Indian Students' Academic Self-Concept in a Selected Band-Controlled School and a Provincial School

by

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine if a difference, in terms of academic self-concept, existed between Native students who attended a band-controlled school, and those who attended a public school. Of secondary interest was whether the two groups of students would differ in terms of the academic aspriations which they perceived their parents and their favorite teacher to hold for them.

The population samples were 42, grade 8 through 12, Native students from the same reserve. One group of students attended the reserve school, while the second group of students attended the public school in a nearby town.

The results were: 1) significant differences in the academic self-concept were not found between the two groups of students; and, 2) Native students who attended the reserve school perceived their parents and their teachers to hold significantly higher levels of educational aspirations for them than the Native students who attended the public school.

Future research pertaining to Native education is suggested.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

General Background

The widespread withdrawal of Indian students from educational institutions raised significant concerns as to the quality of Indian education. For example, while there had been a modest improvement in high school completion among Indian students, their completion rate was still less than one-quarter of the national rate (Knox & Nicholson, 1980).

Concerns for the quality of Indian education led to the development of educational goals by the National Indian Brotherhood, a non-political organization representing the Indian people of Canada. This statement of educational goals provided guidelines to individual communities in the development of their own specific standards of quality education. These goals were stated in the Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973) policy as follows:

> Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people. We want education to give our children a

> strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability. We believe in education:
> - as a preparation for total living,
> - as a means of free choice of where to live and work,
> - as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973, p. 3).

In an effort to improve the relevance of education available to Indian students, educators responded by modifying existing curricula, however, the high drop-out rate continued. The National Indian Brotherhood cited four major reasons which it believed to be responsible for student failure: (a) lack of properly trained teachers; (b) lack of adequate program facilities; (c) lack of parental involvement; and, (d) lack of Indian control of Indian education (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1982).

Since the publication of Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973), considerable speculation has centered around two major hypotheses: (a) the positive effects of Indian teachers, and (b) the

positive effects of Indian curricula on the academic adjustment of Indian students. For example, Reyhner (1981) stated the need for Indian teachers and Indian curricula as crucial to the adjustment of the Indian child in school. He suggested that the presence of familiar models would serve to lessen the apprehension of the Indian child, thus providing a more comfortable environment.

The need for Indian curricula was also discussed in the Indian Education Paper (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1982). It stated that, "A fundamental problem with Indian education is the irrelevance of curriculum and curriculum materials for the Indian learner" (p.20). It further stated that, "Although the picture is improving, at this point in time the programs offered in provincial schools are not in general designed to meet the unique learning needs and styles of Indian children" (p. 20). Central to these ideologies was the belief that modifying the learning environment of Indian students, in terms of being instructed by Indian teachers who use a curriculum relevant to the needs of Indian students, would have a positive impact on student academic achievement.

The Objectives of the Study

Two groups of students, both from the same reserve, participated in the study. One group of students attended the band-controlled school which had modified the provincial curriculum by allowing for the integration of Native content. The second group of Indian students attended the nearby provincial school which followed the provincial curriculum.

The primary objective of the study was to determine if the two groups of Indian students differed significantly in terms of how they perceived themselves academically. A secondary objective was to determine whether different academic environments impacted on the students' perceptions of how they felt their teachers and parents valued their educational attainment.

The results of this study should provide insight into how Native students in two different learning environment assessed their own unique situation.

Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity, the following definitions are presented.

Self-concept of academic ability This refers to behavior in which an individual indicates to self (publicly or

privately) his/her ability to achieve in academic tasks as compared with others engaged in the same task (Brookover, Erickson & Joiner, 1967).

Xit'olacw Community School An educational institution, located in Mount Currie, British Columbia. It provides academic instruction and curriculum modifications for students from Nursery to grade 13. It is controlled by the Lil'wat Nation in Mount Currie.

Pemberton Secondary School A provincial high school located in Squamish, British Columbia. It provides academic instruction for students in grades 8-12.

Indian/Native Individuals who are Native people by birth and heritage. (i.e. are Indian or descendants of Indians, whether or not they are classified as Indian under the terms of the Indian Act).

non-Indian/non-Native All other individuals who do not fit the definition of Indian/Native.

Learning Style "The characteristic or usual strategies of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding by an individual" (More, 1987, p. 19).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review will focus on: (a) factors related to Native students' achievements; (b) needs of Indian education; and, (c) cross-cultural teachers.

Factors Related to Native Student Achievement

In A Survey of the Contemporary Indian of Canada, Hawthorn (1967) stated, "Retention in Grade one and the loss of students in any twelve-year period are alarming. In a period of twelve years, 8441 Indian students out of 8782 did not complete high school" (p. 130). Since that publication, statistics concerned with Native students achievements have not significantly improved. Pauls (1984) reported that, "Even today, nearly 70 to 80 percent of Indian students do not complete their high school education" (p. 31).

In attempts to determine reasons for the limited scholastic success of Indian students, (i.e. dropping out of school and age-grade retardation) some independent research has been conducted. This research has resulted in the identification of a number of factors believed to be relevant to the educational problems of Indian students.

One such factor is socioeconomic status (SES). Hull (1987) found that Indian parents' socioeconomic status and family income strongly influenced their children's success in school. That is, the higher the parental SES, the greater the likelihood that their children would complete high school. Indian children whose family income was above the poverty line were approximately twice as likely to have completed high school.

One possible determinant of class differences in school achievement is parental attitude towards education. Research involving Canadian Native, black and white children found that, irrespective of ethnicity, performance of children from low SES families on school achievement tests were predictable by parental attitude towards education. In addition, parental attitude was found to be a better predictor of their child's school achievement than SES (Das, Manos & Kanungo, 1975).

