A Phenomenological Study of Kindergarten Suspension Of Ojibwe Tribal Students In Two Rural Wisconsin Public Schools

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Abstract

A Phenomenological Study of
Kindergarten Suspension of Ojibwe Tribal Students
in Two Rural Wisconsin Public Schools

LaVonne (Chenault) Goslin

All races of children entering kindergarten face many challenges during their transition; however, in two rural public schools in northern Wisconsin, the challenges faced by Native American kindergarten students are somewhat extraordinary. Suspensions of Native American students in kindergarten have occurred from 1998-2007. According to the statistics from Wisconsin Network for Successful Schools' website, this practice did not appear to extend to non-Native American kindergarten students at these same rural public schools. A total of forty-three Native American Ojibwe students were suspended in these two schools during this time frame.

A qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted in order to gather rich, thick detail regarding the students and parents' memories of their experiences with the kindergarten suspension incident(s) through in-depth interviews. A total of six students, ages 11-14 years old, and their parents were recruited for participation through a homogeneous and purposeful sampling.

The responses were grouped according to the questions using a Nvivo software program, which was then coded and organized by the researcher according to nodes. Nodes are the common themes. An analysis and interpretation of the findings was developed after organizing various data according to themes.

Three common themes emerged as challenges for both the students and parents: being bullied, being labeled, and the display of anger or physical violence by students in the suspension incidents. Other unexpected outcomes emerged for parents regarding their child's medication issues, concerns surrounding their Individual Education Plans, and parents' work issues.

Recommendations were offered for schools to create frequent and intensified services for incoming kindergarten students with IEP's, as well as focus on communication issues, anti-bullying efforts, clarification on restraint of students and/or staff training on use of restraints, and additional cultural sensitivity/competency efforts for schools. Tribal governments and/or a tribal representative should advocate for the tribal community to ensure needed services for children with Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are being provided in a timely manner for a smooth transition into the public school.
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I. CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A. Times of Transition

Kindergarten is a time for new beginnings. All new 5-year-old students enter the public school, either directly from their home environment or from a pre-school setting (e.g., Head Start program). These new students are entering into unchartered territory; a completely new environment with an unfamiliar adult in a new role, as well as many new faces. Some children may have had previous experience with other children via shared community programming or childcare, but the majority of students are walking into a new chapter of their lives. The kindergarten students must not only learn how to relate with an unfamiliar teacher, new students in their classroom, a different environment, new rules, new routines, and possibly riding a school bus, they may also have to learn additional or different communication skills. Communication patterns established as young children, that children have grown accustomed to using in their home and community (even perhaps with an earlier childhood teacher), are firmly established, and may be difficult for young children to change in order to fit into their new world.

According to Clay (1995) and Peyton (2006), the students who are entering kindergarten will be facing multiple challenges. Not only are the children fearful of what lies ahead for them, but the parents are faced with fears and trepidation about their child’s future school success, and bring with them their own schooling perceptions, positive or negative. Ultimately, there is a forced separation of the child into a more independent stage. Transition is challenging for all ages of children, but it is especially difficult for children who are entering a public school from a tribal preschool or a Head Start program.
1. Teacher relationships.

The relationship of the kindergarten teacher with the students is a key ingredient to early school success. Peterson (2009) indicates prior schooling experiences, including the relationships with preschool or Head Start teachers and families, have already played a critical role prior to the child’s entry into kindergarten. After exiting kindergarten, the elementary teachers, the student’s family, and their communities will continue to play an integral role in preparing children for the next stage in public schooling.

Pianta and LaParo (2003) describe the relationships and interactions children engage in as significant to their academic achievement. Children should be cared for by devoted adults, exist in a safe environment that follows routines, and interact in a setting that contains a vast array of stimulating materials. The teacher’s role is to provide children with positive experiences necessary to increase opportunities for academic achievement and overall school success. Children need a strong, trusting foundation with their teacher in order to form a collaborative bond, which can then be nurtured throughout their first year of kindergarten. The teacher and student relationship is of utmost importance for school success (Ryan, 2011).

2. Teacher communication.

The second most important aspect for schooling success is effective teacher communication. The specific method of communication used with students is a significant factor to explore. Does the teacher expect direct eye contact with each student when talking to them? What if a student does not look at the teacher when talking to them? Does the teacher speak slow or very fast? What is the tone of his/her voice, is it high-pitched and shrill, or is the volume and pitch of his/her voice low and slow?
In her doctoral research about kindergarten transition challenges for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) children in relationship to their social/emotional development, Clay (1998) found there was a distinctive difference between how mainstream kindergarten teachers and how AI/AN teachers/family members communicate with children.

Mainstream kindergarten teachers use space, time and their voices in culturally determined ways that are different from practices in AI/AN families. Space and time are more flexible in AI/AN communities, responsive to the needs of children and teachers at the moment. AI/AN family members and teachers communicate with children using low voices and culturally specific gestures; mainstream teachers more typically use high pitched, louder voices to communicate and control behaviors of students. (Clay, 1995, p. 108-109)

Methods of communication are different for people, based on their culture and socioeconomic status. For example, in certain Native American cultures, it is disrespectful for a youth to look at an elder in the eye, whereas in mainstream culture, it is considered disobedient to not look at an elder directly when addressed. Communication is the main channel for teaching and learning. Thus, teacher communication with children is an important consideration as a factor contributing to school success. The expectations of children’s learning and behavior are even different, as they enter kindergarten, and can be difficult for children to adjust to.

3. Different expectations.

Clay (1998) identifies differences between the curricula for preschool and kindergarten. Head Start and other preschools are designed to follow developmentally appropriate practices, while kindergarten follows an academically-oriented curriculum.

The developmentally appropriate curriculum matches the cognitive/language, social/emotional, and physical/motor
developmental levels of the children in class. The kindergarten curriculum is the opposite as it focuses on the academic goals of the school district for all children, regardless of individual developmental levels. (p. 80)

Clay (1998) states prior to kindergarten, adults have always interacted with kids in a manner that was individualized and focused on where they were developmentally, even in preschool programming. However, the paradigm shift to academic achievement is of potential concern, especially for those who come from poverty or different cultures. The focus on academic achievement, instead of individualized developmental progress, may be another huge challenge for Native American students.

According to Pewewardy (2002) there will be complex challenges with communication between the teacher and the student. The student may be reluctant to try and solve a problem due to fear of being shamed if one does not succeed. Unfortunately, teachers may mistake this behavior as disinterest or lack of motivation. The student may not comprehend all the academic requirements expected from him/her in kindergarten. The public school kindergarten standards are set by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2009 WI Act 41); no longer are the standards established locally, such as within the tribal Head Start or early childhood settings.

The Federal Head Start Performance Standards’ Sections 1304.50(d)(1)(i)-1304.50(d)(2)(iv) mandate the following Policy Council roles and responsibilities. The Head Start and early childhood program goals, procedures, policies, and curriculum are established for and with parent input and participation. The tribal Head Start programs are mandated to have policy councils that are composed of the program options. For example, if the Head Start program has center-based and home-based options, the policy council would consist of parent representatives for both options, proportionate to the
population served. The tribal Head Start policy council parents are integrally involved in the entire operation of the program; the curriculum used, any program or policy changes, hiring and firing of staff, and approval of budgets must be approved first by the parent policy council, and then the tribal council body of representatives. This type of community and program governance ensures the program meets parent standards. The public school system operates differently; the public school system operates under the auspices of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and follows the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act.

What are the teacher’s expectations of each student for following classroom rules and procedures? Are the class routines highly structured and inflexible, or does the teacher use his/her professional judgment of what works individually well for the students in the class? According to one of the schools' 2010-2011 elementary school handbook, Student Behaviors’ section, kindergarten children are expected to follow rules and procedures when traveling to other areas of the school building (i.e., hallways, playground, lunchroom, gymnasium, music room, art room, and the bathrooms). Every aspect of a student’s daily routine is determined through rigid rules and high expectations all children to obey the rules. Kindergarteners are expected to line up in an orderly manner, keep their hands to themselves, and wait quietly for their teacher. Children are expected to raise their hands to ask questions, and to work quietly within groups when they are assigned work.

Children may be encouraged to be competitive in their assignments or in class projects and sports. They may have timed assignments or projects which must be done according to the teacher’s time frame. One of the school's 2010-2011 elementary school
handbooks also indicates there are rules for walking (not skipping or running) when traveling through the school, as well as keeping their hands to themselves when in the lunch line. Children may be expected to follow certain protocol standing in the lunch line, and also when they complete their meal. They are expected to follow all classroom rules and school rules while they are at school five days a week.

**Discipline policies.**

Every school has different policies and practices regarding broken rules, and inappropriate or unacceptable behavior. Dupper, Theriot and Craun (2009) state “Teachers frequently make the decision, often in a split second, whether to keep an incident contained within the classroom or whether to instigate the discipline referral that could lead to suspension” (p. 8). Teachers clearly play a pivotal role in the discipline chain occurring in public schools. Several other researchers explore this line of thinking further. Dupper, Theriott and Craun (2009) state “This decision is often compounded by potential cultural conflicts and misunderstandings between middle-class teachers and students of color and poor students” (p. 8).

It is a belief many teacher training programs do not provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to manage the behavior of students with diverse backgrounds even though principals strongly believe teachers should be able to manage most disruptions at the classroom level. (Dupper, Theriott, and Craun, 2009, p.9)

There are several possible methods to correct or change inappropriate student behavioral issues prior to suspension or expulsion. One of the school’s Wisconsin school (2010-2011) elementary handbook cites common first steps for correcting inappropriate behavior, as simple as the teacher talking to the student to inform the student certain practices are not allowed. A second common disciplinary step used by teachers is a quiet time
in which the child may be asked to sit away from other children to think about his/her actions. Individual teachers may use recommended practices such as: (a) problem-solving with students, (b) engaging students in talking circles, (c) conflict resolution strategies, (d) verbal warnings, (e) time-outs in classroom or in another classroom, (f) private conferences with student, (g) restorative justice referrals, (h) student contracts, (i) teacher consultations with school counselor and/or psychologist, (j) pupil service teams, (k) positive behavioral staff member involvement, (l) home school coordinator facilitation, or (m) referral of student to a guidance counselor or school staff member in charge of discipline. (Electronic access at: www.nameofschool.k12.wi.us/ele/handbook elementary 2010-2011.pdf), p. 25.

These types of disciplinary policies are typically administered in a structured common process. Schools may use more severe disciplinary measures when needed, which may include: (a) lunch or recess detentions, (b) in-school or out-of-school suspensions, or (c) expulsions. Any of the disciplinary measures can vary in the severity of the punishment, or in the length of time a student may be expected to serve his/her punishment. Some correction measures may be more commonly used in upper elementary, middle school, or high school grades. One type of disciplinary technique used in schools is a progressive policy where each occurrence is documented, and previous disciplinary steps given to the student are taken into consideration, along with the new violation. (Name of School - Wisconsin Middle School Handbook, 2008-2009)

a. Zero tolerance policies.

According to the “National Center for Education Statistics,” NCES (2000) 79% of U.S. schools have a zero-tolerance policy for violence. Zero-tolerance policies were
developed in the 1980s by the U.S. Customs Agency to target the booming drug trade (Martinez, 2009). This policy was introduced as P.L. 103-382, created from the Clinton administration and the Gun-Free Schools Act (2004). The Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) was passed by Congress to address the issue of school violence, including student possession of firearms on campus. Schools would lose federal funds provided from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 if this law was not upheld.

According to Casella (2003), in 1995 the law changed its terminology from fire-arm to weapon. By 1996-1997, most schools had a blanket zero-tolerance policy, addressing conduct beyond specific behaviors that the GFSA (2004) mandated. In addition, 94% of schools targeted firearms and weapons, 88% targeted drugs, 87% targeted alcohol, and 79% targeted fights. In 1997, drugs were added to the policy. Beginning in 1999, some schools included swearing, truancy, insubordination, disrespect, and dress-code violations in their policies (Axman, 2005; Essex, 2004; Skiba, 2000; Wald, 2001).

The original intention of zero-tolerance policies was to address serious offenses such as possession of firearms, but instead it was being used by administrators as a quick-fix solution to curbing discipline problems with students. According to McAndrews and the National Association of School Psychologists (2001), zero-tolerance policies moved beyond its original intent. School administrators were using zero-tolerance policies as a method to relinquish responsibility for students with behavioral problems. “Zero-tolerance policies are the tools that school administrators use to justify the overuse of suspension. Suspension has no benefits for students or schools” (Martinez, 2009, p. 155).

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), 2001 summarized zero-tolerance policies with the statement “If zero-tolerance is truly an effective
deterrent, then it would be expected there should be a reduction in the use of suspension, but in reality there has been an increase in the use of suspension” (as cited in Martinez, 2009, p. 155).

By February 2001, the American Bar Association posited that zero-tolerance policies should be discontinued in schools (Henault, 2001). Advocates for using suspension suggest removing disruptive students creates an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn. Researchers have demonstrated suspension is not an effective change agent.

Students return to school displaying the same or more severe behaviors, which leads administrators to repeatedly use suspension for the same students. Suspension also negatively affects academic achievement; is a strong indicator that a student will drop out of school and may lead to juvenile delinquency. After inspecting the effect of these policies on our schools, it becomes apparent that there is more evidence that they do more harm than good. (Martinez, 2009, p. 153, 155.)

When suspension and expulsion are used as punishment, the school administrators are “automatically excluding students from an educational institution…[which] is contradictory to the mission of education” (Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004, p. 521).

B. Kindergarten Environment

1. Benefits

Even though there are potentially different academic expectations in kindergarten, this first year of school will include beneficial opportunities. The differing expectations and newly expanded environments can offer children certain opportunities for further positive development, such as increased opportunities to explore books, puzzles, manipulatives, dramatic play, problem solving, and life skills. Children have enhanced social and physical play in kindergarten. For example, children entering kindergarten classes have
needs for more physical activity. Their active play (inside and outside) is encouraged because the public school facilities typically are larger, equipped with a gymnasium, a physical education class, and may have more than one playground. (Miller and Almon, 2009)

2. Social Interactions

Additionally, there are rich possibilities for social interactions, as there are more students to play together in the kindergarten classroom. Their social interactions, and ability to socialize, with children from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds hopefully will increase their social skills with all races. Kindergarten has been indicated as the first step in life gaining independence and venturing into the larger scope of their community. A positive kindergarten experience combines their social skills in conjunction with their expanded opportunities to learn through books, music, art, and physical education. Although there are many potential challenges of transitioning into kindergarten, the overall intent of kindergarten is to help children evolve in a positive manner. (Miller and Almon, 2009).

3. Challenges

There are several challenges inherent with the transitioning of children to kindergarten, with the first being the obvious differences of environment and expectation within the structure. Additionally, there may be major changes in the teacher/student ratio coming from a Head Start or early childhood program into a public school kindergarten. The lower ratio of the preschool experience is an asset, but this ratio can easily be tripled when entering kindergarten. (Peterson, 2009) There is also the challenge of Native American parents, grandparents, and other family members who may feel uncomfortable and
not welcome in the public school setting—especially if their child was previously enrolled in a tight knit tribal community school. (Clay, 1995; Peyton, 2006) There are also many variances in cultural factors for the Native American child who is entering a public school kindergarten class from a tribal Head Start program, a child care setting, or another preschool setting. (Clay, 1995)

4. Teacher/student ratios.

The public school teacher often has a large number of students in each classroom, and often fails at the attempt to compete against a lower teacher/student ratio. For example, in most public kindergartens, the student teacher ratio is 18:1 (Wisconsin State Law 118.43, Student Achievement Guarantee in Education -SAGE, 1996). In one rural northern Wisconsin Head Start program, the student teacher ratio is 5:1 because of additional grant funds to supplement more teacher positions. This is atypical of many early childhood education programs across the country. The lower student teacher ratio of 5:1 is more effective with children as the smaller size allows the teacher to individualize their lesson plans for a smaller number of children. The teacher is also able to address behavior issues with a smaller group of students more effectively than with a larger group of students. The teacher is also able to successfully address individual learning styles and the qualities of interactions with the lower student teacher ratio. Teachers are also able to easily nurture their young wards and develop a closer bond with their students. (Peterson, 2009; Peyton, 2006)

5. Native American family perceptions of public schools

The public school atmosphere may feel more ominous and impersonal to the family members of a Native American child, even though the family members may have
dropped off/picked up their child daily, and occasionally visited the classroom in a tribal preschool, Head Start program, or child care setting. The Native American parent may have had their child enrolled in a tribal early childhood program, preschool or child care setting for the past three to five years. They knew all the rules, procedures, and teachers at that tribal program; the knowledge and familiarity of the program and its dimensions instilled trust between the teachers and family members. (Peterson, 2009; Peyton, 2006; Clay, 1995)

One advantage for children that enter kindergarten from their home, a daycare, or a tribal head start program is not only the lower child/adult ratio but also the resources and assistance provided for the family’s challenges. Some challenges or stressors that families may typically face could be: (a) changes in the family structure, (b) domestic violence in the home, (c) changes in job status or loss of income, etc. The public school and staff may not be seen as caring or nurturing, according to the Native American families, as the previous child care setting, tribal preschool or Head Start programs. (Peterson, 2009)

Many Native American family members do not feel welcome or comfortable in entering or being in public school settings. They do not feel comfortable talking with the teachers and administrators when they have questions or concerns about their child. Perhaps they may have feelings of insecurity or inadequacy in talking to non-tribal, unknown school officials. This inability to be able to talk freely with the kindergarten teacher or other public school staff to understand the issue or address the issue only compounds the challenges the child may be already suffering. (Olson, 2003; Peyton, 2006)
A forgotten issue and challenge for public school teachers is often that many Native American parents or family members have had negative school experiences. The memories of how the public and private schools treated children of color in the past still linger; it is not surprising this issue remains unresolved, and continues to impact the children of today. These past occurrences, in tandem with current negative public school incidents, only reinforce the perception by parents that public schools are unfair, harsh, and not for their children. The undesirable perception by parents regarding the public school is an enormous barrier to overcome.

6. Cultural considerations.

One strength of the local tribal Head Start program is the strong culturally congruent physical environment and classrooms for the Native American children. This type of environment reflects pride for their heritage and who they are. All of the classrooms and school environment show appreciation and respect for the cultural beliefs of the families and students. According to Peterson (2009), Native American families from the community feel safe and in a warm, nurturing environment at this Head Start center, but they do not feel as welcome and comfortable at the public school.

Ojibwe tribal grandmothers and grandfathers participate as volunteers in many of the children’s tribal Head Start classrooms every day. A Native American powwow is held every week at the Head Start and the young boys sit and sing at the traditional drum. They are learning the songs taught to them by their Ojibwe elders. The little girls learn to dance with their teachers or friends using the natural clockwise flow of the circle.

