Reflecting on lessons some would rather forget, but others never will: What it means to be a white teacher in the borderlands of Native America

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Introduction
What follows is not a researched problem, a review of the literature or a theoretical treatise. Rather, the following paper describes an inquiry-based experience designed to create value-laden vantage points for teacher reflection. The development of this project was an attempt to encourage awareness among teachers and those who hoped to follow in their footsteps of how their role, their authority, and their practice is considered and valued by those they teach and the communities they serve.

In particular, this project was an attempt to consider not only the perspective but more fully the condition and possibilities of “the other” who might share a need with members of the dominant culture for an education but whose own culture has been appropriated, marginalized, diminished, slandered or even denied in their schooling experience. In this particular instance, teachers and pre-service teachers were challenged to locate their roles and relationships within an expanded values framework defined by the Native American students they teach and the larger Native community they serve.

Beyond immediate relationships developed in the classroom or in the gymnasium, this project sought to construct reflective vantage points for teachers and pre-service students by increasing their familiarity with the history of Native American Education in the United States. Special emphases were placed on the impact of Federal off-reservation boarding schools on Native American communities and their views of public education and teachers, both past and present.

Locating these relationships between teachers and their students along the continuum of history, two of the challenges facing individuals in this group were to consider the historic residue affecting their relations with students and the ways in which their practice as teachers adds to the lengthening chain of historic events associated with the education of the American Indian in America’s public schools.

Justified Greed: Civilizing the Indian in Exchange for Land
By the late 18th Century America, within only a few short decades of the country’s birth, few policy matters compared in importance to those associated with the American Indian (Grande, 2004). On the one hand, there were the ideals and visions of the new and expanding republic and on the other hand, there was the America Indian, native to the continent, whose lifestyle and relationship to the earth stood as obstacles to the expansionist interests of the emerging empire. At the heart of the problem, was the new government’s need for land. In order for American ideals to be achieved, land was needed for private ownership. Based on prevailing notions of the republic, it was believed at the time that private land ownership was the foundation of a free and self-sustaining society. Because the Indian, ranging far and wide across the continent, appeared to have land in abundance, it became a matter of national interest to find a way to deal with the Indian to obtain as much of these lands as possible. As a matter of Federal policy it thus became important to obtain lands for expansionist interests, but the real challenge, was in doing so without violating the principles upon which America was being built. --Or, failing that, lawmakers were challenged to craft policy that demonstrated suitable moral justification for the appropriation of ancestral lands from Native Americans for the national interests of the emerging empire (Adams, 1995; Grande, 2004).

Whether or not the land would be absorbed by expansionist interests was never in question; with very little advocacy in support of Indian’s maintaining their vast territory, it was simply a matter of crafting politically-correct policy and putting it into action. Eventually, the solution to this dilemma would be linked to 18th Century notions of what it meant to be a civilized person (Klug & Whitfield, 2003; Reyhner & Eder, 1992). By designating indigenous peoples as “uncivilized,” it would then be possible for the U.S. Federal Government to justify the appropriation of Indian Lands in exchange for various civilizing institutions and processes that it could provide. Consequently Indian policy in the 18th and 19th Centuries would ultimately be justified on the basis of need: The United States needed land and the Indian needed civilizing. With principles in tact, the U.S. Government was now able to craft policy after successive policy that would insure access to a seemingly limitless supply of land and at the same time rescue the Indian from savagery (Adams, 1995).

From the early Euro-American perspective, it was not only assumed that the Indian “other” was fundamentally of a lower, inferior order, but it also became reasonable, based on this assumption, that the fate of the Indian was more or less the responsibility of his more advanced white brethren. Furthermore, this line of reasoning continued that the dominant white culture knew what was ultimately best for the Indian. Toward these ends, the process of civilization generally included teaching the Indian how to farm and how to worship. By teaching the Indian how to manage the land and successfully grow crops, it was believed that he would be more likely to eventually own his own parcel of land and in the end become...
successfully assimilated into the larger, dominant culture (not to mention the fact that he would need less land than he had formerly needed as a hunter-gatherer) (Klug & Whitfield, 2003).