A review of numerous studies on the effect of low SES on school achievement led Das (cited in Das, Manos & Kanungo, 1975) to conclude that the low expectations of low SES children, their parents or the community towards education, accounted for the children's poor scholastic performance. He emphasized that although the language of children from low SES may initially impede their scholastic

progress, it did not prevent them from eventually doing well in school.

Value differences is another factor cited as being at least partially responsible for the low school achievement among Indian students in comparison to their non-Indian peers. For the purpose of this paper, an acceptable definition of a value is, "...an individual's concept of an ideal relationship (or state of affairs) which he uses to assess...the 'rightness' or 'wrongness,' of actual relationships that he observes or contemplates" (Scott, 1965, p. 3).

It has been suggested that the inability to equate school acquired knowledge with real life situations, serve to undermine Indian students' intrinsic motivation, thus leading them to drop out of school (Vallerand & Menard, 1984). It is reasoned that this dichotomy often resulted in Indian students being labeled as unmotivated, and "that this lack of motivation is caused by a conflict between middle-class white values and Indian values" (Gue, 1971, p. 24). In general, middle class white values emphasize individualism in life (Gue, 1971). In contrast, Indian values stress activities such as "generosity and sharing, cooperation and group harmony, placidity and patience, behavioral expression, different concepts of time, different

values of ownership and property" (Pepper & Henry, 1986, p. 55).

Gue (1971) conducted a study which determined that differences did exist in the value orientations of Indian and white cultures. The study found that Indian parents and pupils preferred group loyalty to individual goal-setting. Based on the results, Gue concluded that:

> ...a school curriculum and teacher value orientation with a powerful preference for Individualism may be expected to continue to produce intense stresses within Indian pupils and parents who place Individualism in a low third-order preference position.... For the Indian child, achieving high academic goals may mean intellectual, physical and emotional separation from his parents, family and culture. This is a high price to pay in a culture where loyalties are still to the lineal group, not to individual success. The escape route for the Indian child seems to be to drop out of school and avoid the pressures of individualism (p. 26, 29-30).

Another factor which has been found to consistently influence Indian students' achievement is their limited use of the English language. Riffel et al. (1973) pointed out

the language dilemma faced by Indian parents--whether to retain the Indian language for cultural reasons or develop competency in English, thus improving their children's chances of competing successfully in the dominant society. However, Bowd (1972) noted that the principle reason for language problems at school was not the use of a Native language, but the overall inadequate exposure to English, that is, the lack of spoken English in the home. This reasoning was based on the finding of positive correlations between the child's grade level and parental use of the English language. Significant correlations were absent between grade level and the child's use of an Indian language.

An analysis of the literature pertaining to the difficulties of Native students in comprehending and conceptualizing in the English language led Kaulback (1984) to write:

> ...research also indicates the need for effective ESL (English as a Second Language) or ESD (English as a Second Dialect) instruction. Therefore any changes in methodology, materials or programs...must also be accompanied by the implementation of a strong ESL-ESD program (p. 36).

Research by Toohey (1982) supported the need for effective, strong ESL-ESD programs. His study concluded that the present ESL programs by themselves, were not very valuable in developing English language skills of Cree children in northern Ontario. One reason for this poor performance may be related to unsound pedagogical principles (i.e., attempting to instruct Indian students solely in English). Sealey (1973), in his criticism of similar practices in Manitoba, advocated the "common sense principle of moving from the 'known to the unknown'" (p. 153). This approach involves schooling students initially in their Native dialect and gradually increasing the amount of time devoted to learning English. The increase in English is followed by a corresponding reduction of instruction in the Native dialect. Sealey further stated that:

> Wherever such schools are in operation there is found to be a minimum of student maladjustment, little stultification of the processes of intellectual development, closer relationships between parents and teachers due to ease of communication, and, of course, a greater possibility for the community to become involved with, exert pressure upon, and evenly control the educational institution (p. 154).

Sealey's position is clearly supported by the results of a Mexican bilingual program. Modiano (cited in Modiano, 1984) noted that Kindergarten students schooled initially in their mother tongue, and not the second language, ended up performing better in the target language than did students who banned virtually all use of their mother tongue during classes.

Another determinant which is believed to effect the school achievement of Indian students is their orientation towards a particular learning style. "Learning style theory states that Indian children...learn primarily through nonverbal mechanisms such as observational and trial and error learning" (Whyte, 1986, p. 3). The tendency of schools and teaching methods to orient towards an auditory learner, places the Indian child at a disadvantage by virtue of his/her predisposition to a visual style of learning (Pepper & Henry, 1986).

Kaulbach (1984) posited that one reason for this distinctly visual style of learning so prevalent among Native students, was the result of child-rearing practices where young children are direct participants in family and community affairs. This close proximity of the child to the activity renders the need for oral instruction redundant.

Kleinfeld (1970) felt that the academic progress of

Native children would be enhanced if instructional methods were more similarly matched to the perceptual styles of the students. This position was advanced further by Madak (1988) who suggested that the development of programs which take full advantage of Native learning styles would be the best plan for improving Native students' academic performance.

Kaulback (1984), in his analysis of Native learning styles, also suggested adapting teaching methods and instructional materials to the learning styles of Native children in an effort to facilitate learning.

To further facilitate the Indian learner, Kirkness (1985) purports "...it is reasonable to assume that the Indian teacher and the Indian student should readily match in teaching and learning style" (p. 9). Support for this assumption was provided in research conducted by Tamaoka (1986). Tamaoka's study investigated the congruence between the learning styles of Native students and the instructional styles of Native and non-Native teachers. Results indicated that non-Native teachers preferred to teach from logically and clearly organized materials, while Native teachers tended to encourage students to work independently. Based on the data collected, the author reported that:

Although both Native and non-Native teachers

> were congruent on more than 65 percent of all instruction learning components with Native (Cree, Dene and Metis) student groups, it found that Native teachers were congruent with all Native student groups at a higher percentage and on a greater number of components than was true for non-Native teachers (Tamaoka, 1986, p. 20).