Ojibwe artwork and beautiful rugs depicting the four values adorn the walls in the classrooms and the hallways. Beautiful Ojibwe dream catchers created with feathers are
in every classroom, which are said to protect the children when they sleep, so they do not have bad dreams. Huge, soft, furry animal puppets, such as the eagle, black bear, wolf, raccoon, and a rabbit are used weekly in puppet shows narrated only in the Ojibwe language for the children and staff. The Ojibwe language is used daily by the teachers, and taught to the children with the assistance of a special language grant and fluent Ojibwe native speakers. The completely culturally-rich environment is the home for up to five years for each of these Native American children enrolled in Head Start programs. There is a stark difference regarding cultural influence in comparison with the public school—the halls and classrooms of public schools are devoid of cultural items, paintings, or the beat of the drum every week.

Every school district has different challenges facing their kindergarten students. Some of the challenges that may be present for new kindergartners may result in policies and procedures enacted in local public schools. One example of a needed policy or procedural change would be when kindergarten students have to ride on buses with older students and the older students are intimidating them and scaring them.

Children who are Native American and may live in poverty on a tribal reservation or in a rural area will have different life experiences than a Caucasian middle-class student or teacher who lives in an urban area or city. When a Native American student enters a public school that has predominantly Caucasian, middle class teachers, there may be challenges in how they communicate or interpret each other. There could also be misunderstandings of behavior or classroom expectations of behavior. The difficulties in the transition process by the children and their families may result in what Caucasian, middle-class teachers consider inappropriate behaviors of the kindergarten student.
It is important to point out that in many rural schools in northern Wisconsin, there are few minority teachers. Rural areas are not always able to attract teachers of diversity. Perhaps teachers of color are not attracted to rural areas if the pay is lower than urban areas, or the reason could be there are less social amenities in rural areas. Although the employment of Native American or minority teachers in public schools is increasing, their numbers appear to be few in rural Wisconsin.

Many students of color are still receiving less-than-optimal experiences in the public school setting. According to Axman (2005) et al., suspension is frequently used as a punishment for minority students. After more than thirty years of data, it has been shown that “students of color, particularly African American students, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, are at increased risk of being removed from school through suspension and expulsion” (Skiba and Rausch, 2006, p. 1076). When children are removed from school, it may impact their learning and their school career; thus, it is important to examine suspensions, especially for students first entering the public school system.

C. Problem Statement

All races of children entering kindergarten face many challenges during their transition; however, in three rural K-12 public schools in northern Wisconsin, the challenges faced by Native American kindergarten students are somewhat extraordinary. The rural areas of the sample schools are located short distances away from an Ojibwe reservation. The majority of the tribes served within these rural northern Wisconsin areas are Chippewa or Ojibwe (also spelled Ojibway). Suspensions of Native American students from kindergarten have occurred repeatedly during the last nine years. According to the
statistics gathered from the Wisconsin Network for Successful Schools’ website, this practice does not appear to extend to non-Native American kindergarten students at these same rural public schools. The number of Native American kindergarten pupils suspended from 1998-2007 in three northern Wisconsin public schools ranges from a total of 23 students at School I, 20 students at School II, of which 10 were listed as Native American, and six students at School III.

D. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to conduct phenomenological research on Native American Ojibwe students who were suspended from kindergarten while they were enrolled in northern Wisconsin rural public schools. According to the education publication entitled “Status and Trends of American Indians and Alaskan Natives” (2008), the national statistics (in 2004) for suspension and expulsion rates for grades K-12 depict Native American students having lower suspension and expulsion rates than Black students, but higher suspension and expulsion rates than students of all other racial and ethnic groups. Caucasians are considered one group; the minorities identified within these statistics were: Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American.

1. Variables.

There are two important variables most likely to influence the lives of Native American students, and each variable plays a different role. Poverty is the most predominant variable that impacts all three schools, and most likely the study participants’ lives as well. In the United States, according to Fleury DeVoe; Darling-Churchill, and Snyder (2008) there are 34% of Native American children, ages 5-11, which live in poverty. For Native American children under the age of five, the national poverty rate is 39%. In
northern Wisconsin, where the focus rural schools are located, 41% of school-age children qualify for free or reduced lunch, which is the definition for poverty level. According to a recent Ashland (Wisconsin) Daily Press article dated 3/12/11, there has been a 12% increase over the last seven years in the student poverty level in northern Wisconsin. Northern Wisconsin is also noted for having higher percentages of poverty than the state average. The WINSS (2009) annual report states the three sample northern Wisconsin rural public schools have the following average poverty levels for their overall K-12 grades: 55%, 79%, and 86.8% for each school respectively. The poverty levels, recorded in specifically the elementary grades, are: 58%, 86%, and 87% respectively.

Another variable to consider as one of the challenges for transitioning kindergarten students and their family is the introduction to and historical abuse of alcohol within Native American tribal communities. Historically, alcohol abuse in many Native American reservations, or rural communities, has been an issue for hundreds of years. The abuse of alcohol in Native American families invariably can lead to domestic violence or child abuse/neglect. Multigenerational trauma, also known as historical trauma, has been documented as a prevalent issue with many Native American families. Historical trauma is defined by Brave Heart (2000) as American Indians experiencing massive losses of lives, land, and culture from European contact and colonization, resulting in a long legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations. This phenomenon, labeled historical unresolved grief, contributes to the current social pathology which includes: (a) high rates of suicide, (b) homicide, (c) domestic violence, (d) child abuse, (e) alcoholism, and other social problems amongst American Indians.
2. **Contributing factors.**

Three key contributing factors that lead to suspensions of Native American kindergarten students at the three sample rural schools are (a) zero-tolerance policies for violence or perceived acts of violence, (b) lack of a culturally-responsive curriculum geared towards learning styles of Native American students, and (c) lack of cultural sensitivity or cultural awareness training for the teachers in regards to understanding Native American historical factors, their communication and learning styles, and cultural strengths and resilience factors. Learning about community mores and values is also an important cultural factor that would assist teachers in understanding cultural differences.

If one combines the prevailing multiple variables that potentially affect Ojibwe students such as: (a) poverty, (b) potential abuse of alcohol in their homes, (c) domestic violence, (d) child abuse or neglect, (e) historical trauma suffered through the generations with the contributing factors of a school system that may have zero-tolerance policies for violence in effect, culturally insensitive curricula, and culturally insensitive teachers—the resulting outcome could be communications that are misunderstood. There can be misunderstood expectations about behaviors between the teachers and the Ojibwe students. The misunderstood communications and expectations can be linked to the theory of cultural discontinuity.

Cultural discontinuity refers to the lack of cohesion between two or more cultures. Upon entry into school, differences in the functional use of language among culturally and linguistically diverse children have been found to account for the discontinuity they experience. (Lovelace, Wheeler, 2006, p. 303)

There seems to be very little hope for a positive outcome with the list of potential negative variables and factors in effect; it seems as though the only logical progression is
for the teachers to report unacceptable (or misunderstood) behaviors. The students are then disciplined through the act of suspensions.

This study hopes to shed light on the phenomenon of kindergarten suspensions of Native American students, as well as to discover more about the perceptions of the suspension experience by the students and their parents. Interview questions will center on the memories and perceptions of the suspension and its impacts. Other questions may center on the student’s level of hope or despair through a predetermined questionnaire of six questions, to help determine the student's resilience. Students may be asked if their initial suspension only occurred in kindergarten, or whether the suspensions continued in other grades. If suspensions continued throughout the kindergarten year and into other grades in school, were there any particular experiences the student had that they felt altered their destiny of receiving disciplinary actions? Did the student think this destiny-changing experience or intervention occurred through another student, a parent, a teacher, school staff member, or another adult?

According to Ashford (2000) and Bucher & Manning (2003), there have been numerous proactive and preventative interventions that have been effective in curbing violence and misbehavior on campuses when implemented both school-wide and in individual classrooms. The best interventions take an early recourse approach, which may include screening and early identification, as well as to circumvent behaviors from happening in the first place. Lastly, it is important to consider whether the practice of suspending kindergarten students has improved their educational outcomes.

This phenomenological study is critical because it identifies the suspensions of five year-olds who are entering their first year of kindergarten. The first year of school is
important in setting the foundation for a child’s learning, and his or her mindset for learning. A child may slowly develop a bond and trust with his/her teacher, which may become interrupted with a suspension. Additionally, the practice of suspension could become detrimental to the love of learning. If a child feels good about school his or her first year in kindergarten, then one can only surmise that perhaps the child will develop positive feelings about school from that point on. However, if a student has initial negative experiences at this new school, then he/she may learn to distrust teachers or the school officials. Secondly, this practice has been in place in northern Wisconsin for the past nine years, and may have already influenced the attitudes of suspended children towards school. They may no longer feel nurtured or supported in their educational setting. Thirdly, the practice of kindergarten suspension seemed to target Native American students, specifically Ojibwe tribal members. Somehow it must be proven to young Native American Ojibwe students that their lives are more valuable to the world than what this practice portrays. This study will examine what effect this practice of discipline, kindergarten suspensions, had on Ojibwe students.

National, as well as local, suspension and expulsion rates for Native American students are disproportionately high, as it is for other students of color (i.e., Blacks and Hispanics). The practice of suspending Native American kindergarten students in these sample three rural public schools indicates a disproportionate practice, as well as a potentially discriminatory practice. Non-Native American kindergarten students were not suspended in kindergarten in these three sample northern Wisconsin schools. The researcher’s theory is the cumulative effect of kindergarten suspensions on Native American students contributes to school failure when there has not been a strong positive
intervention to deflect or alter the children’s path early in the school years. Poverty, multigenerational trauma, coupled with other societal challenges of alcohol abuse, child abuse and neglect, loss of spirituality, acculturation, and hopelessness or despair all contribute overwhelming odds against the Native American student achieving school success.

E. Methodology

According to Gribich (2004), when a human experience occurs, and the rich detail and essence is captured through exploration, description, communication, and possibly interpretation—this is called a phenomenological study.

Phenomenology is an approach which attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience simultaneously with how participants make sense of these. Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between researcher and respondents or between researcher and texts. (Gribich, 2004, p. 84)

Phenomenological interviews will be held with Ojibwe students who have been suspended in kindergarten at one of the three sample northern Wisconsin rural public schools during the time period of 1998 – 2007. The students that were originally suspended in kindergarten can now be in any grade from 5th to 12th grade, according to the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools’ website. Individual interviews will be conducted with each student, as well as his/her parents, to describe the suspension experience through their memories of the event(s). This phenomenological study will attempt to capture both the parent and student’s perceptions regarding this occurrence, and how they believe it has impacted the child’s subsequent school experience. Furthermore,
interviews with the parents will also target demographic data regarding family composition.

All interviews will be audiotaped through a voice-recording mechanism. These interviews will be transcribed and coded by using a computer generated program called Nvivo, which categorically sorts matching words or descriptions. Additional data used will be the six question hope/despair survey, as well as the 20 question acculturation survey to determine levels of hope and despair, and where each student may fit on the acculturation continuum. The advantage of using the phenomenological method of a qualitative research method is the data will be in richer detail, and derived straight from the source, versus speculation regarding statistics. A phenomenological method studies the phenomenon in its essence and capture memories and perceptions from the students’ of their kindergarten suspensions. Open-ended questions are asked to allow for the participant to freely narrate their story. The researcher becomes a part of this story through the lived experiences of the participant.

1. Definitions

Native American is defined by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (1988) as a person who is an enrolled or a registered member of a tribe or whose blood quantum is one fourth or more and genealogically derived from Native American ancestry (Garrett, 2003, p. 227).

According to the education journal “Status and Trends of American Indians/Alaskan Natives” (2008), the Ojibwe (also known as Chippewa or Ojibway) tribes are considered to be the sixth largest tribe in the United States. This tribe is a member of the Algonquian branch of Native Americans. The Ojibwe tribe experienced a spiritual
migration of their people from the eastern seaboard in the year 1000 AD, and their jour-
ney ended at Madeline Island. Then a movement to assimilate the Ojibwe into main-
stream European culture prevailed in the Apostle Island region.

A term that is critical to understand in relationship to this study is *cultural discontinuity*. Lovelace and Wheeler (2006) state that this term refers to the lack of cohesion between two or more cultures, specifically citing differences in the functional use of lan-
guage among culturally and linguistically diverse children. Children come to school so-
cialized according to language in culture-specific ways; however, the discourse structure and communication styles used by many children from culturally and linguistically di-
verse populations is incongruent with that of the mainstream teacher’s style of inter-
action. This discontinuity between home and school language socialization patterns can have a negative impact on academic achievement.

*Acculturation* has been described as the cultural change that occurs when two or more cultures are in persistent contact. “In this process, change may occur in each of the cultures in varying degrees…A particular kind of acculturation is *assimilation*, in which one culture changes significantly more than the other culture, and, as a result, comes to resemble it. This process is often established deliberately through force to maintain control over conquered peoples, but it can occur voluntarily as well” (Garrett, 2000, p. 6).

“Native Americans differ greatly in their level of acceptance and commitment to specific tribal values, beliefs, and practices, which they practice according to customs, language, and family structure” (Garrett, 2003, p.228).

*Enculturation* is defined as the process by which individuals learn their home culture. Many Native American children learn traditional values, beliefs, and modes of
behavior and communication as a primary frame of reference. “In the school environment and elsewhere, however, the Native American students are oftentimes faced with pressure to compromise their basic cultural values and behaviors to successfully meet the expectations and standards of that context” (Garrett and Pichette, 2000, p. 7).

The culture of poverty is defined as families struggling to have enough food to last through the month. Nutrition is poor due to the lack of financial resources to purchase fresh vegetables, fruits and grains. It can be common for families in poverty to have electricity, gas, water or telephones disconnected due to lack of payment. Transportation may be limited – either they do not own a car or if they do own a car, it is either broken or not driveable. An excellent summary of the culture of poverty is described by Payne (1996):

The economic traits which are most characteristic of the culture of poverty include the constant struggle for survival, unemployment and under-employment, low wages, a miscellany of unskilled occupations, child labor, the absence of savings, a chronic shortage of cash, the absence of food reserves in the home, the pattern of frequent buying of small quantities of food many times a day as the need arises, the pawning of personal goods, borrowing from local money lenders at usurious rates of interest, spontaneous informal credit devices (tandas) organized by neighbors, and the use of second-hand clothing and furniture (p. 58).

Generational poverty, as described by Payne (1996), is to be in poverty for at least two generations; however, the patterns begin to surface much sooner than two generations if the family lives with others who are from generational poverty. Situational poverty is defined as lack of resources due to a particular event (i.e., a death, chronic illness, divorce, etc.).

2. Delimitations and Limitations

This qualitative phenomenological study has a limited scope for the outcome, due to the small number of individual student interviews that may be conducted. This study,
in essence, will be investigating a longitudinal effect on the Native American student from their initial suspension in kindergarten. Although the geographical locations of the rural public schools that practice suspensions of students are all from northern Wisconsin (primarily the Ojibwe tribe), the reader must be cautioned that the outcome cannot be generalized to include all other Native American tribes in the United States.

This study is limited because the rural areas of the sample public school district have a small student population. Participants were limited to students and their parents who were willing to participate in interviews for this phenomenological study. These students were Native American tribal members identified as Ojibwe.

Another potential weakness may involve the recruitment methods for participants from other area school districts in which the researcher may not have preschool graduation lists or enrollment data prior to their kindergarten enrollment. However, the researcher may also have easier access for recruitment of participants if the area school is or has been a former collaborating early childhood partner within the researcher’s community parameters.

The focus students who were suspended in kindergarten may be known through memories and local knowledge by community members. Gaining access to students in school districts farther than 25 miles would be through word-of-mouth or through the interrelatedness of the Native Americans in the school district and local community.

The age of the Native American students is a major factor in determining whether it is best to select younger students so the kindergarten suspension experience may be very recent and vivid in their memories. The disadvantage in selecting younger students could be that they may not be as comfortable with a stranger interviewing them, and they
may not respond as well than if the interviewer was a known community member. Additionally, due to their young age, children’s information may not be as detailed, as rich, or their word use may be limited.

An older student, on the other hand, such as middle or high school age pupil, may not be intimidated by an adult interviewing them regarding their kindergarten suspension experience. Their years of experience and age would contribute to their ability to communicate, and they would probably use more descriptive language when relaying their experience to the researcher. The older students may also be somewhat intrigued by the fact they were selected as a participant in this doctoral study; the fact of selection may generate positive feelings for the student’s self-esteem that they were selected—regardless of the potential negative view of the subject of kindergarten suspension.

a. Research question.

The kindergarten transition challenges for Native American students and the nine-year practice in three rural public schools of suspending Native American students in kindergarten has lead the researcher to formulate the question: What are the experiences of Ojibwe students who were suspended in kindergarten? The kindergarten challenges and practices also led to two sub-questions: What do the Native American students recollect about their kindergarten school suspension? Do they believe this suspension has impacted their subsequent school experience? A final question for this study would be presented to the parents of the suspended Native American kindergarten students: What are your beliefs about your child’s experience in kindergarten?
II. CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of school failure is not a new discussion in educational discourse; however, the subject of kindergarten suspension, particularly with Native American students, is a relatively new phenomenon that seems to have gone unnoticed for the past ten years. This qualitative phenomenological study will be examining if there are any links between school failure with suspensions, and other severe disciplinary actions in early schooling, as well as poverty, acculturation, cultural discontinuity, and the resilience of Native American students.

In a National Educational Longitudinal Study, conducted in 1988, about 15% of surveyed dropout students reported being suspended or expelled from school; Rossi (1994) believes prior suspensions/expulsions led directly to their decision to abandon schooling. The link between disciplinary action and dropout status might suggest a mismatch of school demands and personal coping skills as contributing factors to the high dropout rate of Native American students. Rossi also stated students need to be free of serious personal problems—such as hunger, substance abuse, teenage parenthood, or abusive homes—if they are to concentrate on their school roles and responsibilities.

Poor and minority students are especially at risk of falling prey to the various serious personal problems inside and outside of the school that can lead to dropping out. The unemployment, crime, and family instability in many poor neighborhoods create a breeding ground for various problems of youth and contribute to a sense of hopelessness that drives many youth to behaviors that damage their chances of getting a good education. (Rossi, 1994, p. 264)
A critical need then exists to examine a seemingly new phenomenon of kindergarten suspension of Native American students, as well as several other possible contributing factors, which may have serious repercussions in later years.

A. Introduction

This phenomenological, qualitative study will examine kindergarten suspension experiences of Ojibwe tribal students in northern Wisconsin. This study will focus on individual interviews of students and their parents from each of the three rural public schools in northern Wisconsin that suspended Native American students in kindergarten. The regional locations of these schools indicate Native American students are from the Ojibwe tribe.