In only a short time, however, conflict, again over land, between whites and the American Indian would confound early assimilation efforts. By 1830 large numbers of Indians would eventually be relocated en masse across the Mississippi River. It was rationalized that this and subsequent acts of Indian removal served two basic purposes: First, such disposessions would locate the Indian in frontier territories where he/she could continue, unmolested, with their civilization work and second, these removals ultimately reduced conflict and made more lands available for white settlement and private ownership. In 1851, the Treaty of Fort Laramie would establish the first formal agreement between Native American leaders and the U.S. Government of boundaries that would restrict the movement and place of habitation for the American Indian. As a matter of law, it had now been made more than clear to the Indian: there would be no going back (Nabokov, 1978).

For the next thirty years, the story of the American Indian was one of containment, conflict and eventually the forced transformation of a once proud, free-roaming people to a colonized dependent lot limited to life on a system of federally regulated reservations. By 1871, the US Congress would formally recognize the American Indian as a ward of the Federal Government. Given this formal status of dependency, it was now the self-appointed concern of the US Government to meet the material needs of Indian peoples (Grande, 2004). Eventually, this formal ward status would begin to shape commonly held notions that the Indian, much like the recently “emancipated” Black, would comprise, in part, a permanent American “underclass” (Reyher, & Eder, 1992).

By 1880, however, it was clear to a variety of reform groups that the US Government was falling short on its commitment to care for the Indian. Scandals plagued the administration of reservations in the West and story after story appeared in US papers describing a graft-ridden, corrupt system of Indian management. As a result, it would be only so long before public sentiment spear-headed by politically active philanthropists would bring policymakers to task (Bloom, 2000). Had the United States become so distracted by the business of building its empire that it had forgotten its earlier promise; the promise to itself and to the Indian to civilize and ultimately assimilate these unfortunate exchanges in exchange for the continent they had just absorbed through out-right conquest? By the end of the 1870’s reformers were beginning to call for policy change where the Indian Peoples were concerned. Central to their call for change was a rededication to the civilization of the American Indian (Adams, 1995).

Of course, during the 18th and 19th Centuries of the Modern Era, civilization was as much a verb as it was a noun. It described not only place designated by a collective state of mind where the gentile would attempt to repress all that is wild (within and without), but it also described the taming and domestication of the world and those in it who lived close to nature. Toward these ends, reformers believed that the civilization of the American Indian would require a system that allotted land for private ownership, an extension of the rule of law that would replace the tribal power structure and a proper public education where each child could systematically be exposed to and expected to learn the finer points of what it meant to be transformed into a civilized person (Klug & Whitfield, 2003; Bloom, 2000; Adams, 1995; Reyner, & Eder, 1992).

Civilization through Education

According to Adams (1995), Indian education evolved through/towards four basic aims. These included a) a basic orientation and understanding of the knowledge and institutions of the dominant culture, b) the cultivation of what it meant to be an individual according to the prevailing values of 19th Century America, c) instilling the values of (predominantly Protestant) Christianity and d) the development of the Indian’s identity as a citizen of the United States. The first aim was accomplished through the instruction of the English language, arithmetic, science, history and the arts. Though it was never intended that the Indian would develop proficiency in any of these academic disciplines, it was believed that even a basic grasp of such knowledge would facilitate the Indian’s assimilation into the dominant culture and even a limited exposure might be enough to suggest a more individualistic, self-directed alternative to the clan mentality fostered by tribal life. The second aim, to cultivate individualism, focused on two dimensions of 19th Century civilization: the development of a personal work ethic and the cultivation of a consumer’s appetite for personal possessions. It was believed that the Indian was best suited for unskilled or at best, skilled labor and the best assurance against indolence was the cultivation of a desire for the “fruits” of such individual effort. The “Christianization” of the Indian, the third aim, consistent with the church-sponsored civilizing efforts of a number of faiths practiced world-wide, was meant to not only enlighten, but to morally straighten Native peoples (Klug & Whitfield, 2003; Reyner & Eder, 1992). Emphasis of this aim was to promote a moral code of conduct with special attention paid to personal responsibility for one’s spiritual and economic welfare. Finally, the fourth aim focused on transforming the Indian into an American citizen. Explicitly this aim emphasized instruction on the U.S. Constitution, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the principles and institutions of democracy. Implicitly, this aim focused on the socialization of the Indian into the cultural narrative of the emerging empire as well as the internalization of both the conqueror’s authority and his myths (Adams, 1995).