Differences in social and cultural milieu were suggested as possible reasons for the incongruities found in the instructional styles of the Native and non-Native teachers. For example, the self-exploratory, non-restrictive child-rearing practices of many Indian cultures, where non-interference is regarded as normal, may foster a particular instructional style among Native teachers. Although the data from this study was limited to six northern Saskatchewan schools, the findings suggested that, "if significant academic gains are made when instructional style is matched correctly with students' identified learning style...then Native teachers may have the potential to lead Native students...to a higher academic success" (Tamaoka, 1986, p. 21).

More (1987) cautioned against stereotyping Native students to a specific learning style, as such labeling

could result in ignoring the strengths of Native students. Evidence supporting this concern was provided in research by Tamaoka (1986). This study, involving Cree, Dene and Metis students, utilized 16 inventory scales in an effort to measure the learning and instructional style preferences of the students. An examination of the mean scores on the 16 inventory scales found significant differences between the learning styles of Cree, Dene and Metis students on four of the 16 scales. Cultural and linguistical differences were suggested as being influential in the development of unique learning style preference among the student groups. However, since similarities occurred on three-quarters of the scales, attention to learning styles among Native students was encouraged (Tamaoka, 1986).

Self-concept is another variable which is believed to be associated with the school achievement of Indian students. It has been suggested that Native people develop self-concepts which are, in general, lower than those of the dominant culture, when they come in contact with a dominant society which stereotypes them as being different and disadvantaged (Chan, 1984).

Research conducted by Clifton (1975) found that while both the Indian and the non-Indian students had positive self-concepts, the non-Indian students had significantly

higher self-concepts than the Indian students. It was also noted that regardless of their ethnicity, those students with high self-concepts had more positive attitudes towards education than those students with low self-concepts. A notable exception to this finding was provided by Lin (1985). His study reported that Indians do not necessarily see themselves as inferior persons in an academic setting. The study also found that there were no significant differences between Native American male students and white male students in their concern for and motivation toward education (Lin, 1985).

Interest in the self-concept of Native students is largely based on the premise that a positive relationship exists between students' self-concept and scholastic performance. This assumption has led to the belief that a low self-concept is related to the underachievement of Native students (Chan, 1984; Rampaul, Singh & Didyk, 1984).

Byrne's (1984) review of studies which examined relationships among general self-concept, academic self-concept, and academic achievement concluded that self-concept is "... a multidimensional construct, having a general facet and a more specific academic facet" (1984, p. 431). She also stated that causal ordering of academic self-concept and academic achievement could not be

established, and suggested that their relationship might be reciprocal.

Handsford and Hattie's (1982) literature review also supported the existence of a relationship between general self-concept, academic self-concept and academic achievement. Both reviews noted that the relationship between academic self-concept (ASC) and academic achievement (AA) was the strongest, followed by general self-concept (GSC) and academic self-concept (ASC). The weakest relationship was between general self-concept and academic achievement. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to suggest that future educational research pertaining to the self-concept of Indian students should focus on the academic self-concept, and not the general self-concept of Indian students.

The need to differentiate between a student's general self-concept and academic self-concept was emphasized by Parry (1982) in the following statement:

> As far as education is concerned a distinction must be made between poor self-concept concept as a learner in school and poor self concept generally, otherwise there may well be an 'umbrella effect' of attributing qualities surmised from

> performance in an 'academic' situation to students who may have a strong general self-concept (p. 21).

Needs of Indian Education

In February, 1973, official recognition was given to the policy statement of the National Indian Brotherhood entitled, Indian Control of Indian Education. One of the policy's main concerns was the inability of the educational system to effectively meet the needs of the Indian students. This concern was based on statistics which indicated widespread withdrawal and underachievement of Indian students in the education system. For example, Lee (1986) cited a 1980-81 study conducted in Saskatchewan, which found that of 6505 Native students enrolled in 20 urban schools, 1207 dropped out. Further analysis found that the majority of Native students withdrew between grades 7 to 9. Eighty-one percent of status Indian and seventy-four percent of Metis/non-status Indian students were known to be age/grade displaced when they withdrew. In an effort to address this issue, the policy proposed several principles which it cited as being relevant to the philosophy and needs of the Indian people. As effective communication is perceived as the channel leading to the achievement of educational goals, one

of the policy's principles called for increased communication between home and school:

> The National Indian Brotherhood regards the lack of involvement by parents in the setting of educational goals as a contributor to the widespread withdrawal and failure on the part of Indian students (Davis, 1986, p. 34).

Kirkness (cited in Gardner, 1986) in recognition of the importance of a multi-way communication system wrote:

> Communication is the vital link. Parents - the Indian community as a whole - must be informed about the education process and the teachers - the school - must be informed about the community. The objective is to provide the kind of education that will enhance success for the majority of Indian students (p. 23).

An example of the misconceptions which may arise from inadequate communication between home and school was documented in the results of a survey conducted by the Apache Office of Education of the White Mountain Tribe (cited in Hutchison, 1979). Results showed that teachers were concerned that students were not being prepared for college or the working world. Contrary to their opinion,

the majority of parents and students believed that preparation in both these areas was adequate. The seriousness of this misconception cannot be overstated since preparation for work, or a continuance of higher education, is an essential element in any future self-determination plan of the community. This example serves to emphasize the importance of meaningful dialogue between educators and parents.