Creswell (2007) explains phenomenology as the study of how people experience a phenomenon; therefore, the researcher must bracket his or her own preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of the informants. The participants are asked to describe their everyday lived experiences of their kindergarten suspension through interviews, which are then analyzed through researcher self-reflection and a series of steps to categorize statements into clusters of meanings. These units of meanings are then tied together to make a general description of the experience, stating what was experienced and how it was experienced. This type of qualitative research allows for the essence of the experience to be understood better, and to describe what all of the participants have in common as they experience this phenomenon.

There are five different forms for phenomenology: classical, realistic, transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic. This study will revolve around existential phenomenology, which sees consciousness, not as a separate entity, but as being linked to human
existence. Gribich (2004) suggests humans have the capacity to respond and react to (a) situations, and (b) relationships. These situations and relationships are met, confronted, or are attached in their worlds. Potential contexts for the phenomenological approaches could be any of the following: (a) mundane daily occurrences, (b) place or temporal-spatial location, (c) home or a location, and (d) a state of mind.

Creswell (1998) states phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. The researcher sets aside all prejudgments, and forfeits his or her own experiences. The researcher then relies on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the subject’s experience. Universal structures consist of time, space, relationship to self and others, causal or intentional structures, and bodily concerns.

1. Definition of Native American

One must also be able to understand both the root definition of Native American, as well as the history of the Ojibwe Tribe in northern Wisconsin to set one’s knowledge foundation in order to begin to analyze data gathered from this study. What are the criteria for identifying oneself as Native American? There are two definitions from Garrett (2003):

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (1988) legally defines Native American as a person who is an enrolled or a registered member of a tribe or whose blood quantum is one fourth or more and genealogically derived from Native American ancestry. (p.227)

The second definition of the term Native American is used to refer:

To those Native peoples indigenous to the lower 48 states who self-identify as Native American and maintain cultural identification as a Native person through membership in a Native Amer-
ican nation or tribe recognized by the state or federal government or through other tribal affiliation and community recognition (Garrett, 2003, p. 227).

The 2001 U.S Census Bureau also relies on self-identification to determine who declares themselves Native American.

2. The Anishinabe Migration Story

The second critical layer of this study is to hear a condensed version of the Anishinabe (Ojibwe) 500 year migration story in order to understand the deep spiritual journey of the tribal people whose young descendants are the focus of this study. In order for Ojibwe children to embrace part of their life’s journey while they are in school, they must first be able to understand their tribe’s past history in order to find their own cultural roots. Their Native American cultural identity and their challenges in kindergarten are two critical components of this study. This migration story and its Ojibwe descendants now live in the current locations of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan.

There were seven prophets that came to the Anishinabe Nation when the Ojibwe and other Algonquin-speaking Indians were settled up and down the eastern shores of North America. Benton-Benai (1988) stated “The people were so many and powerful that if one was to climb the highest mountain and look in all directions, they would not be able to see the end of the nation” (p.94). There was much discussion about the prophecies, and whether the Anishinabe needed to follow the sacred dreams and migrate to lands in the west.

The prophet of the First Fire told the people “If you do not move, you will be destroyed” (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 95). He spoke of a turtle-shaped mi-ni-si’ (island) that would be the first of seven stopping places during the migration. An island was
finally found in the St. Lawrence River that could be the turtle-shaped mi-ni-si’. There were many spirit ceremonies and cleansing ceremonies held there on and around these islands. Then they resumed their journey.

Along the migration, there was a group of men who were charged with keeping the Sacred Fire. The flame should never be allowed to die. This fire gave strength to the warriors and kept the people from the migration together. All of the campfires of the people were to come from the coals of this Sacred Fire. In this way continuity was given to the lives of the Anishinabe. (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 96)

The second stopping place was at Ani-mi-kee’ wa-bu (the Great Falls or Niagara Falls). The Sacred Megis Shell rose up out of the water and greeted them. The third stopping place was very likely the shores of the Detroit River. The Sacred Megis appeared to the people out of the water; this water was the Detroit River. It was here the Iroquois Tribe gave the Ojibwe a wampum belt, and at last, peace was sealed between them.

Three groups began to emerge in the Ojibwe Nation. The Ish-ko-day’-wa-tomi (fire people) were charged with the safekeeping of the Sacred Fire. As they migrated, this group guarded the coals of the Sacred Fire. These people were later called the Potawatomi. The second group was called the O-daw-wahg’ (trader people). They were responsible for providing food goods and supplies to all the nations. They took charge of major hunting and trading expeditions. They were later called the Ottawa.

The Ojibwe were the faith keepers of the nation. They were entrusted with the keeping of the Sacred Scrolls and water drum of the Midewiwin (religion). They were later mistakenly referred to as Chippewa. All of the Anishinabe people became known as the Three Fires. The spiritual origin of seeing the prophecies fulfilled was always their sacred goal. They continued their westward journey, and later were attacked by the Sauk
and Fox Tribes. This was on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. Many people felt that the direction of the migration had been lost. Time passed, and people began to wander away from the Midewiwin teaching.

“A boy would be born to show the Anishinabe back to the sacred ways” (Benton-Benai, p. 100). This boy had a dream which led the people on their journey to Walpole Island (Michigan). The fourth stopping point was Manitoulin Island. The fifth stopping place was Baw-Wa-ting’ where the fishing was excellent; this is now known as Sault Ste. Marie.

From Sault Ste. Marie, the migration split into two groups. One group followed the shore to the west, and the other followed the shore to the north. Both groups were attacked by the Dakotas. The northern group of Anishinabe carved rock markings and symbols on the huge rock cliffs and made records of their journey on the rock walls. Their sixth major stopping place was on an island, now called Spirit Island (Minnesota). Here they found ma-no’-min (wild rice). The prophets spoke of a turtle-shaped island that awaited them at the end of their journey. The people sought out this island and placed tobacco on its shore. The Water drum made its seventh and final stop on the migration. This island was called Mo-ning-wun’-a-kawn-ing (Madeline Island). The main body of the Anishinabe people gathered here, and they became strong and powerful. This migration started around 900 A.D., and it took 500 years to complete. The Sacred Fire was kept alive through the entire journey.

Benton-Benai (1988) continued on to discuss the prophet of the Seventh Fire of the Ojibwe who spoke of the Osh-ki-bi-ma-di-zeeg’ (New People) that would emerge to retrace their steps to find what was left by the trail.
There are Indian people today who believe that the New People are with us in the form of our youngest generation. This young generation is searching for their Native language. They are seeking out the few elders who have not forgotten the old ways. They are not finding meaning to their lives in the teachings of American society. They are searching for an understanding of the Earth as Mother of all things. This younger generation is discovering the common thread that is interwoven among the traditional teachings of all natural people. (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 111-112)

The foundation for this study links together four elements: (a) Rossi’s (1994) connection between the Native American students’ dropouts and suspensions, (b) the phenomenological approach to this study and its relevance, (c) the foundation of the Anishinabe Migration Story for Ojibwe people, and (d) the inherent challenges of transition for children, especially Native children, going into kindergarten, in a public, mainstream culture institution. The search for meaning for young Native Americans in today’s society is critical. There is a somewhat recent phenomenon that evidently has been occurring in some school districts for over nine years, kindergarten suspensions of our youngest generation of Native American students.

This study focuses on learning about the suspension experiences and its meaning for Ojibwe tribal students, with a specific focus on kindergarten students at three rural public schools in northern Wisconsin. National and state suspension rates, as well as the targeted rural school rates of suspensions will be presented, specifically for Native American students. The state and local suspension data is extracted from the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools’ website for the years 1998-2007 and the Wisconsin School Performance Report (SPR). The national suspension data was retrieved from a government report from the U.S. Department of Education entitled “Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008”.
Chapter 2 will review research literature on the impact of treaty relationships with Native Americans, and major historical federal Indian policies impacting these students and their families. Knowledge of the history of Native American education is critical in understanding how the generational outcome of the federal government’s education plans from 1880-1930 dismantled the original framework of Indian families. The role of poverty, alcoholism, and acculturation will be discussed in relation to Native American students, as well as the theory of cultural discontinuity, the role of parent involvement, both national and local Native American school achievement statistics, hope and despair of a culture, and factors for school success. The last section of this literature review focuses on teacher classroom behavior/management styles, disciplinary actions, risks and challenges, culturally responsive education, and cultural competency factors in relationship to Native American students.

B. Historical Role of Education and Boarding/Mission Schools

Researchers Goslin (1988) and Satz (1991), offer a brief historical outline of the role of education and federal policy for Native Americans, along with a historical timeline that has impacted several generations of Native American families. The introduction of alcohol and its stereotypical impact, the loss of language and cultural practices, and economic crises on reservations will contribute to the historical outline presented.

There were three major treaties that directly impacted the Ojibwe people: the 1837 Pine Tree Treaty, the 1842 Copper Treaty, and the Chippewa Treaty of 1854. The 1837 Treaty related to land cessions to enable lumbering on a large scale among eastern tributaries along the Mississippi River. The 1842 Treaty was to cede land north of the 1837 cession to allow copper mining. The most significant treaty to affect the education
of Ojibwe people was the 1854 Treaty; this treaty included the Lake Superior Ojibwe, the Vieux Desert bands in Michigan, the LaPointe band, other Wisconsin bands, and the Minnesota bands of Grand Portage and Ontonagon. One such example of an agreement under the 1854 Treaty is examined by Satz (1991), where Article IV speaks of annual payments for miscellaneous reasons including (a) moral and educational purposes (e.g., payments to religious groups), and (b) maintenance of a school for the Grand Portage band.

Goslin (1988) stated Indian treaties were important for the rise of Indian higher education; however, it was also crucial for Congress to appropriate funds to support Indian education in conjunction with treaty promises. The Civilization Fund of 1819, enacted by Congress, was the first piece of legislation that clearly established the federal responsibility for Indian education.

The act was developed for the purpose of civilizing the Indians and provided against their further extinction. The second section of the Civilization Fund of 1819 established a permanent annual authorization of $10,000. Since the government had no organization to supervise Indian education, this was apportioned among the missionary societies, and later, as treaty funds became available for education, these were also paid to the missionary establishments. (Tyler, 1973, p.45-46)

The Civilization Fund originally was used to provide financial support to numerous education organizations, especially the religious denominations, and to Indian students at private institutions and academies according to Goslin (1988). This Civilization Fund was repealed by Congress in 1873. In addition, educational appropriations were made available to Indian tribes through the sale of Indian lands from 1783-1868. During the treaty period, the Secretary of the Interior would place funds from the sale of Indian land into a trust fund, which eventually led to a new way the federal government would
deal with the numerous American Indian tribes; this legislation was called the *Trust Relationship Doctrine*. The Trust Relationship Doctrine had no direct effect on the growth of Indian education during the latter part of the 1800’s; however, it did place the federal government into the position where they assumed full responsibility for the welfare of American Indian tribes.

Goslin’s (1988) research indicates the educational activities of the federal government relating to treaty agreements with various Indian tribes began with the treaty of December 2, 1794, and from this date until September 1, 1968, 120 treaties were signed, which contained education provisions. By 1887, the figure for general education purposes had increased to $1,226,415, and there was a reported enrollment of 14,333 Indian children in 227 schools—64 of which were operated by private agencies, usually missionary societies.

From 1880 to the 1930s, the federal government’s boarding school movement began, which had a critical impact on many aspects of Native Americans’ lives. The philosophy behind this movement was to civilize and christianize the Native American children so they were assimilated into the dominant society. The students were prohibited from speaking their native languages, and were punished for doing so. They were also forbidden from practicing any of their religious or ceremonial beliefs.

According to BigFoot (2000), students were severely punished for infractions of speaking their Native language or practicing their traditional beliefs. Common experiences for children in boarding schools included: (a) harsh and cruel punishment for behaviors defined as infractions or rule breaking, (b) whipped and beaten for typical behavior appropriate for children who were scared or frightened, (c) denied contact with
family for months and sometimes years, (d) denied medical care, and (e) used as indentured servants. Additionally, limitations were placed on amount of food, clothing, and shelter children received, parents were not notified upon child’s death, and children were buried on school grounds without markers or ceremony.

The ancestral generations, coerced to attend these boarding schools, were required to stay there for many years. According to Garrett (2000), the children who had been removed from their homes typically spent a minimum of eight continuous years away from their family and community.

Over the generations, two major negative impacts of the boarding school era have surfaced. First, many Native American parents chose not to teach their children their native languages for fear of punishment to the children. Secondly, most Native American parents had horrific parental role models while they were enrolled in boarding schools; therefore, when they returned to their communities and began their own families, they only knew the brutal and harsh methods of discipline they were exposed to at the boarding schools by the administrators, teachers, and staff. So, not only were the Native languages lost during this time period, but also, inappropriate and ineffective parenting skills were learned and passed on to the next generation.

Several generations of Native parents were raised in boarding schools. Many families with limited resources whom were lacking food and shelter sought boarding school assistance for their children, but for many Native people, the disadvantages far outweighed the advantages.

Students never had the opportunity to experience or embrace a traditional family environment or experience how to work out compromises with elders, siblings or extended family members. They were not taught their responsibility within the tribal unit. The void
that occurred was quickly absorbed in destructive and unhealthy habits. Alcohol, risk taking, aggressiveness, hostility, limited coping and marginal relationship skills emerged as replacements for being disassociated from the tribe. Students in boarding schools were more likely to have a history of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. (BigFoot, 2000, “Social Structure and the Breakdown of Family Structure”, para. 6)

In Wisconsin, the first teacher came to Madeline Island in 1830, and started a mission school for the Warren family offspring and the children of the Indians who lived on the island. There was a Protestant/Catholic tug-of-war over the Ojibwe. In 1845, an agricultural education mission school was started for the Bad River Ojibwe Tribe, located in Odanah, Wisconsin, which was taken over by Wheeler until 1866. The Protestants then took over this mission school until 1884. In the 1854 Treaty, the Chippewa people were divided into the LaPointe Chippewa and the Bad River Chippewa. The Roman Catholic group agreed to settle along the cliffs at the tip of Bayfield peninsula. The Protestant group agreed to accept the Bad River grounds, the historic Chequamegon Point, and 200 acres on the northern edge of Madeline Island for fishing operations. Bantin (1984) states off-reservation boarding school locations in Wisconsin during this time period were at Tomah, Wittenberg, Solon Springs, DePere, Red Springs, Green Bay, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The on-reservation boarding schools were located on the reservations of Lac du Flambeau, Oneida, Menominee, Bad River, Reserve, Neopit, Newpost, and Hayward, Wisconsin. Other mission schools also operated on the Red Cliff Reservation in later years.

In Minnesota, off-reservation boarding schools were located at Pipestone, Morris, Cloquet, Round Lake, Sawyer, Brookston, Grand Marais, Mahnomen, Beaulieu, Clontarf, Squaw Lake, Vineland, Long Prairie, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Owatonna, Minnesota.
The *on-reservation* boarding schools were located at: Red Lake, Leech Lake, White Earth, Fond du Lac, Blue Earth, Nett Lake, and the Grand Portage Reservations. (Bantin, 1984) The boarding school era still impacts Native American families even today, and the long-term residual effects of past emotional, physical, or sexual abuse may be observed as an invisible challenge within the phenomenon of kindergarten suspensions.

**C. Impact of Other Federal Legislation Regarding Native Americans**

1. **Prohibition Law of 1832.**

   In 1832 the Prohibition Law was passed. This law declared it a crime for American Indians to drink alcohol; however, the Prohibition Law did not state it was a crime to supply alcohol to the American Indians. Native Americans have suffered greatly with alcohol and drug abuse, and alcohol abuse has impacted every generation since 1832.

   Frank, Moore, and Ames (2000) stated that exposure to alcohol occurred in the 16th century for the eastern seaboard natives, but for some midwest and western tribes, it was as late as the mid-19th century. Three phases of alcohol use occurred. Phase 1 was a precontact culture; the term *precontact culture* used in this study signifies contact prior to European invasion. Phase 2 was initial contact, which involved a *naïve period of grace*, characterized by comparatively harmless drinking without associated antisocial or violent behavior. Phase 3 was the development of new native drinking cultures, which entailed a progressive development over several decades of high-dose, prolonged collective binge drinking as a central element in many new Native drinking cultures.

   The Phase 3 type of drinking, characterized by Frank, Moore, and Ames (2000), became increasingly associated with individual and social harm. This type of drinking was characterized by:
• group-oriented as opposed to individualistic drinking;
• uncontrolled maximal dosing—to use up however much alcohol was present;
• absence of social controls for alcoholic binges—often there was intense pressure for all male adults to imbibe, with no limits;
• variably rapid rise of uncontrolled behavior, including violence during binges which involved family and kinsmen as the usual victims;
• an absence of individual blame and remorse for alcohol-related harm; and
• the near demonization of drink with a reduced sense of individual responsibility for one’s actions.

The stereotype of “being a drunken Indian” has lasted into the current century.

According to the Nashville Office of Public Health Newsletter (2008), Dr. Dekker, Phoenix Indian Medical Center believes:

The alcohol problem in Indian communities is one of binge drinking and [not alcoholism and that] binge drinking is a bigger problem than alcoholism. 73% of American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) deaths attributed to motor vehicle accidents are alcohol-related, and 84% of AI/AN deaths due to suicide are alcohol-related, according to statistics from Indian Health Service and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (p. 6)

The role of alcohol and its use and abuse within Native American families affects every aspect of this study, from the beginning of alcohol use in 1832, through each generation of the boarding school era, and into the stereotypes of the current century. Ojibwe kindergarten students, although quite young, are all affected, either directly or indirectly, by alcohol use or abuse within their family unit or within their community. All of these time periods are interconnected with the use and abuse of alcohol as in the web of an Ojibwe dreamcatcher, only the positive symbolism of the dreamcatcher and the tiny hole
in the middle of the dreamcatcher allows for the *bad dreams* to pass through so that only the good dreams will remain with the child. However, with the alcohol abuse, its web of destruction has kept the evil potion intertwined within the Native American culture.

2. **Indian Religious Crimes Code 1883.**

American Indian people were not allowed to engage in or practice their Native American religion since a federal law was passed in 1883 prohibiting any of their Native American religious practices, rituals, or ceremonies by threat of committing a criminal offense. In 1883, the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the Indian Courts, developed the first laws aimed at Native American religious practices. These religious offenses on the reservations were later codified by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Thomas J. Morgan in 1892. These were known as the Indian Religious Crimes Code in 1883.

Dances—Any Indian who shall engage in the sun dance, scalp dance, or war dance, or any similar feast, so called, shall be guilty of an offense, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished for the first offense by withholding of his rations for not exceeding ten days or for any subsequent offense under this clause he shall be punished by withholding his rations for not less than ten days nor more than thirty days or by imprisonment for not exceeding ten days; or by imprisonment for not less than ten days nor more than thirty days.