Bringing civilization to the Indian would require more than simply exposing him or her to a new set of ideas or practices. From the beginning, Native education was viewed less as a means of personal edification than as a means of placing an ideological wedge between the individual and his or her culture that would ultimately require its students to reject their history and identity (Bloom, 2000). Consequently, it would not be enough to describe Indian education as a “value-added” process. Although the individual certainly gained in ideas and practices that were different from those historically provided in tribal life, there were also very deliberate attempts, on the part of policy makers, church leaders and of course teachers to use education as a cultural intervention; as a means of stripping away the meaning, the value and vestiges of
various indigenous traditions. In effect the civilizing impact of education was often dependent upon the extent to which the civilizers were capable of placing the school house between the Indian child and his or her tribal existence.

There were primarily three different types of school models employed for the civilization of the American Indian. These included the day school, the reservation boarding school and the off-reservation boarding school. The day school was initially conceived as a means of cultural transformation first and foremost for the child, but also for his or her family. During the day, children would leave their homes and traveling only a short distance would spend their mornings and afternoons learning the ways and ideas of the white man’s culture. At day’s end, they would then be dismissed, taking their newly-learned lessons back to the village and back into their homes (Adams, 1994). In this way it was believed that education would not only change the child, but there was also the belief that the child could now be a change agent within the home and within the larger tribal society, —in effect changing the community from the inside-out. In reality however, reservation day schools proved largely ineffective because of their relative proximity to the tribal community. Tacitly, the effect of tribal culture was ubiquitous in the life of the child and proved too difficult to erase through only a few hours spent in the schoolhouse each day. More directly, schooling on the reservation was not always accepted by either parents or tribal leaders. Recognizing that schools were promoting dominant culture values at the expense of their own, parents would often discourage their children from attending the white man’s school. In the end, the day school proved no match for the compelling forces of tribal life (Grande, 2004). As an alternative to the day school, reservation boarding schools, where children were sequestered from their families on reservation land, began to appear across the frontier and off-reservation boarding schools, to which children would often have to travel some weeks via rail car, would be built across the nation. Between the two, the off-reservation boarding school was considered the more successful in acculturating young Native children to the ways and values of dominant white culture. In this institutional model, children were not only kept for years at a time away from their parent’s culture, but school administrators had the highest degree of control where student socialization was concerned.

Socialization may be a term, however, to which some might object as a value-free attempt to intellectualize or perhaps even rationalize the purpose of such schools. In many ways, the civilization of Native children in boarding schools resembled a cultural cleansing process through which the child’s personal identity was transformed for the purpose of assimilating him or her into the dominant white culture. This experience and these schools have been considered by some to reflect the most culturally devastating Indian policy ever implemented by the United States (Reinhardt & Madday, 2005). In order to de-culturalize Native children, they would first be separated at a young age from their families and tribal communities (sometimes voluntarily, sometimes forcibly) and then they would be transported over great distances to places unlike any they had ever known (both geographically and ideologically) where they would be schooled, potentially, for the duration of their natural childhood. Quite simply, the distancing of child from family was considered a matter of practicality over all else. According to one boarding school administrator, the purpose of removing Indian children from their families was a necessary step in removing the Indian-ness from the Indian children (Reyhner & Eder, 1992). Once at school, often a place that looked more like a military fortification than a center for learning, children were required to have their hair shingled, accept a Christian name and exchange their personal clothing for uniforms resembling those of the military. Furthermore, children were also restricted from speaking their tribal language, practicing their spiritual traditions or even interacting with siblings, —all as measures to “kill the Indian and save the man (Spring, 1994; Fixico, 2003; Grande, 2004).”

Curriculum at the boarding school was predictably Anglo-centric, employing linear rational thought to solve problems and included an emphasis on the development of skills associated with low-skilled manual labor or reproduction art (Fixico, 2003; Barbara Landis, personal communication, October 20, 2007). If such schools did in fact aim to assimilate the Indian child into white culture via their curricular or co-curricular offerings, they were clearly focused on equipping them with just enough tools to begin their climb on the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. While boys were trained to be good citizens who worked with their hands, young girls were trained to maintain the houses of others and rear children as domestic help. Additionally, the paramilitary organizing elements of the school (uniforms, drill and ceremony, the school’s building architecture and grounds and the structure of daily activities) suggest a desire to indoctrinate as well as educate. This hidden curriculum built around patriotism and citizenship advanced the civilizing process one step further. Exposed to themes of patriotism associated with the nation that was essentially responsible for their conquest and subsequent colonization, Native children were now subject to a form of schooling intent on having them do more than simply appear to master the civilized behaviors of the White Man. This inculcating process, via the hidden curriculum, sought more thoroughly to have the core values of the dominant culture internalized by the children; in effect, making them their own keepers. That is to say, keepers of their own conscience resolved to see an end to what would ultimately amount to their own Indian-ness (Fixico, 2003; Grande, 2004).