The implication of literature pertaining to Indian control of Indian education is that, parental participation and control will positively effect student retention in secondary schools. Research has demonstrated that, "in the limited areas where bands have assumed responsibility for secondary education and, to a lesser degree, where provincial schools are close to Indian communities, the retention rates for Indians are higher (Knox & Nicholson, 1980, p. 50).

A second principle designed to improve the educational system for Native learners involves the development and implementation of Native curricula. In reference to this need, the Indian control policy stated, "Indian parents want to develop a program which will maintain balance and relevancy between academic skills, subjects and Indian cultural subjects" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973,

p. 9). It is believed that such a program would effectively merge the skills which the Native child brings to school with those skills necessary for academic success (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973).

Research by Vallerand and Menard (1984) demonstrated that a program which emphasized the synthesis of a traditional curriculum and special programs, can be effective in motivating Native students to come and to remain in school. Their study examined an educational program designed for male and female Dene Indians in grades 7 to 9. In addition to traditional school subjects, the program implemented special student oriented projects such as student co-ordinated outdoor activities; volunteer work programs - which enabled students to identify educational requirements for a particular job, and; participation in the operational and technical aspects of 'live' radio. Although only 16 students were involved at the start of the program, an additional 8 completed the one-year program. Student dropout rate for the year was 0%. The following 2 years when the program was not in operation, student dropout rates of 42% to 50% were recorded. This study demonstrated that, "such a program which blends traditional curriculum with various special projects has the potential to yield very favorable consequences for Native education, eventually

helping to close the gap of occupational inequality" (p. 252).

The third principle was in reference to the need for teachers of Indian ancestry. This principle is based on the philosophy that Indian teachers are crucial to the successful implementation of an educational program designed to meet the needs of Indian students. The assumption is that, "Native teachers and councilors who have an intimate understanding of Indian traditions, psychology, way of life and language are best able to create the learning environment suited to the habits and interests of the Indian child" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1973, p. 18). This belief is reiterated throughout the literature pertaining to Indian education. For example, Whyte (1986) wrote, "Teachers of Indian and Metis ancestry must become part of the school staff. Indian and Metis principals and teachers will provide familiar and especially stimulating models to Indian and Metis children" (Whyte, 1986, p. 18).

Kirkness (1985) contends that, by virtue of common ancestry, a natural inclination towards mutual respect, high expectations and congruency in teaching and learning styles would occur between Indian students and teachers.

In further support for the need of Indian teachers, Adams (cited in Whyte, 1986) argued that Native teachers

would effectively merge Indian history and culture into the school curriculum, decrease the drop out rate of Indian students, and stand up for the rights of Indian parents.

At present, there is no data which supports these views in totality, and research with specific reference to Indian teachers is sparse.

Cross-Cultural Teachers

Research has been conducted which has identified some characteristics of effective cross-cultural teachers and the reasons for their success. It is important to recognize the skills utilized by teachers of Indian students, and that the inclusion of Indian teachers does not necessitate the exclusion of non-Indian teachers. For example, Kleinfeld (cited in Whyte, 1986) found that, Native students participated at an intellectually high level in response to a warm, demanding style regardless of whether the teacher was white or Native; effective teachers tended to prefer individualized instruction, and a warm, personal approach resulted in Native students talking more and scoring higher on IQ tests and teacher prepared tests.

Research by Fisher and Snellens reported that:

> ...those teachers who succeeded in eliciting a high level of verbal participation from Native students tended to respond to them

> with an intense personal warmth rather than professional distance. Teachers communicated such feelings by developing friendships with students outside of the classroom.... Teachers communicated personal warmth within the classroom in large part through nonverbal messages of smiling, close body distance and touch. Such nonverbal communications were especially effective in integrated classrooms because teachers could convey personal warmth to the village student without drawing special attention towards him (cited in Whyte, 1986, p. 4).

Murdock (1981) visited 50 British Columbia elementary and secondary classrooms and found that Native and non-Native students who were enthusiastic and warm with each other had warm and supportive teachers.

Berger (1973) interviewed nine Indian families and noted that the families were relatively unprejudiced about ethnic differences between teachers and students. One mother felt that it was more important for teachers of Indian children to be characterized as good people, rather than to be ancestrally characterized as being Indian.

Although the research in this area is limited, the studies cited suggested that the concern expressed over the

small percentage of Indian teachers in public and band-operated schools is not based totally on teacher ethnicity. The need in Indian education is for teachers who understand the needs of Native students, and who have the necessary skills which would motivate Native students to maximize their academic potential (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 1986; National Indian Brotherhood, 1973).

The literature reviewed suggests that different learning environments may have an impact on the scholastic success attained by Indian students. Parents and teachers have also been cited as significant others in terms of their influence on student academic success (eg., Das et al. 1975; Whyte, 1986). Therefore, this study is designed to examine and compare the academic self-concepts of Indian students in two distinct learning environments, and the level of educational aspirations which both groups of students perceive their parents and their teachers to hold for them. The reason for conducting this study is to provide some insight into the way similar groups of students perceive two different learning environments. It may also provide supporting evidence of a particular learning environment being more conducive to the scholastic adjustment of Indian students. It is imperative to Indian education that statements concerning positive reforms in Indian education are supported by research.

Statement of the Hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses are posed.

1. Native students attending Xit'olacw Community School will have a significantly higher academic self-concept than Native students attending Pemberton Secondary School.

2. There will be no significant difference between the Native students attending Xit'olacw Community School and the Native students attending Pemberton Secondary School in their perceived parental evaluations of student academic ability.

3. There will be no significant difference between the Native students attending Xit'olacw Community School and the Native students attending Pemberton Secondary School in their perceived teacher evaluations of student academic ability.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Students

The population samples were grade 8 through 12 Native students from the Lil'wat Nation in Mount Currie, British Columbia. Out of this population, 70 students attended the Xit'olacw Community School and 49 students attended Pemberton Secondary School. The Xit'olacw Community sample consisted of 20 students. The Pemberton Secondary School sample consisted of 22 students.

