachers and administrators. Using a Likert Scale and free responses, participants would be asked questions about attendance habits and factors that help students to stay in school. Both surveys are divided into four sections and include questions designed to elicit free-response answers. Complete copies of the two instruments are provided in the Appendix.

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Suggested Procedure

Prior to the distribution of the survey, informational letters should be sent home to parents/guardians and distributed to all participants—students, teachers, and administrators. In some instances investigators may be required to obtain either passive or informed consent and assent from all parents/guardians (if the student is under the age of 18 years) and participants, which should be done prior to conducting the surveys and in accordance with school or institution guidelines. All homeroom teachers would be briefed by, and have a chance to ask questions of, the principal investigator regarding the process for conducting the project. In this meeting the teachers should design an alternate exercise for those students who do not participate in the survey; participation is entirely voluntarily and students should not be penalize if they choose not to take the survey. These alternate activities could be either classroom duties, such as taking attendance, or specific to the homeroom teacher's needs.

The day of the survey the principal investigator would be on-site, but would not conduct a survey in a particular classroom as to remain available should there be questions or problems. Students should attend their homeroom class as usual and the homeroom teacher should describe the process for completing the survey. If the student chooses or is instructed by a parent/guardian not to complete the survey, then he or she will return an uncompleted survey and participate in the alternate assignment. The homeroom teacher should distribute the surveys to participating students and allow about 15 minutes for completion; upon completion of the survey the students will submit their anonymous survey to a large envelope that will then be sealed. The principal investigator

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should collect the sealed envelopes from each homeroom at the end of the homeroom period.

The procedure for teachers and administrators would be similar, but would allow a longer period to complete the survey due to the increased complexities of the teachers' and administrators' schedules and workloads. The teachers and administrators would complete the survey the week prior to the day of the students' survey. Completed surveys will be collected in an envelope kept in the school counselor's office. On the day of the students' survey the principal investigator will collect the envelope from the school counselor at the same time he/she collects the student surveys.

A note on data analysis

Since no empirical data were collected for this project it is illogical to provide an analysis or interpretation of actual results. However, in a mixed-method design data analysis would be both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data includes all field notes from observations, descriptions, and quotations from the free response questions and/or interviews. The quantitative data analysis may include chi square tests used to compare different categories such as the perceptions of students versus teachers on each question about why a student may miss school (i.e. illness, transportation, job, funeral, etc.) The purpose of the chi square tests is to compare the frequency of occurrence of different events in different groups (Gay and Airasian, 2003).

For analysis of the surveys, categories would be created to sort the data based on shared characteristics. These categories would then be summarized to capture the core findings from the survey answers, which can then be used to answer the proposed questions (Gay and Airasian, 2003). Since surveys would be given to both students and

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teachers and administrators it would be necessary to compare the summaries of the students' surveys with those of the teacher and administrators' surveys in order to ascertain the similarities and differences between perceptions, which can be done using a chi square.

Though there are numerous ways to analyze the data given the investigator's preferences, experience, time constraints, and reasons for conducting the project, this method of data analysis is consistent with the mix-method participatory approach used in this study. For the purposes of this thesis, the next chapter will provide speculation about anticipated results and offer an in-depth discussion of the implications and applications of those results.

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Chapter IV: Discussion and Conclusion

Anticipated Findings

Based on the literature, findings, and previous experience working in schools that are teaching conflict resolution, the anticipated findings are that students do absent themselves from school when there is significant conflict, but this is not the sole reason for truancy at the school. The survey asked students to describe how often they miss school for reasons outside of their control and the expected responses are: they are without transportation; they must care for brothers/sisters; they must care for their own children; they work either in the home or outside of the home. For some students, particularly those coming from a long distance, transportation will prove to be a problem. In rural areas, unlike urban and some suburban areas, there is no regular public transportation system that students can use to get to and from school. Therefore, it is plausible to think that, if a student does miss the school bus, it is likely that he or she may not have another way to get to school, especially if parents/guardians work shift jobs or multiple jobs and are not at home during the times a student starts or finishes school. The student is thus truant for reasons unrelated to conflict. This cause of truancy is probably less related to ethnicity than to geographical location and perhaps socioeconomic status (students from lower income families may have parents working multiple jobs or live in families who do not own a car or other means of reliable transportation).