The first off-reservation Federal Boarding School was directed by Ret. Col Henry Pratt at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt oversaw the school as its Director from 1869-1904. The school itself would remain open for another 16 years until 1920. Over the course of its forty year existence, it is estimated that more than 8,500 students from across the region now recognized as the continental United States and Alaska had been transported to and enrolled at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, —many of whom were as young as five years of age. Of these students, only 741 would ultimately receive a degree from the institution (Jenkins, 2007). More horrific though, according to one source, approximately 1,000 child deaths were associated with time spent in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, —experiencing what it means to be civilized (Barbara Landis, personal communication, October 20, 2007).

The Expressed Purpose of Physical Education and Sport at the Carlisle Indian School

Physical activity and sport were included in the Carlisle curriculum to essentially improve the physical health of the students and to develop personal character. Of course both were consistent with the school’s over-arching mission to...
assimilate Indian youth into the larger, dominant culture. Physical health was a concern because of its importance for personal productivity in the workforce and character development. When we consider “character” in the context of Indian Education, educators sought to cultivate personality attributes such as a desire to achieve, competitiveness and personal responsibility. Put another way, transformation of the Indian required an education that impressed upon the person that individualism was an essential part of what it meant to be a good American (Bloom, 2000).

In the physical education curriculum the greatest emphasis was placed on military drills. These were used to instill discipline and a work ethic in the Indian students. Besides drills there were no other types of formal physical education that were identified. Nevertheless, it was certain that Pratt greatly encouraged recreational activities that provided students with opportunities to enjoy the outdoors while participating in physical activity. These activities included such things as playing on swings, dancing around maypoles, ice skating footraces and romps. Pratt started cycling clubs, hosted roller skating parties and dance socials. He also provided the students with opportunities to go fishing, shoot bows, camp, swim, and sled (Jenkins, 2007). However, nothing captivated the students more than the sport of football.

In keeping with the school’s mission to assimilate the young Indian students into the dominant culture, students were restricted from participating in traditional (native) games and dance. As an alternative, football with its rough-and-tumble quality provided the perfect distraction for young Indian males excited to prove their worth through a physical challenge.

Not only did the students participate in football, but track and baseball were common sports for the boys where they could display their aggression and masculine side through competition. Girls, on the other hand, participated in basketball but with rules modified to promote feminine traits such as being nurturing, having the capacity to care for another and exhibiting selflessness (Bloom, 2000). Altogether, however, there was less emphasis placed on sports and athletics for girls. If physical education, physical activity or sport were to play any role at all in the lives of the young women it was to contribute to the domestication of the young she-child. The schools would take special care to domesticate women out of the fear that they were more wild and uncontrollable than men and were likely to lure their male counter-parts away from civilization, thus undoing the school’s work where the male students were concerned (Bloom, 2000)

The meaning(s) associated with sport at Carlisle:

The Carlisle Indian School played a large role in establishing athletics as a fundamental part of boarding school culture for Native Americans. Carlisle was the first place that sports became instituted in the federal Indian boarding schools on an interscholastic basis. Many famous athletes emerged from the Carlisle Indian School in such sports as baseball, football and track. They had the most famous athletic program in the boarding school system. The football team at Carlisle was very well known and recognized due to the great gains that they made mostly by defeating well respected opponents such as Yale, Harvard, Army and Navy. They changed the way football was played bringing a whole new style to the young game. To school administrators and proponents of Indian boarding schools, football was more than just a game at Carlisle; success on the field was promoted as proof that the Carlisle “experiment” in Indian assimilation was a success in general. Because of the team’s ability to compete against and best some of the finest schools in the nation on the gridiron, Carlisle football was able to gain some ground in changing negative views of boarding school education in the late 19th and early 20th Century.