Schools

The Xit'olacw Community School is located in Mount Currie. Mount Currie is a community of approximately 1200 Native Lil'wat Indians located 200 kilometres northeast of Vancouver in the Pemberton Valley of British Columbia. The school provides education from Nursery to grade 13. The total school enrollment is 200. There are 17 teachers. Ten of the teachers are Native with band membership. The remaining 7 teachers are non-Native.

Prior to 1973, Mt. Currie students in grade 7 through 12 enrolled in Pemberton Secondary School. Mt. Currie students in Kindergarten through grade 6 were taught by nuns

at the Federal Day School located on the reserve. However in 1973, publication of the Indian Brotherhood position paper, Indian Control of Indian Education, initiated the development of a locally administered program. The aim of this program was consistent with the position paper's educational principles of parental responsibility and local control of education. The establishment of an on-reserve alternate program (to the provincial school) for high school students, and the elimination of the elementary church program, gradually led to the development of the present educational institution known as the Xit'olacw Community School (Wyatt, 1985).

The maintenance of an appropriate balance between traditional Native and contemporary non-Native culture is a primary concern at the Xit'olacw Community School (Wyatt, 1985). To meet this concern, the Xit'olacw Curriculum Center was established. Under the directions of a program coordinator, the Provincial Curriculum has been modified so as to allow for the integration of Native content. Curriculum changes are an on going process. For example, additional courses emphasizing Native culture, such as a Touch of Culture, and other courses, such as Passways which deals with self-concept, are offered. Traditional ways in drum making, herb plants and medicines, fishing, land, and family systems, are integrated in courses such as Home

Economics, the Lil'wat language course, Social Studies, and Political Science.

Native parents in the Mt. Currie community who do not approve of Native culture in the curriculum, and who believe that academic standards are higher in provincial schools, send their children to the provincial schools in Pemberton (Wyatt, 1985). Students from Kindergarten to grade 7 are bused to the Signal Hills Elementary School. Students in grade 8 to 12 are bused to Pemberton Secondary School.

Pemberton Secondary School is a provincial high school located approximately 10 kilometres southeast of Mount Currie, in Pemberton, British Columbia. The school has 262 students in grades 8 to 12. There are a total of 25 teachers. All of the teachers are non-Native. The school follows the British Columbia provincial curriculum as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. In addition, three levels of educational programs are offered. These levels are: Regular, Modified, and Alternate. In the Regular program the provincial curriculum is followed with no modifications to subject content. The Modified program provides the same subject areas as in the Regular program, however the subjects contents are simplified. The Alternate program consists of non-graded courses and individualized programs. Additional interest programs such as Native wood carving and a tourism program are offered.

Instruments

The purpose of this study was to investigate the academic self-concept of Native students in two different learning environments. Of secondary interest was whether these two groups of students differed in their perceived evaluations and expectations held by parents and teachers. To accomplish this investigation, three instruments were utilized in the study: The Michigan State General Self-Concept of Ability Scale (See Appendix B); the Perceived Parental Evaluation of Ability (See Appendix C); and, the Perceived Teachers' Evaluation of Ability (See Appendix D) All three instruments were developed specifically for use in a longitudinal study (Brookover, Erickson & Joiner, 1967). These instruments were selected for this study because of their widespread use, and recommendations by other researchers.

Michigan State General Self-Concept of Ability Scale (SCA).

This instrument was used to measure students' general self-concept of academic ability. The SCA, consists of eight multiple choice questions. Each multiple choice question has 5 response categories which are labeled 'a' through 'e', with 'a' being the most favorable response and 'e' being the least favorable response. A student's score was determined by assigning values of 5 to 1, with the most

favorable answer, 'a', receiving a value of 5, and the least favorable answer, 'e', receiving a value of 1. A summation of values produces a potential score of 40 points.

The orginal normative sample used to determine the validity and reliability of the SCA was 1,050, 7th grade students (Paterson, 1966). Subsequent investigations of the SCA reliability and validity utilized students in grades 7 to 12. The results of the SCA with respect to its measurement of self-concept of academic ability are as follows:

1. Stability reliability coefficients for 1,050, 7th grade students over a 12-month interval were .75 and .77 for males and females respectively (Paterson, 1966).
2. Internal consistency reliability measures yielded coefficients of .82 and .84 for grade 7 males and females respectively (Paterson, 1966).
3. Test-retest coefficients of stability over a one year period longitudinal study with a sample of 5,976 students in grades 8 to 12 ranged from .688 to .724 for males and females combined (Brookover et al, 1967).
4. The correlations for 7,126 grade 7-12 students in a 6-year longitudinal study ranged from .48 to .63 (Brookover et al., 1967).

5. Correlations between predicted and obtained grade point average on a cross validation population were .71 and .70 for male and female respectively (Paterson, 1966).
6. Byrne (cited in Byrne, 1984) reported a correlation of .41 for 929 students in grade 9 to 12.

The following validation studies utilized the SCA to examine the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achiemement. Their results are as follows:

1. Calsyn and Kenny (cited in Byrne, 1984) found a correlation for a 5-year longitudinal study to be .56. The study involved 556 grade 8 to 12 students. The correlation reported was for the total sample at the eighth grade.
2. Shavelson and Bolus (cited in Byrne, 1984) reported a correlation of .37 for 99 students in grades 7 and 8.
3. Morse's (1963) study involving 114 Black students and 1482 Caucasian students, reported correlations of .43 and .65 respectively.
4. Haarer's (1964) study of 100 delinquent boys reported correlations between self-concept of ability and classroom achievement to be .41 without IQ partialled out, and .39 with the effect of IQ controlled.