Medicine men—Any Indian who shall engage in the practices of so-called medicine men, or who shall resort to any artifice or device to keep the Indians of the reservation from adopting and following civilized habits and pursuits, or shall use any arts of conjurer to prevent Indians from abandoning their barbarous rites and customs, shall be deemed guilty of an offense, and upon conviction thereof, for the first offense shall be imprisoned for not less than ten days and not more than thirty days: Provided that, for subsequent conviction for such offense the maximum term or imprisonment shall not exceed six months. (Irwin, 1997, p. 35-36)

The onset of the American Indian Religious Crimes Code began in 1883 for 95 years up to 1978 when the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed. It was 95 years later Native Americans were allowed to practice their spiritual and religious beliefs. One exception that was recorded did occur in 1920, where the religious practices of one Native American religion, the Native American Church, was allowed; however, the use of peyote mushrooms for its religious purposes was still considered illegal.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 reversed the former policy of stripping Native Americans of their culture and use of their language. Native American religious freedom is the crux of the identity and culture of the Native American people. Language, culture, and spirituality are the cornerstone of traditional Native American self-identity.


In 1978 the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was another federal law designed to eliminate or curtail the practice of forced removal of Native American children from their families and their communities to non-Native foster homes. The practice of forced removal devastated the makeup of the Native American family. Many Native children were estranged from their families and were being adopted by Caucasian parents. These children were not reunited with their families or their culture. Generations of Native American children adopted by Caucasians or other races have been severely impacted by their non-Native upbringing because it resulted in a loss of their traditional Native culture, language, and was replaced by the values of a different culture.
HalverSEN, Puig, and Byers (2002) stated the Indian Child Welfare Act (Public Law 95-608) attempted to suspend continued out-of-home placement of American Indian children by returning children to their respective tribes, and attempted to govern the majority of placement and adoption decisions regarding Indian children. These authors stated that the best interest of the child in child custody proceedings is generally defined by looking at a stable placement with an adult who becomes the psychological parent.

Under ICWA, [however] federal standards define the best interests of the Indian children as those served by protecting the rights of each child as an Indian, and the rights of the Indian community and tribe in retaining the children in its culture. Generally, the federal policy attempts to protect the best interest of the Indian children by preserving Indian families, as well as the connection between tribes and their children. (Halverson, Puig, & Byers, 2002, p. 324-325)

The American Indian concept of relatedness is closely correlated with socialization, nurturance, and teaching. This way of life, according to Halverson, Puig, and Byers (2002), emphasizes that children are embedded within a complex and dynamic set of relations that include self, kin, and universe. This spiritual and cultural value is foreign to most members of the culturally dominant group, and has been considered an impediment to the assimilation of American Indians into U.S. culture. The transmission of cultural values, behaviors, and identity development rely on cross-generation parenting and socialization.

The emphasis of American Indian families and the shaping of family preservation services has been the most important role of the passage of the ICWA. Limb, Chance, and Brown (2004) acknowledge there is evidence that indicates the compliance with ICWA promotes better outcomes through reuniting children with their Native families,
and the importance of reuniting families in restoring cultural and familial preservation enables children to have a clear sense of tradition and belonging.

The importance of the Native family systems and their relational dynamics is reiterated by Red Horse et al. (2000). Red Horse states that American Indian children’s sense of belonging is rooted in an understanding of their place and responsibility within the broader context of kinship networks. The value of familial relationships to American Indians is the emphasis on belonging, and this is critical to an Indian child’s identity. The familial relations set the foundation for Native American children including their feelings of belonging and how they see their self-identity. If children are confident about their place in the world and the role of their culture, then the journey through school can become an easier process.

D. The Role of Poverty

The U.S. Department of Education report entitled “Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaskan Natives: 2008” states there are 34% of Native American children ages 5-11, living in poverty in the United States. The percentage of Native American youth living in poverty in the United States is 2.6 times higher than White children, and equivalent or higher than other minority groups in the United States. In northern Wisconsin, the impact of poverty on school-age Native American children is high, resulting in social, emotional, cognitive, physiological, spiritual, and environmental issues. A recent periodical states “41% of school-age Wisconsin children qualify for free or reduced lunch – a 12 percent increase over the last seven years, and almost all northwest Wisconsin schools have higher percentages of poverty than the state average” Duquette, C., (2011, March 19). p.4. Additional enrollment and demographic
data was gathered from the Wisconsin Information for Successful Schools’ website (2009) of the rural northwest Wisconsin schools that are located within a 100 mile radius.
Table 1

*Northern Wisconsin Rural K-12 Schools’ Poverty Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WI School</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>% Poverty</th>
<th>% Nat. Am.</th>
<th>% Non Nat. American</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashland</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayfield</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butternut</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chequamegon</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>98.2</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummond</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurley</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LacDuFlambeau</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mellen</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillips</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Garrett (2000) states the socioeconomic status of the student population is one factor which can drastically influence conflicts between a middle class school structure, and an environment that has a predominantly high-poverty student population level.

A research study by the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) was performed in 1998 and included 22,000 kindergarteners—of which 437 were American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Demographic data was collected from four ethnic groups: American Indian, Hispanic, African American, and White students.
According to Marks and Coll (2007), American Indian/Alaskan Native children from this study who were living in a household below the poverty level was associated with lower mathematical thinking and reading baseline skills at school entry. In addition, living in a rural location was associated with lower growth in both mathematical thinking and reading skills across the next four years of school.

Cholewa and West-Olatunji (2008) have stated that poverty can impact psychological well-being, especially for children living in poverty with limited access to health care services. Many children in impoverished communities face multiple stressors, such as familial conflict, community violence, and high mobility that can impact their psychosocial adjustment and academic achievement. Multiple stressors can impact very young children; they may drastically change their normally routine academic or physical behavior in a classroom setting. This type of challenging behavior can occur in children as young as kindergarten-age or preschool age.

E. Acculturation and Conflict

The cultural heritage of Native American youth is a critical component for teachers and school personnel to understand and appreciate. One must comprehend the meaning of acculturation, as well as its implications for student success. The topic of acculturation of Native Americans was addressed in journal articles from the time period of 1975 – 2003. Garcia and Ahler (1992) described acculturation in the following way:

The cultural change occurs when two or more cultures are in persistent contact. In this process, change may occur in each of the cultures in varying degrees…A particular kind of acculturation is assimilation, in which one culture changes significantly more than the other culture and, as a result, comes to resemble it. This process is often established deliberately through force to maintain control over conquered peoples, but it can occur voluntarily as well. (p.24)
Garrett (2000) explains Native Americans are not a completely homogenous group. They embody various degrees of acceptance and commitment to specific tribal values, beliefs, and practices through a variety of customs, languages, and family structures. Their level of acculturation differs according to their geographic setting (urban, rural, or reservation) and socio-economic status. “Level of acculturation has been associated with patterns of conflict resolution, willingness to use counseling services, personality characteristics, and educational achievement” (Atkinson, Lowe, & Matthews, 1995; Suinn, Ahuna & Khoo, 1992, p. 6).

In order to become more culturally responsive, Garrett (2003), special educators and other service providers ascertain that whoever is working with Native youth must have a general understanding of the culture from which these students come, as well as a specific understanding of the worldview the specific student possesses.

The Native American Acculturation Scale (NAAS) was adapted from the Acculturation Rating Scale of Mexican Americans (ARSMA) and the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation (SL-ASIA) Scale. Garrett (2000) created the NAAS by revising items on the ARSMA and the SL-ASIA to reflect appropriate references to Native American culture. His plan was to assess an individual’s level of acculturation along a continuum, ranging from traditional Native American to assimilated mainstream American.

Table 2 presents basic information on the five levels of acculturation as defined by Garrett (2000) to allow for comprehension of students with varying cultural values, beliefs, traditional tribal customs, method of worship, mainstream values/behaviors, expectations, and practices of their tribal heritage. Since this study deals with the success and challenges of Ojibwe tribal students, this continuum scale and Garrett’s following
critique of acculturation qualities will add to levels of awareness and comprehension. This acculturation continuum is critical information for educators.

According to the 2000 Census (Garrett & Pichette, 2000), there are over 558 federally-recognized Native nations, 304 federal reservations, 365 state-recognized tribes, and more than 50 tribes without official recognition, not to mention more than 250 different spoken languages. According to each tribe’s history of when invaders made contact in their region and what battles ensued determines how much of the tribe’s culture remains intact. For example, the Pueblo Tribes in Arizona and New Mexico still have a large portion of their tribal heritage intact, as well as their traditional language even though they were invaded in the early 1500’s by the Spaniards. Their pueblos were isolated communities which were spread far apart, and they kept their form of tribal government a secret from any invaders, which allowed their society to continue without as much cultural interference.
### Table 2

**Native American Acculturation Continuum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>May or may not speak English, but generally speak and think in their Native language; hold only traditional values and beliefs, and practice only traditional tribal customs and methods of worship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>May speak both the Native language and English; may not, however, fully accept the cultural heritage and practices of their tribal group nor fully identify with mainstream cultural values and behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicultural</td>
<td>Generally accepted by dominant society and tribal society/nation; simultaneously able to know, accept, and practice both mainstream values/behaviors and the traditional values and beliefs of their cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilated</td>
<td>Accepted by dominant society; embrace only mainstream cultural values, behaviors, and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantraditional</td>
<td>Assimilated Native Americans who have made conscious choice to return to the “old ways.” They are generally accepted by dominant society, but seek to embrace previously lost traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices of their tribal heritage. Therefore, they may speak both English and their native tribal language. （Compiled from Herring, 1996; LaFromboise, Trimble, &amp; Mohatt, 1990, p. 638.）</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every tribe has their individual history of colonization and its impact on their language, culture, and Native American tribal practices. In Wisconsin and Minnesota, there are varying levels of traditional Ojibwe language used among different reservations, as well as different Native practices, beliefs, and ceremonies. Each reservation may have varying signs of acculturation on the acculturation continuum. The research for this study will involve Ojibwe students in a general geographical region, even though their land base, Native practices, belief systems, customs, ceremonies, and use of traditional Ojibwe language may each be distinctive. The acculturation continuum most likely would be a
useful tool for educators as well, so they understand each tribal group may differ greatly, even within close proximity.

According to Garrett (2000), Native American students identified as having qualities of biculturalism have a higher success rate than students identified as traditional. They are identified as having fewer personal, social, and academic difficulties because of their ability to effectively use a greater range of social behavior and cultural communication, which are appropriate in a variety of contexts and situations. The Native American students, self-identified as being marginal, are the ones most likely to experience a variety of difficulties resulting from cultural conflict. “They may become trapped between their birthright and the dominant society, losing touch with the former but not feeling comfortable in the latter...leading to conflicts and resulting in serious identity crises” (Little Soldier, 1985, p. 187).

According to Garrett (1995), these are the Native Americans who are most likely to experience a sense of being ‘caught between two worlds’ (in a danger zone) as they struggle for identity and a sense of place. It is important to establish a sense of identity at a very young age, and even more so while the child is at the beginning of their schooling. Children need to know they are in a safe place to learn and through this setting of comfort, they will begin to learn who they are in the physical and spiritual realm. Self-actualization and self-identity are key ingredients for school success.

1. Cultural Discontinuity Theory

*Cultural Discontinuity* is a theory describing a dissonance between the language and values practiced in the home/tribal community versus the dominant, mainstream culture; for example, an entirely new and different language and socialization may exist at
many public schools than at home or in the tribal community for Native American students. Although there may not be many traditional Ojibwe fluent speakers left in the Native American communities of today, there still may be methods of communication that are different from the Native American home/community versus the school.

One example of differences in teacher perception, as opposed to student perception, may be when a student is new, and the teacher chooses to call out a child’s name to respond to a question. In some Native American cultures, this could be embarrassing to a Native American child because he/she may feel singled out by the teacher in front of the entire classroom of kindergarten students. These other students may also be new and unfamiliar to the child whose name is being called to respond. If the teacher had a number of Native American students in his/her class, and if he/she preferred to be culturally sensitive to this culture, the teacher would offer to class members to raise their hand and volunteer an answer to the question. The option to answer voluntarily may help alleviate any embarrassment to some children who may have been raised to practice different cultural values or mores in their home. (Ingalls, Hammond, Dupoux, Baeza, 2006)

According to Garrett (2003) there are verbal and non-verbal styles of communication that may easily be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Tone and intensity of voice, as well as other communication styles between a Caucasian teacher and an Ojibwe student could easily be mismatched. Teachers’ interpretation of body posture, eye or lack of eye contact, slow response, and general overall body posture or head tilt when responding to a teacher or a teacher’s question may all be culturally relevant in the instance of a Native American child that is not familiar with the public school or kindergarten classroom environment. Cultural discontinuity is a hypothesis which has existed since the late ‘90s,
and it has been theorized as a major reason for school failure for Native American students. An example of true cultural discontinuity could be when Native American children fluently speak their traditional tribal language, whereas their public school teacher only speaks English. However, according to Tyler et al. (2008), cultural discontinuity has not been quantitatively proven as to whether it actually exists and can be proven, and also whether or not cultural discontinuity can be named as a factor in school failure for Native American students.

Other researchers’ studies in favor of cultural discontinuity, such as Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1987), conclude that the Hawaiian KEEP (Kemehameha Elementary Education Project) “strongly supports the argument that cultural compatibility between home and school can enhance the likelihood of students’ success, and conversely, cultural discontinuity is a valid explanation for school failure” (p. 286). The Native American home language/values are not in synchronicity with the language/values practiced at the school; this creates a cultural mismatch, and many student-teacher miscommunications can occur.

The KEEP cultural curriculum was developed specifically for the majority population of Native Hawaiian students (in Hawaii) who were having a relative lack of success, as compared to Japanese, Chinese, and Haole (north European ancestry) students.

The project used research on socialization practices in Hawaiian homes, and how these differed from the patterns of interaction in the school, to develop a K-3 language arts program that is culturally compatible for Hawaiian children, and that, both in the lab school and public schools, produced significant gains in reading achievement levels for educationally at-risk Hawaiian children. (Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp, 1987, p. 278)
This curriculum was then imitated in a Navajo tribal school located on a reservation in Arizona. The Hawaiian cultural curriculum was found to be so culture-specific to that Hawaiian population, that it was deemed a failure with the Navajo students.

Anticipating that the gains experienced by KEEP children might be interpreted as the result of better teaching methods, rather than culturally specific methods, the Rough Rock Community School on the Navajo reservation in Arizona replicated the KEEP Project. Many of the strategies developed for use with Hawaiian children were found to be ineffective or actually counterproductive with Navajo students. (Vogt, Jordan and Tharp, 1987, p. 286)

Thus, the assumption from the KEEP study is cultural discontinuity does exist. Due to the discrepancies of researcher opinion regarding the tangible link of cultural discontinuity theory and school success, the researcher either has to align with one or the other or propose that more studies need to be conducted.

F. School Success Factors

There are multiple factors which promote school success specifically for Native American children. Demmert (2006) asserts that there is a direct correlation between student motivation, sense of identity, with positive attitudes regarding Native language and cultural programs in schools. He states teachers who use a variety of instructional approaches with a challenging, culturally-based curriculum can motivate students to do well in school. Additionally, information regarding local attitudes, use of traditional knowledge, and support from parents can all have positive influences on students’ academic performance as well.

Figure 1 emphasizes national statistics for high school completion for students of several races/ethnicities: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American
Indian/Alaskan Native. According to this 2006 data, American Indians have the lowest graduation rate of all these races; only 75% of American Indians graduate from high school. In order to help Native American students succeed in school, Demmert’s (2006) research indicates the characteristics needed are: (a) their language ability, (b) traditional knowledge, (c) motivation, (d) positive life experiences, (e) early goal setting, (f) basic skills, and (g) the ability to balance conflicts between home, community, and school. He reveals some of the reasons for high dropout rates:

- a high level of absenteeism;
- poor teacher-student relationships;
- a lack of parental involvement and support;
- poor academic performance and English language skills;
- social and cultural adjustment conflicts;
- boredom with school life and curricula; lots of moving between schools;
- transportation difficulties; and
- substance abuse (p.94).
According to the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (2004), there are three accurate predictors of one’s ability to succeed in school: 1. Reading readiness, which includes phonemic awareness, vocabulary, alphabet naming, and listening comprehension. 2. A youngster’s social behavior and interpersonal skills—which translates into the quality of social relationships with peers. 3. Work-related social skills or a child’s degree of independence, responsibility, and self-control at age 54 months.
Most of the research data on improving academic performance among American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian students come from qualitative studies, with limited quantitative data, which is largely non-experimental. Most of the programs demonstrating success are very new, and do not have large quantities of analyzable data; however, there are some actions that are clearly important for successful academic performance:

- Rigorous, research-based training of teachers to be academically and culturally competent
- A school environment culturally and linguistically congruent with the community or communities served
- An establishment of partnerships among all stakeholders to expand the traditional notion of “extended families,” that expect and promote an attitude of confidence and success
- The development of linguistically and culturally fair teaching and learning strategies, and of assessment tools for monitoring student progress to these teaching and learning strategies
- The creation of stimulating early learning environments for young children that promotes all areas of development. (Demmert, 2006, p. 96)

Native American students who may not be able to access the social capital of school personnel are also compromised. Students are not confident in their own academic abilities if they do not have a feeling of connection to school personnel.

A lack of interpersonal relationships with school personnel puts American Indian students at a disadvantage, because those social bonds are critical to fostering a sense of belonging to school that leads to students’ confidence in their own academic abilities. Parents’ presence and participation at school is critical to helping the Native American students in negotiating the mainstream culture of public school. (Powers, 2005, p. 340)
Unfortunately, according to Mather (1997), since statistics indicate a low rate of educational attainment among American Indians, it’s likely that many American Indian parents lack the content skills necessary to assist their children as the curriculum becomes more advanced. Mather (1997) states that in a study of over 1000 5th and 6th grade students, it was found that American Indians were twice as likely as African American or Anglo students to report they had no one to ask for help with their mathematics homework. Parent involvement in the early years of their child’s schooling experience is important as well, as the communication between a parent and teacher is a key ingredient for school success.