Because college football was emerging as a source of mass entertainment, drawing crowds in the thousands, success on the field not only brought a great deal of recognition to the Carlisle school, but this success would often distract attention away from some of the more controversial issues associated with the school. Consequently football and other sports started being used as public relations tools. By capturing the attention as well as the imagination of the media through football, school administrators seized the opportunity to show that, through the school’s efforts, racial transformation was occurring, thus domesticking the Indians. (Bloom, 2000)

The students loved to play football because it was a game that reflected and validated the idea of masculinity. In football they found the means to compete violently, but still be recognized as gentlemen. Football was also a form of catharsis for the Native youth. It was a game that allowed the players to channel their aggression toward positive ends. In many ways, football became a useful metaphor for their struggle. Now they could stand up and fight back against the white man for all the injustice. It was a way for them to seek revenge for what the white people had done to them. Through football, they were no longer victims. According to Bloom (2000), “On the athletic field, where the struggle was man to man, they felt that the Indian was given his first break, and the record proves that they took full advantage of it (pg. 25).”

The Operational Framework for the Project

The project at hand is but one part of a larger pedagogical framework developed with the intent to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with value-laden vantage points from which to reflect upon their practice (Brawdy, 2004; Brawdy, 2007). In this instance, both pre-service and in-service teachers were asked to consider their roles and relationships as non-Native teachers of American Indian students within the public school system. Furthermore, they were asked to consider these roles and relationships within the historic context of Native American education in the United States. As a foundation for their reflective work both pre-service and in-service teachers collegially shared in the supervision of Native American students, considered at-risk by virtue of their enrollment in an alternative school, during a two-day excursion to the former site of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, now a registered historic US landmark. The Carlisle School was of particular interest for this project because of the conflicted meaning associated with this place by Native and non-Native peoples. Reviled by many for practices associated with dehumanization and cultural genocide, The Carlisle School is also associated with the athletic prowess of Jim Thorpe, winner of both the pentathlon and decathlon events at the 1924 Olympic Games in Stockholm, as well as the legendary Carlisle Football program (Jenkins, 2007).
In preparation for the excursion, five pre-service teachers read historic accounts of the role of sport at the Carlisle School and participated in at least twenty hours of observation/interaction at the alternative school where the students were enrolled. In-service teachers, on the other hand, prepared by participating in a round-table discussion structured around three readings focused on the interpretation of sport, physical education and the schooling process of Native American children in Federally-funded off-reservation boarding schools. In addition, one of the teachers engaged the help of the community’s archivist/historian for the purpose of integrating student genealogy projects into her instruction of Health Education. The teacher’s goal was to help students (mostly male) develop family histories and identify, when possible, any potential links that students might share with the Carlisle School, including links to the school’s legendary football program or sport heroes.

Prior to the excursion both groups were provided with a framework of themes associated with teaching to guide their reflections. For the purpose of comparison, both groups were asked to consider the ways that education of American Indian students, by non-Native teachers, has either changed or stayed the same since the boarding school era.

Following the excursion, pre-service teachers organized their reflections in a written paper that was to be turned-in for graded work. Participating in-service teachers were interviewed individually. Interview comments were collected using a combination of digital recordings and field notes. Member checking, to the extent that determinations of credibility were feasible, occurred in different ways for each of the two types of teachers. In the case of the in-service teachers, themes were discussed during informal meetings either during or at the end of the school day. In the case of the students, member checking occurred in a follow-up class discussion.

**The Excursion**

From the Seneca Nation of Indians and the Alternative School of Salamanca, New York, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, location of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School is approximately five hours’ drive by van. The itinerary for the two day excursion included: 1) a tour of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School exhibit at the Cumberland County Historic Society, 2) a tour of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School historic landmark, and 3) a detailed slide presentation of the school’s history by the school biographer. Membership in the group consisted of six high school students, two public school teachers, five pre-service teachers and two university faculty members.

The United States Army War College now stands where the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was once located. Although a number of the original buildings and some of the original grounds remain, the purpose of each building, save Thorpe Hall has been re-commissioned to reflect the contemporary needs of the War College. Some remains of the Carlisle School are identified for the viewing public by historic placards. Though open to the public for self-guided walking tours, security measures have been in place since 9/11. For the purposes of this project, arrangements were made with the School Biographer, Ms. Barbara Landis of the Cumberland County Historic Society, to guide the group and provide additional historic context in which to better understand the boarding school experience.

**Guided Reflections**

Pre-service and in-service teachers were each provided with a series of questions prior to the excursion to encourage and to structure their reflections. Primarily, the questions inquired about institutional comparisons, from an historical perspective, of the educational experiences provided to Native American students by and within the dominant culture (United States).