Another factor likely to emerge is that a student is absent from school because of the need to care for family members—siblings, elderly adults, or children. If a family member falls ill the student may be the only one available to stay home and care for that person because the student's parents or guardians may not be able to miss work. This is

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particularly true in single-parent households, grandparent-headed households, and households where both parents/guardians work. Again, this is a reason why students may be truant and these situations cannot be solved by conflict resolution education. In schools with high American Indian populations it might be the American Indian students who are chronically absent from school for this reason. In numerous Native cultures it is accepted and often expected that care for family members is a primary responsibility.

Also conceivable is that students who are part of a family that lives either in poverty or just above the poverty line may have to work to help support the family, and when forced to choose between working to meet immediate needs and going to school to meet future needs, it is difficult to look beyond the present situation. Again, this is more often an issue for students living in rural communities because the job possibilities are limited. In urban areas it is often feasible to find enough work outside of school hours for students to do both; but in rural areas with limited job opportunities the only viable option for some students may be to work during the school hours. The socioeconomic status of students is outside the realm of conflict resolution education and, therefore, truancy problems due to economic needs will not necessarily be addressed by its introduction into the schools.

A second finding of this project is likely to be that the introduction of conflict resolution education does reduce truancy rates, but it may be limited to those cases in which conflict at school is the reason for the student's chronic absence. As stated above, there are numerous potential reasons that students absent themselves from school that have little to do with conflict at school. The survey asks students to describe the frequency of different sources of potential conflict at school, including conflict with

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teachers, other students, or their own inner struggles. The survey also asks students to identify the reasons they do come to school as a way of looking at the strengths and motivations that exist in the students' lives. It will be in the comparison of these answers that a significant amount will be revealed about the role conflict plays in a student's decision whether or not to attend school. If the student expresses numerous sources of conflict at school and few sources of motivation then he or she is likely to absent him- or herself from school in order to avoid conflicts. There is probably little encouragement or interest in students' education and therefore avoidance of the conflict is easier because there are few, if any, external incentives or repercussions. In this case conflict resolution education might be helpful in keeping the student in school and increasing the student's motivation to an extent, but the deeper issues of motivation must also be addressed.

On the other hand, a student who expresses a great many sources of conflict at school and high motivation to attend school is the most likely to benefit from the inclusion of conflict resolution education in the school. This student may be truant because he or she does not see another option to get out of the conflicting situations at school. He or she has the motivation and encouragement to go to school but most likely feels unsafe there. This student, when introduced to the skills of negotiation and the view of conflict as a normal occurrence and an opportunity for change, will more than likely cease absenting him- or herself from school. He or she has learned a constructive way to approach conflict and, using that approach, can now meet both immediate needs—going to school and feeling safe while doing it.

A third expected finding from this project is that conflict resolution education is one culturally appropriate method of truancy prevention in schools with high American

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Indian populations when truancy is the result of conflict within the school. As was stated previously, many Native cultures view conflict as a disturbance in the overall harmony. In many American Indian cultures peacemaking and restorative justice are preferred methods of dealing with conflict because these processes honor the development of the conflict and its resolution rather than depersonalizing them. Walker (2004) avowed that processing conflict in many indigenous cultures is in an attempt to create long-term, sustainable change. Part of the peacemaking process is acknowledging the contributing factors—like historical unresolved trauma or institutionalized racism—in an attempt to at least understand them. Conflict resolution education may offer American Indian students the opportunity to better understand how their histories influence current behaviors and values and how those histories interact and are interwoven with other people's histories. It is reasonable to think that conflict resolution may offer that opportunity to each student regardless of ethnicity.

I expect the anticipated findings will also corroborate that conflict resolution education is an appropriate means of addressing truancy in schools with high American Indian populations as peacemaking is harmonious with many traditional values in American Indian cultures. Collaborative conflict resolution is also becoming more incorporated into the Euro-American culture and therefore into school systems. In Western Montana peer mediation is the most used form of introducing conflict resolution education into the school systems—in the past year the author has been involved in the teaching of peer mediation training sessions at three middle schools, one of which was a school with a high American Indian population and was one proposed site for this project. Each of these schools had existing peer mediation programs and these training

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sessions served as refresher courses for the current peer-mediators and as preliminary training for the new peer-mediators. Since the schools are responsible for the running and maintenance of the program, each middle school has their own process to meet specific needs, but in each case the feedback concerning the program was overwhelmingly positive. Students claimed that being trained as peer mediators helped them in their everyday conflicts, which in turn raised their self-confidence. Students felt safer at school and more empowered to handle situations like bullying, teasing, and difficult teacher-student relationships.