G. National Native American School Achievement Statistics

The broad topic of improving academic performance among Native American students was researched by Demmert (2001) by reviewing 8,000 ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) documents and abstracts related to American Indian/Alaskan Native/Hawaiian Native and other Indigenous education models. These research efforts led to the accumulation of more than 100 studies as evidence of what works or does not work to improve the academic performance of Native students. Demmert’s studies were organized into the five following themes which may emerge during the course of this study. The five themes are:

- early childhood environment and experiences;
- native language and cultural programs in schools;
- teachers, instruction, and curriculum;
- community and parental influences on academic performance; and
- student characteristics.
H. Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of Kindergarteners

According to Demmert’s (2006) analysis of the research on Native American students’ achievement, derived from the results of the ECLS-K (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of Kindergarten Students) and the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), the results show:

Native American children start kindergarten with lower reading skills than White, Black, and Hispanic children. Native American students’ skills are about 27 percentile points lower than White students, about 10 percentile points below that of Hispanic children and 12 percentile points below that of Black children. All differences are statistically significant. Native American children also start kindergarten with the lowest math skills, although the difference is statistically significant only for White students. Native American skills are 27 percentile points lower than White students, about two percentile points below those of Hispanic children, and eight percentile points below those of Black children. (Demmert, 2006, p. 12)

Demmert’s studies with his reported results are significant to this study of the impact of kindergarten suspensions and expulsions. School suspensions are in conflict with school learning simply because the child is taken away from his/her learning environment when suspended. According to Demmert (2006), a large number of family, human-capital characteristics are also statistically linked to these low levels of reading and math skills at the beginning of kindergarten. These factors are generally similar across children from all racial/ethnic groups; however results show that human or social capital variables can reduce achievement gaps for Native American students. Data also indicates that rural areas, especially poor rural areas, usually lack social capital. Social capital influences achievement through such things as peer effects, quality of communication and trust among families in communities, the safety of neighborhoods and the
presence of community institutions that support achievement. The factors that show statistically significant effects, other things equal, include:

Parental education, family income and a measure of long-term poverty status, number of siblings, age of mother at birth of child, the number and biological relationships of caregivers to the child, language spoken at home, frequency of readings to child and number of children’s books in the home, health of the child as reported by the parent, birth weight, presence of learning, speech and hearing disabilities, quality of emotional connection between parent and child, depression in the mother, and a set of parent reported developmental learning and personality characteristics. (Demmert, 2006, p. 13)
I. National suspension rates for kindergarten through 12th grade students’.

Figure 2

2004 National Suspension Rates for Grades Kindergarten through 12th Grade By Sex and Race/Ethnicity

As shown in Figure 2, the Native American rate of suspension is second highest in comparison to all races, with significantly higher percentages of suspension than evidenced in the mainstream culture of the public school system. This chart indicates the same disproportionality in practices of school suspensions of students of color as compared to the dominant culture as was discussed by Krezmien, Leone, and Achilles (2006) in their study titled: Suspension, Race, and Disability: An Analysis of Statewide Practices and Reporting. This study researched from 1995 to 2003, indicated disproportionate rates
of suspensions for African American and American Indian pupils, as well as students with disabilities in the state of Maryland.

**J. Hope, Despair, and Resilience**

This section on hope, despair, and resilience discusses how Native American students may feel about themselves, their own personal levels of hope, and protective factors that may contribute to their resilience. One definition for hope is that *it is the sum of the mental willpower and waypower that one has for his/her goals.* Willpower is the driving force in hopeful thinking. It is the sense of mental energy that over time helps to propel the person toward the goal. Waypower, on the other hand, reflects the mental plans or road maps that guide hopeful thought. Waypower shows the route through which the person must travel over time toward the goal. Goals are any objects, experiences, or outcomes that are imagined and desired in mind; thus, goals are things to obtain (such as an object) or attain (like an accomplishment).

A six-question Children’s Hope Scale was developed by Snyder (1994) et al., which was contrary to other measurement models developed by other researchers. Other researchers, such as LaFromboise, Albright, and Harris (2010), used *hopelessness* as the focus rather than hope. Snyder’s scale was developed to validate a self-report measure based on the positive, goal-directed thoughts pertaining to *willpower and waypower.* This scale can be used for children ages 8-16, if they have reasonable reading skills, who need relatively little or no adult interaction to assist them with reading comprehension. However, if they have difficulty reading, it is helpful to read the items aloud and to record the answers for them in the appropriate boxes. An eight-question Hope Scale for adults is available. Additionally, for times that the participants are not available to rate
themselves, an alternative Modified Hope Scale is available to be completed by a key person in the participants’ lives. Hope scores can also be calculated by another person if need be.

This measurement scale is regarding hope for the individual; however, other important people in your life also have some level of hope. Either you may be drawn to others with a high level of hope, or just the opposite, you may find yourself surrounded by low-hope people. This is relevant because the more people you have in your life who are high in hope, the greater is the chance that you also have high hope. (Snyder, 1994, p.70-71)

Snyder (1994) states that one critical factor in determining hope is how children deal with obstacles to their goals. He suggests caregivers can help increase the successes of children maintaining willpower in the face of barriers. There are three lessons for caregivers: 1. First, normalize the fact the child is being blocked (due to some barrier in their life), and although this may be a difficult concept for the child to grasp—it is important for the child to learn obstacles are a part of life. 2. Point out past successes when they encountered blockages and surpassed them. 3. Teach the child tough barriers are best thought of as challenges rather than inevitable failures.

Parents pose a powerful additional means of sparking willpower, encouragement. Parents are the key to instilling hope in their children, from the time of infancy to adulthood. Children have a natural desire to know what exists in their world, and the parents can help guide them to identify goals which may bring them satisfaction and growth.

Also, we need to teach children to have a sense of humor about self, especially when they are discouraged and feeling stuck. Parents can also help their child learn how to wait until a desired goal may be reached. If the child does not learn to wait, mental energy is vented in the form of frustration. (Snyder, 1994, p.182)

According to Snyder (1994), when we experience a blockage of important goals,
as well as recurring impediments negatively affecting multiple goal, this can produce a form of anger called rage. This rage may progress to despair and apathy depending on the level of dispositional hope and the nature of the goal blockages. Rage is described as more of an active, outward expression of goal blockage, while despair is more of a passive, inward expression about a goal being insurmountable. Once a point is reached where it’s felt the desired goals are no longer reachable, then this despair will turn into apathy.

Both hope and despair are interconnected to resilience. According to Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock (2003), resilience, as it relates to American Indian and Alaska Native youth, is exemplified by certain qualities possessed by these children and youth who, though subjected to undue stress and adversity, do not give way to school failure, substance abuse, mental health problems, or juvenile delinquency. Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock’s study identified connections to parents, communities, teachers, and schools as major contributors to the resilience of Native youth, but students reported “being well-grounded and connected to their tribal culture as a big reason they stayed in school” (p.5). Three other positive characteristics the students felt helped them (often after experiencing serious adversity) were: (a) good self-concept, (b) a strong sense of direction, and (c) tenacity. Feeling good about their tribal culture was a consistent theme among these students.

The students talked about their ability to feel comfortable living in both worlds (the Native community and mainstream schools); participation in cultural activities; strong positive feelings of belonging to a Native community and family; appreciation of the influences of elders, grandparents, and parents; and participation in a school curriculum that included Native history, language, and culture. (Nurturing Resilience and School Success in American Indian and Alaska Native Students, ERIC Digest, 2002, p. 5-6)
Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, and LaFromboise (2001) mirrored the importance of resiliency after the results of their interviews with 196 American Indian children. Their study found the degree to which these American Indian children in grades 5-8 had been embedded in traditional culture positively affected their school performance. According to these authors, this study provided empirical evidence that “enculturation is a resiliency factor in the development of American Indian children” (p.57).

**K. Teacher Classroom Behavior/Management Techniques**

In conjunction with the other major topics associated with this study, classroom behavior/management becomes a focal point when discussing suspension rates for Ojibwe students. An underlying question about teachers, their perceptions, teaching style, and classroom behavioral management techniques, may be directly linked to kindergarten suspensions. Are they aware of or are they practicing teaching methods that are most compatible with Native American students’ learning and communication styles?

A description of successful patterns of practices, methods, and teacher behaviors which work best with Indigenous students, according to Cleary and Peacock (1998), are: (a) the need to build trust, (b) to connect with the community (c) to establish cultural relevance in the curriculum, (d) to tap intrinsic motivation for learning, (e) to use humor, (f) to establish family support, (g) to provide situations that yield small successes, (h) to make persuasive connectives with students, (i) to use highly engaging, activity-based learning, and, in some cases, cooperative learning (j) to provide role models, (k) to be flexible, fair, and consistent, (l) and to provide real audience and purpose for student work.

Certain elements continue to emerge from Demmert’s (2001) research on what
works best with Native students: (a) the dominant fact cultural knowledge, (b) culturally relevant information and activities, and (c) cultural connections and cooperative effort with the community and family are all critical aspects for a Native American student’s success in school.


Pewewardy (2002) reveals that American Indian/Alaska Native students generally learn in ways characterized by factors of social/affective emphasis, harmony, holistic perspectives, expressive creativity, and nonverbal communication. The teachers at the tribal Head Start provide education that engages children in learning a typical way that Native Americans learn by having weekly powwows. The children learn about colors, music, heritage, language, mathematical beats in the music, physical education as the dancing, as well as other embedded curriculum as part of the harmonious, social, creatively expressed, nonverbal, holistic style of learning. Assumptions underlying these approaches are American Indian/Alaska Native students have been strongly influenced by their language, culture, and heritage, and that their learning styles are different, not deficient.

Pewewardy (2002) defines field-dependent as a student unable to perceive elements of himself/ herself as separate from his or her environment. These learners are holistic or global learners; they begin with the whole picture and establish meaning only in relation to the whole. These learners are highly visual/spatial, integrative, relational, intuitive, and contextual. The learner’s thinking is not linear or hierarchical. Visual learners learn best when they are able to see the material they are expected to master.
They tend to learn best when the teacher provides a myriad of visual learning opportunities such as graphs, films, demonstrations, and pictures.

Pewewardy (2002) also indicates that Native American/Alaskan Native students tend to be reflective. Some students’ conversations may have a longer period of time between responses. Since they tend to be reflective learners, they must examine all sides of an issue, as well as possible implications and solutions related to the problems. They are careful to make sure that the answer to a problem is known before responding. It is not uncommon for American Indian/Alaska Native students to spend much more time watching and listening, and less time talking than do White students (Gilliland, 1999).

American Indian/Alaska Native students may appear to be reluctant to try to solve a problem for fear of being shamed if they do not succeed. Teachers may mistake this behavior as disinterest or lack of motivation. It is imperative that teachers are provided training as to how typical, traditional Native American students learn and think, so that curriculum may be tailored and instructed in a manner in which Native students can succeed. For early learners, it is crucial to provide a solid foundation for positive learning and growth for their academic future, so that they do not face multiple blockages to their schooling goals and develop apathy or rage, but instead a love for learning and school.

2. Desirable qualities of teachers.

During the parent responses to the interview questions, additional thoughts from the parents resulted in the following Table 5: Desirable Qualities of Teachers. Three students and/or their parents each identified one special teacher they appreciated as being very helpful and kind to them during their years at school. Participant C (parent) remembered an especially excellent teacher for his son when he was in fifth grade who
communicated on a daily basis with them about their son’s good and bad days at school. Participant 4 (now a 6th grade student) talked eagerly about his kindergarten teacher whom he loved, and thought she was very smart. Participant 5 (now an 8th grade student) smiled when he reminisced about a preschool teacher who took him for walks and shared special talks with him. He remembered she was the only teacher who took the time to spend with him.

A quote from Participant F seems to be quite adequate in thinking about the best teacher for your child.

Yeah, we are still going to have our trials and whatever, but I hope this is a good start (when talking about new beginnings). I hope good things happen. You know, it all depends on the teacher. It all depends on, it’s got to be a right fit. And I know the schools, they're all about funding and stuff, but you got to fit the kid to the teacher! Cause [sic] if you don't, you will have a bad year. You will have a bad year.

The researcher asked the parents and students to identify the qualities of a good teacher. It was stated in the *Schools and Students At Risk* article that it was of critical importance for students to feel they had a special relationship with one teacher in which they shared a common bond.
Table 3

*Desirable qualities of teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desirable teacher qualities restated from researcher</th>
<th>Verbatim parent statements regarding teacher qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher competence. Good, behavioral management skills. Dedication to the students. Motivates the students.</td>
<td>The teacher knows why she’s there. She’s there because those kids need her. She knows what needs to be done, and she keeps pushing those kids harder and harder. It might be a little overwhelming for the kids at first—but they do get it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Highly organized and passion for teaching is evident.</td>
<td>High energy level – It’s the fact that I can walk in a room and I can see a difference from that classroom to another, because the energy level is there. The teachers have the energy, and the drive to try and help the kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Positive attitude. Fresh, new ideas.</td>
<td>Positive, bubbly attitude – When it’s time to work—it’s time to work, and when it’s time to have fun—it’s time to have fun. And we just need to keep getting new teachers in the rest of the grades to try something new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Must have inner desire to be a teacher. Loves her profession and remembers why she is in this profession.</td>
<td>If you don’t have the drive any more, then give it up, do something else, because if you’re not there for the kids, then what are you there for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Holistic understanding of various components of students. Perceptive and intuitive to students’ behavior and needs. Calm and soothing demeanor.</td>
<td>A good teacher has an understanding of what is going on, the teacher could see it coming on. The teacher would remind the student if you need to leave the room, please do. The teacher was always so gentle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A background in special education is needed. A familiarity with children with special needs.</td>
<td>I think in her background, they worked with special needs kids early on in her career. It was something she was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The WINSS is a resource that contains both general and specific demographic data that monitors what happens in schools throughout the state of Wisconsin. The resources are gathered by government officials on an annual basis. In order to obtain specific information regarding disciplinary consequences, the website was researched, and the information was located under the section titled: Disciplinary Consequences for Students. The access point for researching what percentage of students were suspended or expelled was listed under Suspensions and Expulsions. Disciplinary consequences, indicating types of incidents resulted in suspensions or expulsions, were listed in categories, such as Weapon/Drug Related Incidents or Not Related to Weapon/Drug Incidents. Different views of the statistics were available by selecting elementary, middle school, or high school grade levels. Specific entry data was accessible, such as gender, race/ethnicity, grade, disability.

M. Northern Wisconsin Rural Public Schools’ Kindergarten Suspensions

A study done from 1995 to 2003 by Krezmien (2006) indicated there were disproportionate rates of suspensions for African American students, American Indian students,
and students with disabilities in the state of Maryland. “It was found that the odds of being suspended increased over time for African American and American Indian students, and the increased rates of suspension in the state disproportionately and negatively affected students from these two racial groups” (Krezmien, 2006, p. 222). Krezmien surmised that it would seem, from the data retrieved, the punishments doled out for challenging behavior is not effective for reducing or alleviating the behaviors.

School suspensions can contribute to the dropout rate if the student continues to be suspended and misses classes or begins to feel despair about his/her situation. “Students who are excluded from school have an increased likelihood to experience academic failure, and subsequently to drop out, and these failures place them at great risk for involvement in juvenile courts and corrections” (Krezmien, 2006, p. 218). Students may become apathetic towards school if they are constantly in trouble and receiving suspensions—this only serves to increase the likelihood they feel they are a failure, then dropping out of school may seem like their only choice.

Another developing focal point in schools that may indicate efforts to build a safe school environment is the presence of anti-bullying efforts. Anti-bullying efforts contribute to students feeling safer at their school, and it may help to lessen the number of school dropouts. In a recent newspaper article that communicated incidents occurring in one of the study focus schools, a high school guidance counselor responded, “Bullying is happening and it’s a serious problem, but school staff are often not aware of the bullying because victims are afraid to come forward and don’t report it” Buckles, J. (2010, November 11). Suspensions, bullying focus at school board. “The County Journal”, p. 1.
This study will examine kindergarten suspensions of Ojibwe students in northern Wisconsin. The suspension rates for three rural northern Wisconsin schools are included to provide a context for the problem of kindergarten school suspension statistics for Native American children. These suspension statistics range from the annual lowest of 2% to the highest suspension rate of 27% for the years 1998 to 2007 (Refer to Table 4).
Table 4

*Three Rural Wisconsin Public Schools’ Kindergarten Suspension Rates of Ojibwe Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>TOTAL # SUSPENDED</th>
<th>% NAT. AM. STUDENTS</th>
<th>STUDENTS’ SUSPENDED IN 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School II</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.13%</td>
</tr>
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<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.71%</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School III</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information from Table 4 is the foundation for this phenomenological study; the data from these three rural northern Wisconsin schools indicates the irrefutable fact that these children were suspended in kindergarten. The data from all three schools indicates that the suspensions of Native American kindergarten students started in 1998 in one school, and 1999 and 2000 in the other two schools, which may suggest a trend. School I suspended more than 25% of its total Native American kindergarten population for two consecutive school years of 2005-2007.

One other compelling statistic evident from this table shows the only time all three schools did not suspend any Native American students was when there were no Native American students enrolled for that year. For School I there were no suspensions or Native American students in years: 1998-1999, 2000-2001, and 2007-2008. School II there were no suspensions or Native American students in years: 1998-1999, 2004-2005, 2007-2009. In School III, there were only three years when there were Native American students enrolled: 1998-1999, 2001-2002, and 2005-2006. School III had much lower suspension rates in comparison to School I and School II. The possible trends shown in this data bring forth a question: are public schools adequately providing an equitable safe learning environment for Native American learners?

**N. Risks and Challenges**

According to Huffman (2000), during their early school years, students may face problems in one or more of the following core competencies: (a) academic competence (i.e., impaired academic achievement marked by grade retention, low scores on early measures, and identification of special education), (b) behavioral competence (i.e., behavioral problems that require intervention outside of the regular school class), and
social competence (i.e., difficulties understanding the complex social systems found in the school setting, such as negotiating new social relationships with teachers and peers).

1. Dropout rates.

In current literature on Native American kindergarten suspensions and Native American high school dropout rates, there has not been a hypothesis linking higher levels of Native American kindergarten suspensions to a higher level of Native American high school student dropout rates. The possibility of any correlation or connection between suspensions of Native American kindergarten students and Native American high school student dropout rates will be considered during the course of this study.

According to Figure 3, Hispanic males/females and American Indian males-females are within the top 13-25% of dropouts. The second highest dropout rate consists of Black males/females; this constitutes 9-12% of the dropout rate. The third lowest dropout rate consists of Caucasians and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders. Asian students have the lowest dropout rate.

This data indicates Hispanic, American Indian and Black students are being suspended disproportionately compared to Caucasian students; therefore, does the theory of cultural discontinuity play a critical role in this study? Is there a cultural disconnect in communication and understanding of the culture values and mores between middle class Caucasian teachers and students of color? Children of color who are suspended may likely feel discriminated against or inferior, or not knowing how to fit in, which creates blockages for learning, which may lead to apathy/despair, and thus the drop out in later years. This study will seek to understand whether there is a connection between cultural
discontinuity, the dropout rate and suspensions of Ojibwe students, and the phenomenon of kindergarten suspensions.