Perceived Parental Evaluation of Ability and Perceived Teacher Evaluation of Ability.

The other two instruments which were used in conjunction with the SCA, were the Perceived Parental Evaluation of Ability (PPEV) and the Perceived Teachers' Evaluation of Ability (PTEV) (Brookover et al., 1967). These two instruments were designed to elicit the students' perceptions of the academic expectations of themselves held by certain significant persons in their lives, that is, parents and teachers. Both instruments consisted of 5 multiple choice items. Response statements were scored in an identical manner as the SCA. A summation of values produces a potential score of 25 points on each test.

The following validity and reliability tests were conducted on the PPEV and the PTEV in a 5-year longitudinal study of grade 8-12 students. Two hundred and fifty-five males and 307 females participated in the study (Brookover et al., 1967).

1. Hoyt's Analysis of Variance Reliability coefficients for the PTEV ranged from .912 to .927. Reliability coefficients for the PPEV ranged from .755 to .880. These were stated as being adequate for group comparisons.
2. Over a 1-year period, test-retest coefficients of stability for the PPEV ranged from .640 to .762.

self-concept, existed between the two groups of students in the study. Of secondary interest was whether the two groups of students would differ in their perceived parental evaluations and perceived teacher evaluations.

The design was set up using the Indian students attending Pemberton Secondary High School as the control group, and the students attending Xit'olacw Community School as the experimental group. In order to determine if differences existed between the two groups of students, means, standard deviations, and t-tests were computed on the data obtained from all three instruments.

Limitations of the Study

The absence of randomization, manipulation, control, and small sample size served to weaken the results of the Causal-Comparative design. Generalizations are limited as the study focused on two specific schools. Test limitations resulted from testing being concerned with only specific areas, and what each individual chose to reveal about their personal feelings in the tested areas.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study at Xit'olacw Community School was approved by the Xit'olacw Board of Education. Permission to conduct the study at Pemberton Secondary

School was approved by the Board of School Trustees for the Howe Sound School District No. 48.

Forty-two students, in grades 8 to 12, participated in the study. The Xit'olacw Community School sample consisted of 20 students. The Pemberton Secondary School sample consisted of 22 students. Both samples of students were Lil'wat Indians from the Mt. Currie Reserve.

In order to recruit students, representatives from each school personally contacted parents. At the Xit'olacw Community School, personal contacts were made by the Acting Administrative Coordinator. At the Pemberton Secondary School, personal contacts were made by a Native liaison officer.

Both samples of students were assessed on the same day. The students at Pemberton Secondary School were tested in the morning. The students at Xit'olacw Secondary School were tested in the afternoon. Both test sessions were 45 minutes. At the beginning of each session, the students were read an opening statement (see Appendix A).

After each student had received a pencil and a packet of materials, an overhead projector was used as an aid as the questions and options were read to the students. This was done in order to minimize the effects of reading ability on task performance. Prior to and during the testing

sessions, students were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Statistical Analyses

For each group of students, the data collected from the three instruments were analyzed descriptively by computing the means and standard deviations. A one-tailed, independent t-test was used to compare differences between the mean scores for the two groups of students. The research hypotheses were tested at the conventional probability level of .05. Internal consistency reliability measures of the ASC were calculated, for each sample of students, using the Pearson r. The Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was applied to the resulting coefficient in order to estimate the reliability of the total test.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The results relating to the research hypotheses tested in this study are presented in this chapter.

The data analysis pertaining to the academic self-concepts of the students is organized under the heading 'Academic Self-Concept'.

The data analysis pertaining to the perceived parental evaluations is organized under the heading 'Perceived Parental Evaluations'.

The data analysis pertaining to the perceived teacher evaluations is organized under the heading 'Perceived Teacher Evaluations'.

Academic Self-Concept

The hypothesis tested in this analysis was that the Native students attending Xit'olacw Community School would have a significantly higher academic self-concept than the Native students attending Pemberton Secondary School. In order to test this directional hypothesis, the Michigan State General Self-Concept of Ability Scale was administered to the two groups of students.

The results were analyzed by finding the mean and standard deviation for each sample of students. A t-test for independent samples was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the academic self-concept between the two groups of students at the .05 probability level. The Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was used to estimate the Internal consistency reliability of the SCA for each sample of students.

As shown in Table 1, students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School had a mean academic self-concept score of 28.1 and a standard deviation of 4.63. Students who attended Pemberton Secondary School had a mean academic self-concept score of 26, and a standard deviation of 4.51. The means for the students' academic self-concept scores between the Xit'olacw Community School and Pemberton Secondary School differed by 2.1. The t ratio of the difference between the means was 1.49. Internal consistency reliability measures yielded coefficients of .80 and .83 for the Xit'olacw Community School and Pemberton Secondary School respectively. It was thus concluded that the students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School and the students who attended the Pemberton Secondary School did not differ significantly in their academic self-concepts.

Table 1

Academic Self-Concept Results

	Mean	S.D.	*t* Ratio	*df*	Level of Significance
Xit'olacw	28.1	4.63	1.49	40	*p* >.05
Pemberton	26	4.51			

Perceived Parental Evaluation

The hypothesis tested in this analysis was that there would be no significant difference between the students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School and the students who attended the Pemberton Secondary School in terms of the levels of educational aspirations which they perceived their parents to hold for them. Student scores from each test were analyzed by finding the means and standard deviations. The t-test for independent samples was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the samples at the .05 probability level.

As shown in Table 2, students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School had a mean PPEV score of 20.15 and a standard deviation of 2.96. Students who attended the Pemberton Secondary School had a mean PPEV score of 17.36 and a standard deviation of 2.66. The mean difference between the two scores was 2.79. The *t* ratio of the difference between the means was 3.22. The data indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in how the two groups of students perceived their parents to evaluate their academic ability. The students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School perceived their parents to hold significantly higher levels of educational aspirations for them than the students who attended Pemberton.