Teachers and school counselors also noted that programs were very successful and felt that it was noticeable which students had been involved in the peer mediation training; in fact many teachers lamented the fact that all students could not participate. Of the obstacles that teachers encountered in implementing and maintaining the peer mediation programs, most were related to not having enough funding for additional trainings and a lack of administrative support (though this was not in all cases) due to the pressures on time and resources that public schools face with regards to standardized testing requirements. Teachers felt that more administrators would be supportive if they would also participate in the trainings.

Unfortunately, all of this information is obtained via observation and personal communication with students, teachers, and administrations without specific and necessary documentation; however this clearly speaks to the great need for more scientific inquiry to be done in this area. There are similarities between this information and the results of Johnson and Johnson's (1995) studies, which reported that students engage in many conflicts each day; trained students are successful in learning and

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maintaining conflict resolution strategies throughout the year; students apply these strategies both within and outside of the school setting; given the choice of using interest-based negotiation versus distributive negotiation, students tend to use interest-based negotiations; peacemaker processes can be successfully integrated into academic units to increase academic achievement.

Implications and Conclusion

The expected findings of such a study have implications for at least three distinct groups: teacher education programs; policymakers at local, state, and federal levels; and individual schools, especially those with a large percentage of American Indian students. Teacher education programs must be more proactive in developing teachers who understand and are sensitive to multicultural issues for all minority students, particularly in light of the fact that the U.S. public schools are getting exponentially more diverse in their composition. To address the issue of schools themselves being conflict avoidant, teacher education programs could begin to familiarize their teachers with conflict resolution education programs. Those teachers who are familiar with conflict resolution education programs prior to entering the profession will be more likely to use the same techniques in their classrooms. If conflict resolution education programs are then introduced into individual schools there will be an existing group of pre-trained teachers.

Policymakers must restructure their policies and practices to reflect the diverse needs of minority groups, multiracial schools, and schools in which truancy or other subtle issues pose risks far greater than violence or overt rebellion. Conflict resolution education and peacemaking are rapidly growing fields in Western societies as the professional sphere (and indeed, the personal sphere as well) becomes more collaborative

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and less competitive. Can educational policies tap into these growing fields in order to train generations of students to work in an increasingly global community, regardless of where those students choose to create a life for themselves?

Finally, schools with a large percentage of American Indian students must alter their practices to be more multicultural and more truly integrative so that no student is marginalized because of his or her heritage. Can the introduction of conflict resolution education decrease the truancy rate in school? Is conflict at school a leading cause of American Indian truancy or are there other explanations? These are questions to be illuminated by this study, but it is left to further research to answer those questions that will move US public schools further towards educational equity.

In addition to the anticipated results to the hypotheses, the implication of the anticipated findings is that more inquiry must be done into the relative value that Native cultures place on formal education and the impact that value has on the truancy rates of American Indian students. Does Native culture value formal education as much as Euro-American culture? What is the lasting impact of boarding schools or stories of boarding schools on current American Indian students, many of whom had parents or grandparents in the boarding schools? Will parents who had traumatic experiences at a boarding school encourage their children to attend school if those children report that they feel unsafe or are involved in conflict with teachers or other students? There must be some caution in the explanation of responses from American Indian students because there may be explanations that are outside of the classic interpretation. For example, classic interpretations of why students do not go to college revolve around finances or tests scores. However, an example of an alternative explanation as to why an American Indian

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student may not go to college is offered by Brave Heart & DeBruyn (1998) from the viewpoint of a 15 year-old Pueblo girl:

> I just can't talk to my parents. I don't want to burden them with my problems and feelings. They have so much pain of their own. I just can't bring myself to do that, but I felt like I had no one to talk to. That's why I took those pills—I just felt so tired. I wish I could take away their pain. They have suffered so much themselves in boarding school. *I'd like to go away to college but I can't leave them. I feel so guilty, like I have to take care of them.* (emphasis mine, p. 62)

Her reasons for not attending college in the future may extend into her current high school life as well. If she is worried about her parents and their experiences in boarding school, she may choose to stay home from school on days when she feels her parents need extra attention; her reason for being truant would not be easily categorized and is specific to her American Indian heritage. She values the care of her parents over her formal education; those values are non-negotiable and can only be understood as another perspective on an issue.