Although individuals provided a range of unique interpretations of their experience, two emergent themes were noted across the two groups. These included: a) reflections on control and b) reflections on teachers’ relationships with power.

**Reflections on control.** Across in-service and pre-service teachers, the use of control in education was the most common emergent theme. When considering the legacy of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School within the context of their own experience, the teachers (in-service and pre-service) commonly identified two different types of control by comparison. The first type of control, commonly associated with the boarding school experience and broadly considered, dealt with acts perpetrated by teachers and school personnel that included some manner of physical restraint or actions that led to the physical transformation of the Native student. The second type of control, associated with instruction of their own students, dealt with more subtle experiences in schools that promoted assimilation at the expense of the student’s development as a cultural being.

**Reflections on teachers’ relationships with power.** Across in-service and pre-service teachers there were also very similar interpretations related to the relationships teachers shared with the power structure. When describing and comparing relationships between students and their teachers, both in-service and pre-service teachers generally reflected on the experience of the boarding school teacher as being allied with the power structure. Conversely, teachers today were considered more likely to be distant from, if not managed by, the power structure and more closely allied with the students they teach, if anyone at all. Although this would suggest that teachers, today, were perceived to be much more sympathetic to the concerns of their students, it seemed equally tenable that teachers today were perceived as being somewhat at odds with the authority structure in public education.

**Making Connections**

According to Klug and Whitfield (2003), if our pedagogies are to become culturally relevant to/for the learning needs and experiences of Native American students, they need to include the following. First, our lessons need to help students think critically about the “truth” describing our roles and actions as colonizers of various indigenous groups in North.
America. Second, as teachers we need to be sensitive to, and include in our teaching, information about the ways that specific groups of indigenous people, such as the Seneca, experienced colonization. Third, we need to clearly address the ways in which the narrative of the dominant culture has justified both the conquest and colonization of indigenous peoples and finally, as teachers we must not be distracted by the rhetoric of equality. Rather, a culturally-relevant pedagogy requires teachers to be advocates for a pluralistic society.

Although this project shared a number of features commonly attributed to qualitative inquiry, the project itself was not pursued for the purpose of research. Instead, this project was undertaken to stimulate teacher reflection and to support an innovative curriculum initiative in an Alternative School of Education serving a large percentage of Native American students. While the excursion itself gave meaning to many of the preparations and newly established relationships, it was also undertaken with the intent to de-stabilize institutional routines defining the roles, rules and possibilities framing the teacher-student relationship and to subsequently stimulate a degree of personal reflection for all included.

It’s probably not surprising for anyone who has traveled to or who has studied the boarding school experience that a visit to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School would lead teachers to reflect on control and power. As a physical space, even today as a militarized version of a college campus, the site of the Carlisle Indian School is a lonely place. More so, when you consider how it must have been experienced by a young child who was denied access to his or her language, family, culture and spirituality. It would be hard to imagine a greater experience of vulnerability, when viewed through the eyes of a teacher.

Considering such vulnerability, it becomes an easy next step to think critically about the ways in which those in power, at the time, exploited this condition to systematically attempt to eradicate a culture and how, through force and wile, control, often in the form of physical force, was used to meet their objectives. It’s another thing, however, to think just as critically about practices of our own.

When considering their teaching practice or the practices around them, the teachers were in fact open to the idea that schooling today, in their experience, continues to exert control, although in very subtle ways, over American Indian students at the expense of their culture. Even the undergraduate pre-service teachers were able to identify and discuss in their papers and through their conversations a number of ways hegemony, supporting dominant class values, ideas and ambitions were present in schools today. There was, however, some reluctance to acknowledge any personal culpability where the use of such oppressive institution control was identified. One teacher did however directly address some of the ways in which she continued to contribute to dominant culture hegemony in her teaching.

Unfortunately, whether injustices were identified in someone else’s classroom or within one’s own, it’s not altogether clear that the teachers in this project felt as though there was much, if anything, that could be done formally to bring about change unless it was supported by the existing power structure. The second emergent theme associated with power relations is somewhat ironic but nevertheless consistent with many teachers’ experience in schools in America. While the teachers’ comments suggested that they see themselves more closely allied with their students than the power structure, this may unfortunately also reflect the amount of agency or empowerment that they or teachers they know experience within their schools.

References