Figure 3

2006 National Drop Out Rate for Ages 16-24 Non-Institutionalized Youth


The dropout rate would likely fall under any one of the three core competency areas: (a) academic competence, (b) behavioral competence, and (c) social competence faced by Native American students. The consequences of problems in these three competencies and poor performance in the beginning of school may imperil children, labeling
them delayed learners and placing them in school tracking programs (e.g., retention in grade, or special education). Children who are not successful early in school have greater problems later with behavioral, emotional, academic, and social development. Grade retention also predicts school dropouts and rapid, repeat adolescent pregnancies. Demmert (2006) explains some of the key reasons for high dropout rates:

- a high level of absenteeism;
- poor teacher-student relationships;
- a lack of parental involvement and support;
- poor academic performance and English language skills;
- social and cultural adjustment conflicts; boredom with school life and curricula;
- lots of moving between schools;
- transportation difficulties; and
- substance abuse (p.94).

Through awareness of these risk factors, researchers or education officials may find the methods implemented to decrease suspensions and dropout rates may be similar in their focus.

2. Perceived discrimination.

During early adolescence when children are establishing their ethnic identities and trying to understand where they fit in as members of a minority group, perceived discrimination may interfere with this process. According to a study conducted by Whitbeck, Hoyt, McMorris, Chen, Stubben (2001), perceived discrimination can introduce confusion regarding self-worth, and even potentially contribute to angry, externalized
reactions, resulting in self-destructive behaviors, such as delinquency and substance abuse.

Whitbeck, Hoyt, McMorris, Chen, Stubben’s (2001) study was conducted on the perceived discrimination and early substance abuse among American Indian children. It involved examining internalizing and externalizing symptoms as potential mediators of the relationship between perceived discrimination and early substance abuse of 195 American Indian students. When perceived discrimination interferes with a child establishing his identity and this introduces confusion regarding self-worth, then the internalizing symptom of hatred and disrespect sets in because this is what the student sees around him. Likewise, the externalized symptom would be the student becoming angry, turning to self-destructive behaviors, which may include delinquency and substance abuse. These students were in grades 5-8 from three reservations in the midwest which seem to share a common culture (i.e., language, spiritual beliefs, and traditional practices). Their findings indicated that, although perceived discrimination contributed significantly to internalizing symptoms among the adolescents, internalizing symptoms were unrelated to early substance abuse.

According to Whitbeck, Hoyt, McMorris, Chen, Stubben (2001), there are also numerous studies tying feelings of alienation and discrimination to academic troubles and substantial school dropout rates. This type of research only heightens awareness for underlying conditions which may or may not exist with Native American students.

3. Cultural Competency/Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural competency is a critical issue in any school with an enrollment of minority students, but it is even more significant in a school having a high population of
diverse students. One question emerges as to whether the teachers and staff are equipped with enough professional development training or information to understand the complexities and importance of possessing cultural competency in working with students of color.

Literature exists on cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching from 1991-2008. LaFromboise & Rowe (1983) state, in order to be culturally competent an individual must a) possess a strong personal identity, b) have knowledge of and facility with the beliefs and values of the culture, c) display sensitivity to the affective processes of the culture, d) communicate clearly in the language of the given cultural group, e) perform socially sanctioned behavior, f) maintain active social relations within the cultural group, and g) negotiate the institutional structures of that culture.

The concept of cultural competence was introduced by Green (1982) and Pinderhughes (1989) to the discipline of social work. A comprehensive definition developed from a cultural competency education summit by the Oregon Department of Education (2004); it was determined that cultural competence is based on a commitment to social justice and equity, and it is a developmental process occurring at individual and system levels, evolving and sustaining over time. It requires that individuals and organizations do the following:

1. Have a defined set of values and principles, demonstrated behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively in a cross-cultural manner.

2. Demonstrate the capacity to:
   - Value diversity
   - Engage in self-reflection
• Facilitate effectively (manage) the dynamics of difference

• Acquire and institute cultural knowledge

• Adapt to the diversity and the cultural contexts of the students, families, and communities they serve and

• Support actions which foster equity of opportunity and services

3. Institutionalize, incorporate, evaluate, and advocate the above in all aspects of leadership, policy-making, administration, practice, and service delivery while systematically involving staff, students, families, key stakeholders, and communities. (Lum, 2007, p.7)

Lum (2007) illustrates a social work-cultural competencies table, with cultural awareness and a knowledge acquisition listing of skills, for a generalist level of social work. This chart could be used with other professionals (e.g., teachers in schools) to encourage more awareness of what skills cultural competency may require.

Table 5

*Cultural Competencies in Social Work – Generalizable Qualities to Other Professions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURAL AWARENESS</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own life experiences related to culture</td>
<td>Understanding of terms related to cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with other cultures and ethnicities</td>
<td>Knowledge of demographics of culturally diverse populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of positive and negative experiences with other cultures and ethnicities</td>
<td>Development of a critical thinking perspective on cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own racism, prejudice and discrimination</td>
<td>Understanding of the history of oppression and of social groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of the strengths of people of color</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Garrett (1995) explains that schools are typically structured for middle-class, Euro-American styles of communication and learning. Participation in these types of schools by Native American students may be in direct conflict with middle-class Caucasian students or teachers. This conflict then causes confusion and misunderstandings between peers, teachers, and Native American youth. Children in public schools, by virtue of the mainstream value system which the educational process is based, are expected to be outgoing and assertive. Behaviors, such as asking questions, interrupting, speaking for others, telling others what to do, or arguing, are fairly common in mainstream society and schools. However, this behavior severely contradicts what Native youth have been taught as respectful and appropriate ways of interacting. Most classrooms are not well prepared for students with different cultural styles, learning patterns, or high risk home situations.
III. CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction and Overview

A phenomenon appears to be occurring in some rural Wisconsin schools regarding the use of suspension in kindergarten as a disciplinary tactic for students, particularly Ojibwe children; 39 Ojibwe tribal students were suspended in kindergarten and 13 non-Native students out of 52 suspended students (69%) during the years of 1998-2007, according to the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS, 2010) website. Initially, these occurrences began in 1998. Current statistics have been gathered through 2007; the same source of statistical information indicated the use of kindergarten suspension as a disciplinary tactic was not comparable with non-Native American students during this same time period at the same three schools, which indicated a potential disparity to investigate.

Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological research study was to shed light on these events by examining the experiences of the families involved. It is important to study these students’ suspension experiences in order to develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, to enhance the research literature on the topic for further study, as well as to perhaps develop ideas to consider regarding optimal disciplinary approaches and the prevention thereof of such practices. This study analyzed specifically the suspension of Ojibwe tribal kindergarten students.

A phenomenological approach was determined to be the best research method for exploring this topic; the phenomenon of kindergarten suspensions were examined by analyzing data from qualitative interviews of the lived experiences of the affected
students. The phenomenological approach was felt to be the best research method for this study as it provided more in-depth understanding of this occurrence from the unique perspective of the students and parents affected. The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to gather the individual experiences from each Ojibwe tribal student as to the impact, perceptions, and memories in relationship to the actual suspension occurrence for each student.

The researcher wished to gather a detailed and succinct description from each research participant through individual interviews of the students, as well as each student’s parent in order to tell this story through the eyes of the research participants. Their experience illuminated and illustrated this phenomenon to society as well as provided rich and thick detail to enhance the knowledge and awareness of literature on this topic.

A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals regarding their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study describes what all participants have in common as they experience an event (e.g., grief is universally experienced by all participants due to an incident). The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon, and to instead create a description of the universal essence or identify a common theme.

This study integrated transcendental phenomenology, as described by Moustakas (1994); it was focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of participants. Also, epoche (or bracketing) was used in which the researcher set aside her experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh view toward the phenomenon under examination. The term transcendental means “in which
everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). This research study on the topic of kindergarten suspension adhered to the principles of transcendental phenomenology.

The methodology was based on a technique of data gathering through personal interviews. Peer review and debriefing approaches were used throughout the research, as well as clarification of researcher bias and subjectivity, to ensure validity of research, that addressed issues brought forth (Creswell, 2007).

This study included a detailed description of the research sample and population, the type of information necessary for this study, and the qualitative phenomenological design of the study. The types of methods used for data collection are included, as well as how the researcher proposed to analyze and synthesize the data. Additionally, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, limitations and challenges, and a chapter summary were discussed.

Application was made to the University of Minnesota Duluth Institutional Review Board for approval of this study.

1. Research Sample and Population

There were three rural northern Wisconsin public schools that had statistics indicating they had kindergarten suspensions of Ojibwe tribal students during the time period of 1998-2007. All three schools were within a 100 mile radius of each other, and all three were located in rural areas. Each school had Native American students that were primarily from the Ojibwe tribe. The Ojibwe students from these three schools were from different tribal reservations in northern Wisconsin, but the three reservations were all
Ojibwe reservations. The students from each school lived in a different geographic area and therefore, represent three different tribal bands of Ojibwe students.

The two school years that were common to all three schools in regards to using the practice of suspensions of Ojibwe kindergarten students were: 2001-2002 (these students would now be enrolled in 10th grade) and 2005-2006 (these students would now be enrolled in 6th grade).

Schools I and II had two school years common to each other in which they used the practice of suspension of Ojibwe tribal kindergarten students (shown in Table 4). The common time frames for kindergarten suspensions were: 2003-2004 (these students would now be enrolled in 8th grade), and 2006-2007 (these students would now be enrolled in 5th grade). [Disclaimer: Some students might have been retained during one or more of their school years, so then they would not be at the current predicted grade level.]

School I had a K-12 student population of 392; a 78% Native American student population, and an average poverty level of 79% for all enrolled students. School I suspended 23 Ojibwe tribal students and 0 non-Natives in kindergarten over a period of six years, which was 13% for a six year mean average rate (WINSS, 2010). (See Table 4 for this data for Schools I-III.)

School II had a population of Pre-k through 2nd grade enrollment of 396 students with 29% of the student enrollment being Native American, and an average poverty level of 61.4%. School II suspended 23 students in kindergarten over a period of five years, 10 were Ojibwe and 13 were non-Native, which was a 12% mean average rate (WINSS, 2010).
School III is a Prek–8th grade school with a population of 445 students. 97% of these students were Native American, with a poverty level of 87%. School III has the lowest number of kindergarten suspensions of Ojibwe students, six students and 0 non-Native students. The three-year mean average for kindergarten suspensions at School III was 4% (WINSS, 2010). The gender of the suspended kindergarten students could not be deciphered from the statistics as the number of suspended male and female students was categorized for as many as six grade levels and not individually per grade.

2. Procedure

The application of this study was submitted to the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board and it was approved. One tribal council resolution was submitted to allow the researcher to pursue her study as a part of her staff development goal (See Appendix A) as well as collaboration agreements with two public school districts.

By studying the experience of the kindergarten suspensions, the researcher hoped to gain insight into the commonalities, variations, and perceptions of the students and parents relative to the phenomenon of kindergarten suspension.

3. Selection Criteria

This research study used a criterion-based selection process, which signified all cases met some criterion. In this instance, the student research participants met three criteria:

1. Members of an Ojibwe Tribe or eligible for enrollment;
2. Each student was enrolled in kindergarten in one of the three focus schools, and
3. Each student was suspended in kindergarten during one of the focus years for this study.

The parents had to meet only one criterion—they were the primary caregiver of the student research participant involved in this study.

According to Creswell (2007) the more diverse the characteristics of the individuals, the more difficult it will be for the researcher to find common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of the experience. In other words, if the individuals in this study have a wide array of characteristics, it may be more difficult to find common themes.

a. Procedure for tribal council resolution and approval for research study.

If the participating tribal councils requested the researcher to submit a tribal council resolution for approval to perform the study and to recruit participants, then the additional steps that may be required for this research study were:

1. The researcher may be asked to prepare a tribal council resolution to submit, along with a request, to the tribal council as an agenda item for their next meeting.
2. The researcher may be asked to give a presentation to the tribal council, and respond to questions regarding this study. The researcher may wish to request the physical presence of the tribal education director at this meeting to help assist the researcher.

When the researcher’s presentation was completed, most likely there would be a vote of the tribal council. If there was a majority vote to approve this resolution, then it was approved and assigned a number. After the vote, the researcher asked the tribal council if permission was given to begin the study with the help of their tribal education
program. Generally, the resolution would be signed and certified by the tribal council secretary within a few days (See Appendix A).

**B. Research Design**

The design of this study used qualitative phenomenological research methods. After an extensive review of the literature was conducted regarding research articles relative to this topic, a preliminary oral exam on chapters one and two was presented and approved, and an IRB application was submitted and approved outlining all the procedures and processes necessary to meet strict research guidelines.

A recruitment flyer was developed by the researcher and submitted by each collaborating tribal education director to recruit potential students enrolled in kindergarten during the focus years of the study. The recruitment flyer asked for volunteers who were suspended from school while in kindergarten. The flyer stated volunteer students must be between ages 11-17 and each student must have written parental consent prior to participation. One primary caregiving parent per student was also requested to participate in the study. The researcher’s contact information was included on the flyer.

**1. Initial meeting.**

An initial meeting was held with both student and parent research participants in which the Research Participant Letter was presented to them and the information about the study was thoroughly discussed. If they agreed to participate, the parent must sign the Adult or Parent Consent Form for their participation and for their minor child. The minor child signed the Child’s Assent Form.

**2. Second meeting.**

A second meeting was held with each student, if needed, to perform
less formal in-depth individual interviews lasting no longer than 1 hour 30 minutes each. A separate time was set to also perform semi-structured in-depth parent interviews which lasted no longer than 1 hour 30 minutes each; all interviews were recorded by an audiocassette and digital recorder and transcribed into a verbatim record. The interviewed parent was the primary caregiver of the student, and the location of the interview was determined by the student or parent.

3. Data analysis.

There were several steps regarding data analysis. First, all of the interview recordings of students and parents were transcribed. The researcher reviewed and began formatting the transcripts of each interview using a computer software program Nvivo. All of the parents' questions and students' questions in the transcripts were formatted per Nvivo instructions, and then these transcripts were downloaded into a Nvivo file labeled by the Researcher as kindergarten suspension.

The software program separated the parents' responses from the students' responses into two separate groupings. After the Researcher performed one additional formatting step, the Nvivo program then grouped all of the parents' responses together under each question. There were fifteen parent questions. The same formatting technique was then used to group together all of the students' responses under each of the eleven student questions. The Nvivo-formatted parent and student responses were then printed out in their entirety, and the researcher was then able to note commonalities, similarities, and differences from the printouts, and then themes were formulated from the categorized records.
All of the audiotape recordings were offered as a gift to each participant once the entire research project had been finalized or the participants chose to have the researcher destroy the cassette tapes. The digital recordings are kept for five years and then destroyed by the researcher.

4. Transcription and coding interviews.

The actual names of the research participants were not used during the interviews or in the transcriptions. Each participant had a number (i.e., Student Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or Parent Participant A, B, C, D, E, F). The student and their parent’s identifying number were in the same order. For example, if John Smith was Student Participant One, then his dad would be Parent Participant A, etc. The research participants’ names, contact information, any school suspension data, and their consent forms were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s office for use only by the researcher, and a coded list was kept for the researcher’s use that did not have any identifying information listed.

Moustakas (1994) identified the steps for phenomenological analysis in several segments:

The researcher must first identify significant statements, create meaning units, cluster any themes, describe any textural and structural descriptions, and make a composite description of textural and structural descriptions into an exhaustive description of the essential invariant structure (or essence) of the experience (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 187).

A meaning unit is described as when a researcher first identified significant statements, and then grouped them into larger units of information, which are called meaning units or themes. A textural description is what the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon, which included verbatim examples of what happened. One example of a textural description in this study was how some of the participants felt
labeled, such as the following quote: "They treat the other kids like Goody Two Shoes [sic], when I went to school, I was just a bad kid." A structural description is how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context; the research participant reflects on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced. For example: according to a study by McVea, Harter, McEntarffer, & Creswell (1999) on the phenomenon of smoking behavior of high school students, a structural description was given about where the phenomenon of smoking occurred, such as in the parking lot, outside the school, by student lockers, in remote locations at the school.

5. Triangulation of data.

There were several variables that may have impacted this study such as (a) poverty, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) race, and (d) historical trauma. There were multiple sources of data which were used to corroborate the findings, such as a document review of kindergarten suspension statistics which was extrapolated from the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (2010) website at the onset of this study.

The secondary source of data collected for this study was the parents’ demographic questions, which were included during their interviews.

The third source of data was the individual interviews of the up to eight students and the individual interviews of each of their primary parents. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), these interviews fostered interactivity with the participants, elicited in-depth, contextual and rich personal accounts, perceptions, and perspectives. “Interviews can explain and describe complex interactions and processes and facilitates the discovery of nuances in culture” (p. 195).
The analysis of data was an attempt to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon regarding the kindergarten suspension of Ojibwe tribal students.

C. Data Collection and Triangulation of Data

The interview transcriptions of both the parents and the students were transcribed, organized and coded according to similar themes.

1. Strengths and challenges for use of younger vs. older research participant.

One advantage for using the youngest student research participant (currently enrolled in fifth-grade) for research was the kindergarten suspension experience was at its shortest length of recall memory, six years. The students’ memories and perceptions were clearer and more readily available than attempting to remember this experience up to 13 years later. The younger student research participants used simpler terms in describing their perceptions, which was neither an advantage nor a disadvantage.

One challenge regarding selecting the younger student research participant might be the difficulty they faced in identifying their thoughts or emotional frame of mind when attempting to remember this experience from kindergarten. The younger student research participants might also be more hesitant to meet alone with an unknown person for an interview. The researcher considered allowing a parent to be present during the interview of the student research participant; however, it was felt that having a parent presence might not be the most conducive interview atmosphere for the young student.

The parent might be inclined to interrupt or interject their own responses when questions were asked of the student research participant. The parent might also have attempted to correct the student research participants’ responses if they felt their answers were incorrect or false. Perhaps the child might have felt they might get in trouble with
their parent if they answered in a certain way. Or the child might fear disapproval from their parent so his/her answer might not be in its entirety. They might also omit thoughts and feelings about the question. If the researcher were to allow the parent to interject their viewpoint, then the interview responses would not truly be from the student’s perceptions.

The older age student research participant most likely would not be afraid to meet with an unknown person for an interview; they might even be intrigued with the idea if they were selected for this study. They might articulate their experience with more description and perhaps with more reflection as to what emotions they may have felt at that time. They may also remember more about the structural description or physical description of what happened, when and where.

The challenge in selecting the older age participants was the fact there might a greater time span for their recall of the kindergarten suspension experience, up to a maximum of 13 years. The researcher would have had to incorporate more reflection time for the older student research participant by giving them the interview questions prior to the interview in order to allow them enough time to recall their kindergarten suspension experience.

D. Methods of Data Collection

Once the participants saw the recruitment flyer and contacted the researcher to participate in this study, then Phase I and II was detailed for data collection for this study.