The first chapter of this thesis defined multicultural education as a goal, a process, and a philosophy that seeks to honor and respect the worldviews of each student. National educational policy seeks to secure equity in educational opportunities for all students. The importance of this project rests on the uncomplicated premise that to fulfill both the ideals of multicultural education and national educational policy each student in a school must be counted, and when students absent themselves from school on a regular

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basis they cannot be counted. Therefore, truancy issues must be addressed as schools continue to work towards equity of educational opportunities for all students.

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FIGURE 1. STUDENT SELF-REPORT SURVEY

A **TO BEGIN, PLEASE ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF. (PLEASE FILL IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE OR CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX)**

1. How old are you? _____ **years**

2. Are you a male or female? **Male** ❒ **Female** ❒

3. What grade are you in? **6th** ❒ **7th** ❒ **8th** ❒

4. How many schools have you been to, including this one? _____ **schools**

5. Is English the language spoken in your home most of the time? **Yes** ❒ **No** ❒

If you answered no, what language is spoken most of the time? _____

6. What is your ethnic background?
   (a) Native American (Indian) or Native Alaskan ❒
   (b) Caucasian or White ❒
   (c) Hispanic or Latino ❒
   (d) Pacific Islander or Asian ❒
   (e) African American ❒
   (f) Multi-ethnic (more than 1 ethnic backgrounds) ❒

7. On average I miss school
Less than once a month ❒ **about once a month** ❒ **once every two weeks** ❒ **once a week** ❒ **more than once a week** ❒ **at least twice a week** ❒

B **NEXT, PLEASE ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ATTENDANCE.** *Please answer each question.*

1. I miss school because I am sick
Always true ❒ ***sometimes true*** ❒ ***rarely true*** ❒ ***never true*** ❒

2. I miss school because nobody can give me a ride to school
Always true ❒ ***sometimes true*** ❒ ***rarely true*** ❒ ***never true*** ❒

3. If I miss the bus, nobody can drive me to school
Always true ❒ ***sometimes true*** ❒ ***rarely true*** ❒ ***never true*** ❒

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4. I miss school because I have to care for brothers/sisters
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

5. I miss school because I have to care for my child or children
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

6. I miss school because I have to work at home
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

7. I miss school because I have to work at a paid job
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

8. I miss school because I have to attend a funeral and/or wake
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

9. I miss school because I think a teacher(s) doesn't like me
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

10. I miss school because I am afraid of other students
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

11. I miss school because I feel like I don't learn anything
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

12. I miss school because I feel unsafe at school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

13. I miss school because I don't think school will help me in my life
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

14. My family supports and encourages me to come to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

15. My friends support and encourage me to come to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

16. My teachers support and encourage me to come to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

17. I come to school because I want to go to college/trade school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

18. I come to school because I want a job that requires me to finish school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

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19. I come to school because my role model(s) finished school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

20. I come to school because I enjoy school/learning/education
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

21. I come to school because my family expects me to come
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

C

NEXT, PLEASE ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH PEACEMAKING AND/OR MEDIATION. *Please answer each question.*

1. I have participated in some kind of peacemaking program
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

2. I have participated in a peer mediation program(s)
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

3. I have participated in a mediation either at school or outside school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

4. I think a peacemaking and/or mediation program is a good idea for my school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

5. I think peacemaking and/or mediation is something I want to try
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

6. I think peacemaking and/or mediation helps students resolve conflicts (fights)
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

7. I think peacemaking and/or mediation helps students learn how to deal with problems
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

D

THESE ARE THE LAST FOUR QUESTIONS OF THE SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, YOUR ANSWERS WILL HELP TO MAKE YOUR SCHOOL A BETTER PLACE FOR YOU. *Please answer each question*

1. What are three (3) things you really like about coming to school?

_____

_____

_____

2. If you do not like coming to school, what are three (3) things that would make it better?

_____

_____

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3. What does the word *conflict* mean to you?