Table 2

Perceived Parental Evaluation

	Mean	S.D.	*t* Ratio	*df*	Level of Significance
Xit'olacw	20.15	2.96	3.22	40	$p < .05$
Pemberton	17.36	2.66			

Perceived Teacher Evaluation

The hypothesis tested in this aspect of the study was that there would be no significant difference between the students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School, and the students who attended Pemberton Secondary School in terms of the levels of educational aspirations which they perceived their teachers to hold for them. Students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School had a mean PTEV score of 20.8 and a standard deviation of 3.66. Students who attended the Pemberton Secondary School had a mean PTEV score of 17.23 and a standard deviation of 2.79. The difference between the means was 3.57. The *t* ratio of the difference between the means was 3.58. The data indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups of students in terms of the levels of educational aspirations which they perceived their favorite teacher to hold for them. The students who attended the Xit'olacw Community School perceived their favorite teacher to hold significantly higher levels of educational aspirations for them than the students who attended Pemberton Secondary School.

Table 3

Perceived Teacher Evaluation

	Mean	S.D.	t Ratio	df	Level of Significance
Xit'olacw	20.8	3.66	3.58	40	$p < .05$
Pemberton	17.23	2.79			

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Discussions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the academic self-concept of Native students in two different learning environments. Of secondary interest was the level of educational aspirations which students perceived their parents and teachers to hold for them. This chapter presents a discussion of the results of this investigation. Future research pertaining to Native education is suggested.

Academic Self-Concept

The first questionnaire evaluated the students' academic self-concept. The results from this aspect of the study found that the Native students attending Pemberton Secondary School did not have significantly lower academic self-concepts than the students attending the Xit'olacw Community School. There are several possible reasons for this outcome. One reason may have been the exposure of both groups of students to Native role models. Over half of the Native teachers at the Xit'olacw Community School were long term residents of Mount Currie reserve. Since the Native

students at Pemberton Secondary School also lived on the reserve, they were also exposed to the same role models as the students from the Xit'olacw Community School. Thus, the presence of Native teachers in the community might have provided both groups of students the opportunity of having Native role models with which to identify.

A second reason pertains to statistical power. This is the ability of a statistical test to detect if a significant difference exists between the means of two samples. Since one method of increasing the power of a t-test is to increase sample size, the small sample sizes used in the study may have limited the power of the t-test to detect a statistically significance difference in the academic self-concepts of the two groups of students (Hays, 1988).

A third reason has to do with the problems in measuring psychological constructs. In previous research, (Brookover, et al., 1967) academic self-concept was defined as a "behaviour" which could be measured through the use of a self-report instrument. However, Combs (1984) argued that self-concept was not a behaviour. He defined self-concept as a perceptual organization which generated behaviour only as a symptom of itself. His contention was that while self-report is a behaviour affected by self-concept, it could not be accepted as being identical with it. He further stated

that people do not behave solely in terms of self-concept; they also behave in terms of all their other perceptions, that is, their experiences of events and of self.

Weaknesses of the findings in the assessment of self-concept, may also be attributed to problems of variable intervention. The conventional methods of measuring self-concept utilizes self-report instruments such as, check lists, completion tests, and questionnaires. Variables such as, the willingness of the subject to cooperate, the subject's own goals, the relationship with the requester, the subject's comprehension of the material being presented, the present emotional state of the subject, and so forth, may modify or distort what a person is willing to reveal about his or herself (Combs, 1984; Madak, 1988).

Perceived Parental Evaluation

The second questionnaire evaluated the students levels of educational aspirations which they perceived their parents to hold for them. The results from this aspect of the study found statistically significant differences between the Mt. Currie students and the Pemberton Secondary students in terms of their perceived parental expectations.

The Native students who attended Pemberton Secondary School evaluated their parents as holding significantly

lower educational aspirations for them. In contrast, the Native students at the Xit'olacw Community School perceived their parents as holding high educational aspirations for them. One possible reason for this outcome may have been student sensitivity to parental attitude. The Native students who attended Pemberton Secondary School had parents who persisted in their belief that academic standards were higher at Pemberton Secondary School (Wyatt, 1985). These parents, however unintentional, may have caused their children to perceive them as doubting the educational skills of Native professionals. Students who perceived their parents as doubting Native people in their roles as educational leaders, may have felt that their own parents would also doubt their ability to succeed professionally as Native students.

The low level of educational aspirations which Native students at Pemberton perceived their parents to hold for them, may ultimately have grave consequences for the future academic success of these students in terms of limiting what they will attempt to accomplish. For example, Erickson (1965) found achievement expectations from parents to be related to student achievement level. Previously cited research (e.g., Das et al., 1975) also found parental

attitude to be a good predictor of Native student achievement.

Perceived Teacher Evaluation

The third questionnaire evaluated the students level of educational aspirations which they perceived their favorite teacher to hold for them. The results of this aspect of the study also found statistically significant differences between the Mt. Currie students and the Pemberton Secondary students in terms of their perceived teacher expectations.

The students attending the Xit'olacw Community School perceived their teachers as holding higher academic expectations of them. This finding supports the contention of Kirkness (1985) that Indian teachers are crucial in terms of providing high academic expectations of the Indian child in school.

In contrast to the Xit'olacw Community School students, the Native students who attended Pemberton perceived their teachers as holding significantly lower educational aspirations for them. Conflicting values between teachers and students maybe responsible for student perceptions. Research (Pepper & Henry, 1986) has documented differences of time, behavioral expressions, group loyalties versus

individual loyalties, and so forth between Indian and white values.