1. Phase I – initial meeting – research participant letter.

The contents of the Research Participant Letter was discussed with both student and parent research participant, and the parent’s written consent was requested at this
time if they agreed to participate in the study. The student (if a minor) was given an Assent Form for his/her information and to sign if he/she agreed to participate.

   a. Parent demographic survey.

   Parents responded to questions about their family’s demographic data. Questions included: their thoughts about the safety of their neighborhood and community, and any challenges they felt their child faced at home/school or in their community.

2. Phase II– Interviews.

   a. Individual student interviews.

   The individual student interviews were semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and lasted up to 1 hour 30 minutes (See Appendix B for student interview questions). The researcher asked the student or parent for consideration of a location for the interview. The location was a quiet location free from disruptions (e.g., telephone, visitors). The interviews were audiotaped, digitally recorded, and transcribed into verbatim written records.

   Since this study involved memories of a previous time frame, it was necessary for the researcher to set the stage for focusing participant thoughts on their kindergarten year, especially if the student was a younger student, and was not given the questions prior to the interview. It was the researcher’s responsibility to walk them through to when they began their first day in kindergarten. The researcher used open-ended questions, however, the context and setting was framed before the researcher began the research questions about the actual suspension.

   Students were asked a primary research question to recollect their kindergarten school suspension, their perceptions or memories of this experience, as well as whether
or not their kindergarten suspension had impacted their subsequent school experience. Each student was asked if they had any school suspensions after kindergarten (see Appendix B for student interview questions).

b. Individual parent interviews.

The parent who was the primary caregiver of the student was also asked to participate in a separate interview lasting up to 1 hour and 30 minutes. Initially, several demographic questions were asked, such as: (a) family size and composition, (b) their education level, (c) employment, (d) social economic status, and (e) their family’s current housing situation. The foundation for the early learning time period (prior to the start of kindergarten) of the child was also accounted for with introductory questions about the child. For example, questions were asked about the child’s time in tribal preschool or Head Start program; how did they feel about the experience? What feelings or thoughts did the child have about their Head Start teacher? Positive or negative experiences in early learning environments prior to kindergarten can directly impact a child’s kindergarten experience. The parent was asked about their beliefs in regards to their child’s experience in kindergarten as well, such as their thoughts about the teacher, the learning environment atmosphere, their child’s learning, communication, how their child learned, and what challenges they felt their child faced in kindergarten (see Appendix C for parent interview questions).

c. The interview process.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), it is important to use open-ended questions to engage more interactive discussions about feelings, perceptions, and per-
spec views. The questions are meant to allow the participants to express their innermost thoughts about this topic, and this time in their life.

**d. Cultural sensitivity awareness.**

Cultural competency and cultural sensitivity was a key ingredient in working with Native American families. There are many kinds of communication patterns that could easily be misunderstood with Native American children and families. The researcher needed to develop rapport and trust with the participants. This rapport and trust was gained through being very mindful of both verbal and non-verbal behavior during the interview. The researcher needed to make sure that she did not signal disapproval of any comments or boredom in listening to the responses. Attentive listening to the participant was important, so the researcher needed to engage by occasionally nodding or performed other signs of active listening.

It was important to nurture the participant during the interview. The researcher needed to be careful to not react verbally or non-verbally in either a negative or positive manner to responses from participants (Goslin, 2006, p. 26). In other words, “the researcher needed to maintain a nondirective role as the researcher in order to learn the respondent’s beliefs, experiences and views, rather than persuade them according to your perspective” (Glesne, 1999, p.85).

The researcher also needed to assess whether or not the student or parent were comfortable with direct eye contact or occasional eye contact during the interviews. In some Native American cultures, direct eye contact was avoided as it may be considered disrespectful, intrusive or intimidating. After the initial meeting, this was clear to the researcher about whether to have very little or some direct eye contact with the partici-
pants depending on their obvious comfort level, as well as the physical boundaries they subtly exhibited during the initial meeting.

Staring may be interpreted as intimidating, unfriendly or at least impolite. Direct eye contact, especially on the part of younger people or people of less social standing, may be seen as bold or brash. Some Indian people feel quite ill at ease with non-Indians who look directly into their eyes while talking. Some Indians may look down or look at something other than the speaker. Many Indian children are taught not to stare, but instead to look down when they are addressed by their elders. This way of showing respect is sometimes misinterpreted by teachers either as extreme shyness and withdrawal or as not paying attention. (Swinomish Tribal Mental Health, 1991, p. 189-190)

Expression of emotions or lack of expression can also be misunderstood when working with some Native American families. According to the Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project (1991), negative feelings in particular may be expressed more subtly by Indian people.

This may be because of social norms which discourage confrontation, and because of the history of accumulated losses and grief. People who have experienced a great deal of trauma or deprivation may be less likely to demonstrate grief at a new loss than are those who have rarely faced a severe blow. Non-Indians are sometimes surprised and upset by the matter-of-fact way in which Indian people sometimes describe extreme tragedies. Those not familiar with Indian people may mistake courage, acceptance, or numbness stemming from emotional overload for insensitivity or lack of caring (p. 193).

Another issue regarding interviews and cultural sensitivity could be if the researcher took notes during the interview. It might have been construed that he/she was not listening. If the researcher asked permission at the onset to take notes and the participants agreed, then the researcher could freely write an occasional note during the interview, as
long as it did not affect the spontaneity of the response or the researcher’s attentiveness to the student or parent.

**e. Gifting.**

When both student and parent interviews were completed, and the cassette and digital recordings had all been confirmed as intact, each family was offered either a token gift certificate of $30.00 or a pendleton-like Native American blanket. An additional gift of a handmade dreamcatcher was given to each student. Each one was personalized through either a charm, a trinket, or colored glass beads along with an attached Ojibwe legend about the dreamcatcher’s meaning.

Today many Ojibwe families and their children strongly believe in the practice of using the dreamcatcher to hang above a child’s bed or crib to ward off bad dreams, but not all may know how to make one themselves. It was significant on both a personal and spiritual level when the researcher took the time and materials to make and give each student a personalized dreamcatcher for their use. In the book, *Chippewa Customs* (1979), Frances Denmore wrote:

Even infants were provided with protective charms. Examples of these are the “spiderwebs” hung on the hoop of a cradleboard. These articles consisted of wooden hoops about 3 1/2 inches in diameter filled with an imitation of a spider’s web made of fine yarn, usually dyed red. In old times this netting was made of nettle fiber. Two spider webs were usually hung on the hoop, and it was said they “caught any harm that might be in the air as a spider’s web catches and holds whatever comes in contact with it” (p. 113).

**E. Ethical Considerations**

Safeguards were established to protect the rights of the parents and the student...
participants. This safeguard included informed consent of the parents, both for themselves and for their minor (child) student participant. The purpose of the informed consent was to protect all participants from harm and to ensure their confidentiality. Informed consent ensured that all human subjects retained their independence and their ability to judge if and what risks they might have taken by participating in this study for the purpose of scientific research.

All parent and student names, contact information, and consent forms were kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher. As discussed in Phase III—Transcription and Coding, first and last names of student or parent participants were not used during the interviews or during the transcriptions. A first name only was used if it was a commonly heard name, and it was not identifiable to one specific person in a school district. For example, a student’s name would not be used if it was unique in nature, like the name Tawonda, because it was identifiable to one specific person.

The names of the schools, names of the school districts, or the city in which participants were located were not named or identified in this study. Each school was only known as School I, II, or III.

The names of the specific bands of Ojibwe were not used in the study as it would identify a reservation location in the state of Wisconsin. The location of the city might easily be determined if the reservation was identified, and then the public school name could be ascertained from the name of the city.

**F. Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of a research study was any condition that might weaken the study. In this particular research study, there were several limitations that existed. The restricted
sample size was the first limitation. This study was a qualitative study, and only involved the research with a maximum of up to eight student research participants and up to eight parent research participants. The results would not be able to be generalized to include an overall population due to the small size of this study.

The sample selection for this study was very specific to a particular focus year or years in which the kindergarten suspensions occurred for each school, so the data is extremely concise to a specific timeframe and, again, cannot be generalized to all years for kindergarten suspensions.

This study used specific tribal members of the Ojibwe Tribe, and the outcomes or conclusion cannot be generalized to fit another Native American tribe. In relationship to this limitation, specific geographic bands of the Ojibwe Tribe were used as participants of this research study, and although these bands were not identified, the results or outcomes of this study cannot be generalized to other tribal bands.

This research study was regarding the concise topic of kindergarten suspensions. In this regard, this information cannot be generalized to mean that a study of all grade levels of suspensions would result in the same outcome.

The issue of researcher bias could be a limitation in this study. The researcher had some work experience thirteen years ago at one of the schools in supervision of students of all grades and ages during a suspension detention or in-school suspension. It was felt this experience did not bias the researcher because of the lapse of time.

There was the limitation of possible research participant reactivity to the questions posed during the interviews. The researcher made every effort to use open-ended questions so that contextual-rich, in-depth perspectives were given. Interviews were an
excellent method to engage the parents and students in an interactive session that elicited their perceptions and perspectives on this topic.

The responses of the parent participants in this research cannot be generalized to assume all parents of suspended kindergarteners would have the same perceptions or perspectives as the parents in this study.

G. Chapter Summary

Individual, phenomenological, qualitative interviews were held with six Ojibwe tribal students who were suspended in kindergarten plus interviews of one primary parent per student. There were 52 kindergarten suspensions at three rural Wisconsin public schools during the time period of 1998 – 2007, 39 were Ojibwe students and 13 were non-Native students. According to the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools’ (WINSS, 2010) website, it was calculated the youngest students suspended in kindergarten during this time period would now be enrolled in fifth grade and the oldest students suspended during these focus years could now be one-year-post graduation. The student participants’ ages for this study could be as young as 11 years old and as old as age 19.

The selection of student research participants was purposeful sampling. Each student had to have experienced the phenomenon of being suspended when they were enrolled in a public school kindergarten class, and they must be a member or eligible for enrollment of an Ojibwe tribe. Each student was asked what their perceptions and memories were of their kindergarten suspension. They were asked whether or not they felt this kindergarten suspension experience subsequently affected the rest of their school experience. If the suspension did make a long-term impact, in what ways did the suspension
affect their school experience. Parents were asked several questions about their feelings regarding their child’s kindergarten experience.

The demographic data collected from the parents, along with both student and parent interview transcriptions was categorized, summarized, and coded to see if there were any commonalities, themes, variances, or contradictions.

The purpose and intent of this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was to collect thick, rich, in-depth data through individual student and parent interviews, through demographic questions. It was important that the phenomenon of kindergarten suspension be expressed through the eyes and memories of these students and their parents. This study gathered the meaning of the lived experiences of these individuals for the purpose of describing what they all had in common with this experience. “A qualitative study may fill a void in existing literature, establish a new line of thinking, or assess an issue with an understudied group or population” (Creswell, 2007, p. 102).

This study sought to describe this phenomenon with thick and rich details by interviews of six students and six parent experiences; the purpose was to have a deeper understanding of the occurrences, contribute research information to the literary field of education, and perhaps look at unique and optimal approaches in the field of kindergarten suspension for future research.
IV. CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to conduct a phenomenological research study about Native American Ojibwe students who were suspended while they were enrolled in kindergarten from three northern, rural Wisconsin public schools. Statistical records pinpointed that the highest number of Native American kindergarten suspensions were during the 2003, 2005, and 2006 school years respectively. Participants for this study were identified and recruited who fit the time frame for being suspended in 2003, 2005, or 2006 at each of the three schools.

The students who were recruited for this study were either suspended in kindergarten in 2003 and are now in eighth grade; students suspended in 2005 would be in sixth grade; students suspended in 2006 would be in fifth grade. A Native American contact within each school collaborated with the researcher and assisted with creating a list of prospective study participants. Confidentially-bound recruitment methods were used in which the Native American liaison distributed the flyers in person or through a mailing. The researcher's name and contact information was listed on the flyer for interested participants. An additional verbal contact was made to potential participants by the collaborating partner due to the lack of response. Participants responded to the recruitment efforts from two out of three schools.

Data were collected through interviews with students and parents regarding their experiences, perceptions, and views of kindergarten suspension. In this chapter, the data are presented and analyzed from 11 interviews, five with Native American Ojibwe
students who were suspended in kindergarten, and six parents of Ojibwe tribal students who were suspended in kindergarten within these two public school districts.

This chapter includes a summary of the demographic information about the participants, interview format and questions, student and parent responses, key themes, as well as significant statements by study participants. Table 6 provides information on the demographics of the parents interviewed for this study, such as race, gender/age, education level, income level, whether they have custody of the student participating in this study, and whether their family lives on the reservation, in a rural area, or in an urban setting. Table 7 provides similar information on the demographics of the student interviewed, such as their gender, age, grade, number of family members in their household, single or two parent family, and whether they have an Individual Education Plan.

Table 6

Parent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>RACE</th>
<th>GENDER/AGE</th>
<th>RESIDENCE</th>
<th>EDUC. LEVEL</th>
<th>INCOME LEVEL</th>
<th>CUSTODY of Student</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Low</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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Table 7

Student Demographics

<table>
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<th>CODE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>CURRENT GRADE</th>
<th>#MEMBERS HOUSEHOLD</th>
<th>PARENT COMPOSITION</th>
<th>IEP</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Two parent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>12 years</td>
<td>6th</td>
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<td>Single parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11 1/2 years</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Two parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Two parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8th</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>*6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Two parent</td>
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</table>

*Student not interviewed. Information provided through mother's interview.

The following 2012 Head Start Poverty Guidelines were used to determine whether the participants were low, median, or high income.

Table 8

2012 HHS Poverty Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons in family/household</th>
<th>Poverty Guideline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$11,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19,090</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27,010</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>34,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>38,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add $3,960 for each additional person.

http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.cfm
A. Demographics of Interviews

All of the participants were offered the option of interviews either in a private meeting room in a public library, a private early childhood center classroom during a time when they were not in use, or in the privacy of the participants’ home. Three of the participants chose a private meeting room in a public library as their location; two chose an early childhood center classroom in the early evening, and one family chose their own home. The latter location was chosen due to the unavailability of the public library meeting room and for the timely convenience of the parent. All interviews were tape recorded with prior permission of the participants. All parents insisted their child be interviewed with the parent present. The tape recordings were offered to the parents to be given to them at the completion of the study. During the interviews, none of the parents expressed an interest in receiving ownership of their tape recording (or their child's).

The parent interviews consisted of two types of questions and lasted an average of one hour. The initial set of five questions gathered basic personal information about their demographics, such as tribal membership, size of household, geographic location of their residence, custody of student, income level, and education level. The second set of questions for the parents consisted of ten questions that discussed their memories and perceptions, similar to the questions asked of students.

All of the students were asked a total of eleven questions. Students were asked for detailed responses regarding a self-description (and each parent was also asked the same question). Both students and parents were asked questions about their memories of kindergarten, how the child or parent would describe their kindergarten teacher, as well as happy and sad memories in kindergarten. Questions were asked about the first time the
student/parent remembers the child getting in trouble by the teacher, being suspended in kindergarten, and recollections of any other school suspension after kindergarten. Each participant was also asked as to whether or not they felt the child's kindergarten suspension had any impact on his (her) school years following kindergarten. The ending question asked both the parents and the student if they faced any challenges or barriers at school now, and if so, to discuss the specific challenge or barriers.

Similar themes were identified when two or more parents made similar responses to the same question. Other major themes were identified when a topic or challenge repeatedly arose in the parent interviews. Striking differences or contrasts were noted when a single response did not match any other responses and identified a unique perspective.

B. Interview Responses

The overall question the researcher asked for this research study was the following: What is the experience of Ojibwe tribal students who were suspended in kindergarten. In order to determine the answer to this main question, several sub-questions were asked to assist in gathering information.

1. What impact or memories does the Ojibwe tribal student recollect about his/her kindergarten school suspension?

The students' verbatim responses did not initially show a pattern, and there were no identifiable themes recognized initially until after the researcher thoroughly analyzed the students' responses together. The researcher determined that a theme of physical violence was shown by five out of six of the participants' responses, which is discussed in the summation of this section. Chapter Five also discussed more about the theme of physical violence and why other risk factors or family history related to this issue were
not available in this study. A recommendation was given in Chapter Five for future studies relative to this topic and what other types of information would be beneficial for additional analysis.

Participant 1: The fifth grade student remembered, when I got in trouble, the school did one of three things: called my mom, put me in a special room, or would bring me to the principal's office. My mom made me study by bringing home some home-school books so I would continue learning when I was suspended.

Two sixth grade students discussed how they would throw things in their classroom, physical items, such as desks and chairs. For example, the two following quotes from sixth grade students show how they displayed their anger.

Participant 2 stated: I don't like authority or teachers trying to tell me something or to sit down. My temper would just get out of control, and I would throw things, erupt and smash stuff and get suspended.

Participant 3 remembers: I wasn't listening, throwing things, throwing desks and chairs. I would throw them at random, no one got hit. I don't know how to describe it. I really didn't like talking about it. Sometimes I really don't care to talk about it.

Participant 4: Another student reported remembering an incident in which he bit a police officer and he was suspended for one week. This was his saddest memory.

Participant 5: One of the eighth grade students talked about how he physically fought with another male student both in the classroom and on the playground, and that he always got in trouble.

Participant 6: Participant F described how her son had to be restrained and came home with bruises in kindergarten.

In summation, after the researcher analyzed all of their memories and their actual stories, it was evident that five of the six students had physical violence involved in their
memories of their kindergarten suspension. Physical objects, such as desks or chairs were thrown, one student bit a police officer during an incident, and another student remembered physical fights with another male classmate. Another student (through mom's interview) described how he had meltdowns and school staff had to use restraints on him and caused bruising on his arms. One female student did not indicate physical violence in her response to this question; however, her mother recounted in her interview that her daughter had several meltdowns in kindergarten and was suspended three or four times.

2. Does the Ojibwe tribal student believe the suspension has impacted his/her subsequent school experience?

Each of the students' responses to this question was unique. There were no identifiable themes, however it was recognized that the description from Participant 1 actually was a transition challenge for entering into middle school, and she described all the unknown factors which she had to face which made her nervous.

Participant 1 stated: Like every single year I felt nervous. Nervous about the different classrooms. Next year I will probably feel even more nervous because I have to go to a whole bunch of different rooms, find my classes, remember my combination for my locker. When the researcher asked why she thinks she was nervous, she replied: Because it's like trying new things, but you don't know what will happen.

Participant 2 stated "Yeah, I thought that getting in trouble was fun. And I started-kept getting in trouble, kept getting in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble, in trouble.

Participant 3 gave an unintelligible response on the tape recording.