_____

_____

4. How honestly did you answer these questions?
   (a) I answered all of the questions honestly ☐
   (b) I answered most of the questions honestly ☐
   (c) I answered a few questions honestly, but most were false ☐
   (d) I answered most of the questions falsely ☐

FIGURE 2. TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR SELF-REPORT SURVEY

A **TO BEGIN, PLEASE ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF. (PLEASE FILL IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE OR CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX)**

1. Are you a male or female? **Male** ☐ **Female** ☐

2. How many years have you taught at this school? **1-5** ☐ **6-10** ☐ **11-15** ☐ **15+** ☐

3. How many schools have you worked in, including this one? _____ **schools**

4. What is your ethnic background?
   (g) Native American (Indian) or Native Alaskan ☐
   (h) Caucasian or White ☐
   (i) Hispanic or Latino ☐
   (j) Pacific Islander or Asian ☐
   (k) African American ☐
   (l) Multi-ethnic (more than 1 ethnic backgrounds) ☐

B **NEXT, PLEASE ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS' ATTENDANCE.** *Please answer each question.*

1. Students miss school because they are sick
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

2. Students miss school because nobody can give them a ride to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

3. If students miss the bus, nobody can drive them to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

4. Students miss school because they have to care for siblings
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

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5. Students miss school because they have to care for their child(ren)
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

6. Students miss school because they have to work at home
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

7. Students miss school because they have to work at a paid job
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

8. Students miss school because they have to attend a funeral and/or wake
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

9. Students miss school because they think a teacher(s) doesn't like them
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

10. Students miss school because they are afraid of other students
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

11. Students miss school because they feel like they don't learn anything
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

12. Students miss school because they feel unsafe at school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

13. Students miss school because they feel school is useless in their life
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

14. Students' families support and encourage them to come to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

15. Students' friends support and encourage them come to school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

16. Students come to school because their teachers support them
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

17. Students come to school because they want to go to college/trade school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

18. Students come to school because they want a job that requires a diploma
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

19. Students come to school because their role model(s) finished school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

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20. Students come to school because they enjoy school/learning/education
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

21. Students come to school because their families expects them to come
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

C **NEXT, PLEASE ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH PEACEMAKING AND/OR MEDIATION.** *Please answer each question.*

1. I have participated in some kind of peacemaking program
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

2. I have participated in a peer mediation program(s)
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

3. I have participated in a mediation either at school or outside school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

4. I think a peacemaking program is a good idea for my school
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

5. I think peacemaking and/or mediation is something I want to try
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

6. I think peacemaking helps students resolve conflicts
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

7. I think peacemaking helps students learn how to deal with problems
Always true ☐ ***sometimes true*** ☐ ***rarely true*** ☐ ***never true*** ☐

D **THESE ARE THE LAST FOUR QUESTIONS OF THE SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, YOUR ANSWERS WILL HELP TO MAKE YOUR SCHOOL A BETTER PLACE FOR YOU.** *Please answer each question.*

1. Do you think daily conflict is one factor in student truancy? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

2. What are the top factors that influence these groups of students **to be truant**?
Native American Boys _____

_____

Native American Girls _____

_____

Non-Native Boys _____

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Non-Native Girls _____

3. What are the top factors that influence these groups of students **to stay in school**?

Native American Boys _____

Native American Girls _____

Non-Native Boys _____

Non-Native Girls _____

4. Please add any other comments, questions or suggestions:

_____

_____

_____

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Endnotes

[i] Indian Country is a legitimate, legal term that identifies "geographical limits of tribal government power, or jurisdiction. The most important provision is that Indian Country includes all land, regardless of ownership, within the exterior boundaries of federally recognized Indian reservations" (Wilkinson, 2004, pp. 30-31). For more detail discussion of legal terms and policies see Deloria & Lytle, 1983; Wilkinson et al., 2004.

[ii] In 1887 the Dawes Act authorized the allotment of land on Indian Reservations. This policy gave the Bureau of Indian Affairs the power to allot parcels of land, land that was previously communally owned, to individual tribal members or families. The parcel land remained in trust for 25 years and "Indian people lost millions of acres through fraudulent transactions or tax sales after their allotments passed out of trust" (Wilkinson et al., 2004, p. 10). Land on the reservations that was not allotted was opened for homesteading by non-Indians, which caused a substantial decrease in Indian landholdings. While allotment did not apply to all reservations, it unequivocally altered the life of reservations where it did apply. For a more detailed discussion see Deloria & Lytle, 1983; Wilkinson et al., 2004.

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