A second reason maybe that the Native students at Pemberton perceived their teachers as simply doubting the academic capabilities of Native people. This reason parallels the reason for the students perceiving their parents as also holding lower educational aspirations for them.

The results of this aspect of the study are difficult to analyze. A more complete understanding of classroom behaviour is needed in order to determine whether students' perceptions of teacher behaviour are consistent with teachers' intentions. However, the cumulative evidence from this research does suggest that the Xit'olacw Community School environment maybe more suited to the academic needs of the students from the Mt. Currie reserve.

Recommendations

The following suggestions for future research are presented as a result of this study:

1. A study is needed to determine if a relationship exists between the academic self-concept and the academic achievement of Native students. At present there is no research which provides support for the theory that a

positive relationship exists between these two variables. The strength of the relationship between these two variables is of parallel importance. Without such relevant data, any implications as to the significance of these variables in Native education will be essentially impractical. As Madak (1988), pointed out, "... without knowing the importance of the relationship, one cannot make decisions as to how much time, energy, or money to invest in trying to improve self-concept with the hope that academic achievement will follow" (p.8). An additional factor to consider is the educational environment. The literature review discussed the inability of schools to respond to the distinct needs of Native students. Therefore, a study involving variables such as Native academic achievement would best be conducted in an environment culturally similar to the students' social environment.

2. Research pertaining to non-Native groups has shown parental achievement expectations to be related to student achievement (Erickson, 1965; Joiner, Erickson, Krugh & Sproull, 1966). Similar research is required in order to determine what effect Native parental expectation has on Native student achievement. Proponents of Native education (e.g., Davis, 1986; National Indian Brotherhood, 1973) maintain that the lack of parental involvement in the

education of their children is a contributor to the academic failure of Native students. It is possible that parental support may be a necessary variable for eliciting better school performance from Native students. Verification for this assumption may be conducted through experimental measures which involve parents who hold high academic expectations of their children and, who are closely involved in the present academics of their children.

3. More evidence is needed to support the contention of Native teachers being necessary for the academic survival of Native students. There is a limited amount of research which has found that students' ethnicity is one variable upon which teachers base their expectations (eg., Clifton, Perry, Parsonson, Hryniuk, 1986). Other research (Swann & Snyder, 1980) has illustrated that instructors' initial beliefs about pupils' ability does not alter even when evidence contridictory to their beliefs is made available. These findings are important to the extent of teachers' beliefs influencing their interactions and teaching strategies with students believed to possess low ability (Swann & Snyder, 1980). A study designed to correlate teachers' academic expectations of their students, and the levels of educational aspirations which students perceive their teachers to hold for them, may be valuable in

determining whether preconceived stereotypes are threatening the academic success of Native students. Such a study may also determine the relationship between students perceptions and teachers intentions.

Conclusion

The results of this research study have provided pertinent information on the academic adjustment of Native students in two distinct learning environments. It is reasonable to conclude that there is support for the presence of a band-controlled school on the Mt. Currie reserve, although the evidence is not as definitive as supporters of Native educators hoped it would be. What is evident, however, is the continuing challenge to educators to meet the needs of Native students. Perhaps this unsolicited comment, written by one of the students on the back of his test packet, will assist educators in creating an environment which will maximize the levels of learning for Native students: "Truly!! If I had my deserved attention and the right encouragement, no one could stop me."

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Appendix A

OPENING STATEMENT

My name is Cheryl Senior Wall. I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am presently completing a Master's Degree of Education in Educational Psychology.

As part of my degree program, I am conducting a study to determine if students from the Mt. Currie reserve who attend Xit'olacw Community School feel differently about school than the Mt. Currie students who attend Pemberton Secondary School.

Each of the packets, which are being handed out, contain an information sheet and 3 tests. The first test consists of eight questions. This test determines how you feel about yourself as a student. The second and third tests determine how you perceive your favorite teacher and your parents to evaluate you as a student. All of the tests are multiple choice. Please answer the questions by circling the letter in front of the statement which you feel best answers the question. You have the option of withdrawing from the study at any point. We have approximately 45 minutes to complete the tests.

3. Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?

a. among the best
b. above average
c. average
d. below average
e. among the poorest

4. Do you think you have the ability to complete university?

a. yes, definitely
b. yes, probably
c. not sure either way
d. probably not
e. no

5. Where do you think you would rank in your class in university?

a. among the best
b. above average
c. average
d. below average
e. among the poorest

Appendix C

PERCEIVED PARENTAL EVALUATION

Please answer the following questions as you think your PARENTS would answer them. If you are not living with your parents answer for the family with whom you are living.

Circle the letter in front of the statement that best answers each question.

1. How do you think you PARENTS would rate your school ability compared with other students your age?

   a. Among the best
   b. Above average
   c. Average
   d. Below average
   e. Among the poorest

2. Where do you think your PARENTS would say you would rank in your high school graduating class?

a. Among the best
b. Above average
c. Average
d. Below average
e. Among the poorest

3. Do you think that your PARENTS would say you have the ability to complete university?

a. Yes, definitely
b. Yes, probably
c. Not sure either way
d. Probably not
e. Definitely not

4. In order to become a doctor, lawyer, or university professor, work beyond four years of university is necessary. How likely do you think your PARENTS would say it is that you could complete such advanced work?

a. Very likely
b. Somewhat likely
c. Not sure either way
d. Somewhat unlikely
e. Very unlikely

5. What kind of grades do you think your PARENTS would say you are capable of getting in general?

a. Mostly A's

b. Mostly B's

c. Mostly C's

d. Mostly D's

e. Mostly F's

5. What kind of grades do you think this TEACHER would say you are capable of getting in general?

a. Mostly A's

b. Mostly B's

c. Mostly C's

d. Mostly D's

e. Mostly F's