Participant 4 responded no.
Participant 5 stated "I didn't think it mattered," and when asked to clarify what he meant, he responded "I don't know."

Participant 6 not interviewed.

In summary of student responses as to whether or not their kindergarten suspension had impacted their subsequent school experience, one of six students responded yes; one responded no. One response on the tape recording was unintelligible; one student was not interviewed. One responded that every single year she felt nervous because of all the new experiences in school. The last student indicated he didn't think it mattered, and why asked to clarify his answer, he responded he didn't know.

3. Does the student face any challenges or barriers at school now?

Each student responded uniquely to his/her own school experiences and challenges, and no one answer was identical. There were no identifiable themes.

- Participant 1 responded that she faces physical challenges with catching and running.
- Participant 2 did not respond, but his father responded that his son's biggest challenges are interpersonal, such as being antisocial, not liking big crowds or new people. He has problems trusting and believing people.
- Participant 3 felt that schoolwork was his biggest challenge in school.
- Participant 4 responded that others bullying him, calling him names, and his getting into fights were his challenges at school.
- Participant 5 stated that he did not like teachers and authority figures, and that he perceived that there was a difference in the way he was treated as just a bad kid as compared to other kids.
Teachers annoy me. I don't like teachers. I don't like authority figures at all. The student was asked by the researcher what he meant by saying *annoy you*. He responded: They call me out and they just don't like me.

When asked if he sees a difference in the way he thinks he is treated as compared to other kids, he responded: Yes. They treat the other kids like *Goody Two Shoes*. When I went to school, I was just a *bad kid*. I hated math even though I had a tutor, it was still hard for me. When I got suspended, I would also *get in trouble at home*. [His mother interjected at this point to say that when he said *get in trouble at home*, he meant that she used to spank her kids. She said she spanked her kids at a previous time when she was into an unhealthy lifestyle. So whenever he got suspended, he thinks he got the worst part of that because his siblings didn't get the same treatment.]

- Participant 6 (as voiced through mom's interview) were his meltdowns in school, and that he's afraid to go back to school because he doesn't want to have another meltdown.

  When my son is in that state of a meltdown, I don't even think he remembers half of what his behavior was like. All he remembers is trying to...I don't know...he fights you know, to get away. He just wanted to be gone. I mean I would struggle with him at home after that to get him to go to school. He hated going; he didn't want to have a meltdown. And now he's old enough that, yes, he wants to go back to school, but he's afraid of meltdowns. He doesn't want to have meltdowns in school. Researcher asked 'Does he have any memory of that meltdown when it happens or do you think he can feel the signs of when he's going to have one?' Participant F replied: I don't necessarily think he knows when he's going to have one, and that's where it's very important that teachers are aware of when he starts getting agitated or he's up moving around too much. And to back off and you don't need the power struggle.

1. **Five themes of student challenges.**

   Although the student responses to individual questions may not have indicated many identifiable themes in his/her response to that question, the reader must understand there were many times both the students and the parents talked about many other
challenges or memories of the incidents throughout other questions. Also, the parents' interview responses added a rich contribution to the overall understanding of this phenomenon. In other words, the response to each specific question was not the sole source for the researcher in order for themes to be identified. During the analysis of the data by the researcher, various themes were noticed and then each student or parent was noted who had experienced that theme. Through this thorough analysis and compilation of student and parent responses, the researcher identified five themes in this study:

- Six out of six students interviewed had anger issues or exhibited physical violence patterns. Participant C stated: So, yeah, our son has an anger issue, always has. As he's getting older now, it's getting a little bit better.

- Five out of six students (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6) faced safety dilemmas or perceived risks to themselves while at school. (See Participant D's bullying quote below.)

- Four out of six (Participants 1, 3, 4, 6) students voiced they had transition issues.

- Three out of six (Participants 1, 3, 6) students faced communication issues at school according to their interviews as well as their parents' interviews. Three of the parents described in their interviews that they were not always immediately notified when their child was in trouble; they also described they were not listened to during their child's IEP meetings.

- Three out of six (Participants 1, 3, 4) students faced the challenge of bullying.

  Participant D highlighted the intense issues of bullying and safety for her son in the following quote.

  My son came home from school one day and said,' I just don't want to go back. I'd rather die than go back to school.' And my son loves school...and when he said that, that was when I was alerted, that was like at the beginning of January. One Monday,
he just came home crying and frustrated from all the kids always being negative. And you know, all the years of it just built up and exploded. I felt my son might not be safe at school; what if my son goes to school and commits suicide at school? Or my son gets so angry that he hurts somebody and he kills them or something? Either I have to go and get my son being dead or him have killed somebody. I don't want it to end up like that. (Participant 4)

C. Parent Interview Responses

4. What are the beliefs of parents of suspended Ojibwe tribal kindergarten students about their child's kindergarten experience?

Participant B (father of student) stated while he was incarcerated, the mom was responsible for their son. He knew that she did not seek any type of help for him when he was in kindergarten.

Participant D felt her son was targeted after his first time of getting into trouble. Once he got labeled as being, you know, a behavioral child...she would get calls saying he's not suspended, but he's in trouble. Her son was suspended six times that year for a total of 18 days.

Participant E didn't remember too much about how or what he got in trouble for, but she does know that he would describe his teacher as an authority figure. She knew that the principal called, and she would have to call her mother for a ride to pick him up from school.

Three out of six parents described their children's kindergarten experience as a challenge due to major medication issues which were prescribed for their children related to their diagnosed IEP.

First example: My daughter was on medication but in high anxiety situations, it was not helping her at all. The beginning of the school year was really, really bad. In the beginning of October, it got really bad (that anticipation) right before Christmas
break. It was horrifying after Christmas break...starting to go back to school year again. It was a pattern. Any high anxiety troubled her. Even at home we started seeing a lot of trouble. There were some nights she would be so wound up, she wouldn't sleep. She'd be up at night... And we tried to find a way to a solution, but we couldn't find anything.

After the third or fourth suspension it was very difficult to get through this. But after that last time she got suspended for having a meltdown they couldn't control, instead of giving her the timeout and trying to work through it, they automatically called me and said she's suspended.

They didn't want her in the building; they didn't want to have to deal with her. And so I was really frustrated, and I said 'that's it.' I said, 'If you guys can't control her, you won't help me get the help I need--I'm pulling her out of school.' (Participant A)

Second example: My son was suspended twice in kindergarten. They said my son had ADHD at that age. They had put him on medications for awhile; we took him off it again. And they tried to say that they would do stuff to us, and I said, 'Go ahead and try it. It's our responsibility to raise our child the way we feel is right.' Doing that kind of medication, I don't think is the right way to raise any child. So they were going to suspend him completely from school, forever. I said 'Go ahead if that's what you think you got to do, but you're wrong for doing it, because you can't force us to make him take medications.' (Participant C)

Third example: You know, that first year in kindergarten...I don't remember any happy memories. I remember them wanting to medicate him, and it was just, it was a very frustrating period for me. As a result, I ended up pulling him out in the middle of the year. I couldn't take it anymore. I was very anxious, and the times I had to pick him up...it started in kindergarten but it went through his fifth grade year.

I went there one day to pick him up. They built a box in one of the rooms, in a special education room with a plexiglass window so you can see in, and a door to lock my son in. I am not kidding! I walked into that classroom after I got a call. A special education employee (Mom pauses) had my son on the floor...had her foot on his back, pushing him into that box and shutting the door. I am not kidding!

I knew they were making it (the box), and I did see it. I get it that they wanted it for a time out area for him to be alone and to relax. But they were putting him in there and then
shutting the door. I mean, it wasn't like an open door kind of space for him, and they were shutting the lights off in there... so it was dark. Which...he does like dark places, but...he should have never gotten to that stage. They waited too long, and a big key was that it was like a power struggle, and if you don't comply, they couldn't think outside the box. They couldn't make accommodations for him, and it was so frustrating and pain-ful. It was awful. It was awful. The box was probably a 5'x5' or a 6' x 6' kind of box area. I think it was pretty tall. (Participant F)

5. What are the parent's thoughts about whether or not there were any subsequent effects at school that related to their child's kindergarten suspension?

Participant A responded no to this question because she felt that her daughter knew if she did something wrong. She felt that her daughter did not want to be sent home, but she knew that if it got too bad, that her mom was going to be there. Perhaps it may have made her escalate enough so the school had to call the mom to come and get her. Her daughter was afraid of going to the principal's office or having her recesses taken away from her.

Participant B responded yes, because his son loves being home, and he learned that when he is suspended, he would be able to be home and not at school.

Participant C: So, yeah I do believe it did have an impact on the rest of his schooling so far.

Yeah, in a roundabout way he got labeled and that's the thing that I hated. But they do it to a lot of the kids. Once a troublemaker, always a troublemaker. And every time they do a little something wrong, sometimes it gets blown completely out of proportion. So, yeah I do believe it did have an impact on the rest of his schooling so far. I'm not going to say he didn't deserve some of the things that's happened to him, but I think some of it could have been handled a little bit different. So, yeah, I do believe it had an impact on him. (Participant C)
Participant D felt her son was getting accused of something before they even found out why he was angry. She stated that it takes two students to fight, so another child was involved in it too.

Participant E didn't know whether or not my son being suspended in kindergarten had anything to do with the other. If there is a teacher, cops, anybody that's trying to tell him what they think he should do, he doesn't like it because he has a problem with authority figures.

Yeah, the behaviors didn't stop, and if my son was in a situation where it was fight or flight, he would fight. And he would be out-of-control by the time I got to him, so I understand why he needed to leave. But he is smart, he was very smart. So, when he had enough, he knew that if he, that if they had to call me, I was going to come get him and take him out of that situation. He would be remorseful and sorry and cry, but he just needed to get out of the situation. He's very smart. (Participant F)

1. Summary of parents' responses.

- Four of six parents responded yes that their child's kindergarten suspension did result in subsequent effects at school. Participants B, C, D, and F all felt there were subsequent effects at school that related to their child's kindergarten suspension. Participant B felt his son learned that in order to be at home, he could get suspended and be sent home. Participant C stated his son got labeled a troublemaker; Participant D felt her son was the only one getting in trouble when there were two students fighting. The other student did not get in trouble; she felt her son was being unfairly treated. Participant F felt that if her son was put into a situation where he felt he had to fight or flight, he would fight. She did not feel his needs were being accommodated at school.
• One parent responded *no* that her child's kindergarten suspension did not result in subsequent effects at school. The mom felt her daughter knew if she did something wrong, and that she did not want to be sent home. So her belief was her daughter knew right from wrong. (Participant A)

• One parent responded that she *did not know* if her child's kindergarten suspension resulted in subsequent effects at school. She was unsure if her son's being suspended in kindergarten had anything to do with any other subsequent effects at school. (Participant E)

6. **What challenges or barriers do you think your child faces at school now, and if so, what are they?**

This question was asked during parent interviews as a formal part of the study, however, it was very apparent that the parents needed to voice their opinions regarding his/her own barriers they faced in dealing with their child's suspensions. The four most common difficulties for parents that surfaced as a response to this question by three out of six parents were:

- **a. Daily calls from school - Disruption to jobs.** - Responses from Participants B, C, and F.

  *First example:* Researcher asked dad 'Did you have a vehicle to come pick him up?' Dad: No, I've never had a driver's license, so that was another challenge, you know. I would have to find a ride, and nothing's cheap, so I'd have to have gas money, you know. I've spent a lot of money running and picking him up from school. Even when he was going to another school (in foster home) So I still had to leave work early, ride a bus to the other school, walk up there, and pick him up every day. Then we would have to wait a couple hours for the bus to come back home. We wouldn't get home until dark. It was long days and long rides, and a lot of money spent. This went on for a couple of months. (Participant B)
Second example: Dad: That's the reason I don't work anymore because it got to the point where we got so many phone calls a week that it was disrupting both my wife's job and mine. And we had to make a decision on who stays home and plays Mr. Mom, and I will, at the drop of a hat, if I need to get up there, to either settle him down like I did in grade school or bring him home.

I would love to go to work you know, but as of right now, until our son, until we know this won't keep happening or until everyone's content, he's the main one I get calls on. (Participant C)

Third example: Researcher asked the mom if she was called at work whenever something happened with him at school. Mom replied: 'All the time. All the time. If it wasn't my daughter picking him up, it was my mom. Or I would have to leave work. There were times when I thought I was going to lose my job, I was leaving so frequently.' (Participant F)

Fourth example: The police liaison person had to physically pick up my son, and he said my son spit in his mouth. And I thought 'Oh, my God! And it's like WOW!' (Unidentified participant due to sensitive nature of quote.)

b. Parent feelings. - Responses from Participants A, C, and F.

The dominant feelings for three out of six parents were mentioned individually as an absolute nightmare, feeling bad, and a struggle.

First example: It's just the whole situation was an absolute nightmare; the whole year. I mean it was just awful. I mean I can clearly remember sitting down and just crying, because I didn't know what to do and I couldn't make anybody listen to me, even with the IEP in place. (Participant A)

Second example: You feel bad that they're being punished for the way he's acting. When you get called to go to the school because he's acting up and you get there, and you see the way he is, I don't want to say traumatized or anything like that, but it's a different look in his face. I don't know if it's a scared look or it's an ashamed look because he knows he's done something wrong. As a parent, you don't like that sight. (Participant C)
Third example: The bus incident was one of the biggest ones and the bruises they left on him...was awful. Those, those were really hard for me. And the more, you know, things happened to him at school, the more he didn't want to go. He just didn't want to go. So he would cry and he would have meltdowns at home. It was so frustrating for me, because you know, I needed to go to work...It was a struggle. It was a very hard struggle. (Participant F)

c. Labeling of students. - Responses from three parents.

Participants C, D, and E.

First example: Yeah, in a roundabout way he got labeled and that's the thing I hated, but they do it to a lot of the kids. Once a troublemaker, always a troublemaker. (Participant C)

Second example: And I understand when he throws something--and does something inappropriate, but it's just, like he was targeted after, you know, the first time. Once he got labeled as being, you know, a behavioral child, it was just like, you know. And a lot of times, he would get, um I would get calls saying, 'Oh, he's not suspended, but he's in trouble.' (Participant D)

Third example: When researcher asked the student if he sees a difference in the way he thinks he is treated as compared to other kids, he responded, 'Yes. They treat the other kids like Goody Two Shoes. When I went to school, I was just a bad kid.' (Participant E and 5)

d. Restraints of students. - Responses from Participants C, D, and F.

First example: I thought, this teacher is probably a godsend for my son when I met the teacher the first time (for classes off school grounds). He did a lot for my son. I mean, he restrained my son more than once, but he would call me on a daily basis, keep me informed, good and bad, which I like. (Participant C)

Second example: In kindergarten, they took my five year old and brought him to this other room, with this police officer, and a school psychologist, and they're trying to calm him down when he doesn't want to go because he doesn't know that, he was that bad. That biting was a go-home incident (he was sent home for biting). He had bitten another student for taking a
Lego from him, and they had called me and said that he had to go home because he bit.

And he was kicking and screaming, and they're adults, and they're grabbing him and stuff. Instead of letting him settle down in the corner, or under the table, wherever he was, so that, instead of taking the other kids' out, because it's beyond the extreme safety for the other kids, they tried to remove him. Who's kicking and screaming, and they hurt him in the process. So, he's lashing out as a five year old, not knowing, why are these adults grabbing at me and trying to get me out of here? And, you know, he kicked the police officer and slapped the lady. I was just like 'Wow, you know that he was mad!'

But it was more of a lashing out that they were trying to grab him, and he didn't want to be grabbed. And being a sensory kid, he was out of it. Just crying and screaming. He couldn't calm down. (Participant D)

Third example: Yes, he was very violent, and he was kicking, screaming. He was, I think he punched the principal a few times. Yeah, and they were trying to restrain him, and all he wanted to do was bounce the ball! That's what I don't get. Why can't they think outside the box? Let him, he wasn't doing anyone any harm. And wasn't that the whole point of physical education? I think that was second or third grade. (Participant F)

A summary of the parent and student themes were identified in Table 9, as well as the research sub-questions, the themes of the parent responses, as well as the themes of the student responses. Following Table 9, there was an analysis by the researcher of all the responses and what the meaning might be.
Table 9

**Summary of Parent and Student Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS</th>
<th>THEMES OF PARENT RESPONSES</th>
<th>THEMES OF STUDENT RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student's Question</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What impact or memories does the Ojibwe tribal student recollect about his/her kindergarten suspension.</td>
<td>Theme: Violence involved in all students' recollections of kindergarten suspension.</td>
<td>5 of 6 students indicated physical violence in their response. 6th student physical violence identified through mother’s interview.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Similar Parent's Question**

4. What are the beliefs of parents of suspended Ojibwe tribal kindergarten students about his/her child's kindergarten experience. Major medication issues related to their Individual Education Plans (IEP's) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student's Question</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the Ojibwe tribal student believe the suspension has impacted his/her subsequent school experience.</td>
<td>Each student response was unique.</td>
<td>No identifiable themes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Similar Parent's Question**

5. What are the parents' thoughts about whether or not there were any subsequent effects at school that related to his/her child's kindergarten suspension. Yes, 4 of 6 parents felt there were subsequent effects at school due to the kindergarten suspension |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student's Question</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the student face any challenges or barriers at school now.</td>
<td>Each student response unique.</td>
<td>No identifiable themes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Similar Parent's Question**

6. What challenges or barriers do you think your child faces at school now and if so, what are they. Daily calls from school which were disruptive to parents' jobs Various emotions of parents Labeling of students |
(The above question was asked during interviews, but specific parent challenges unique to all of the parents surfaced as well.)

Restraints of students  Police involvement
Bullying issues  Safety dilemmas or perceived risks at school
Transition issues  Communication issues
Students' involvement with judicial system
Alternative educational placement

In summary there are several unique responses from students regarding their recollections of their kindergarten school suspension, the impact of their kindergarten suspension, and their challenges and barriers at school now. After careful and close analysis and compilation of all the interview responses by the researcher, five out of six students' responses for Question 1 indicates there was a theme of physical violence involved with recollections of their kindergarten suspension. Although the sixth student did not indicate physical violence in her response, her mother had discussed several incidents in kindergarten, which involved physical violence of the student. So the sixth student's data involving physical violence was included in this statistic. For Questions 2, 3, and 6, the students' unique responses do not indicate any identifiable themes based solely on only the students' responses.

It must be noted however the themes emerged through compilation of both student and parent responses to all questions. As indicated earlier, the researcher stated that many of the parent responses to interview questions included their thoughts and views on many aspects of his/her child's kindergarten suspension. There were many times when the parents expressed their thoughts on other challenges, concerns, other incidents besides just the answer to the researcher's question. So, all themes/responses were noted
which emerged during all interviews and later, the researcher noted on a flip chart which participants had experienced or voiced they had experienced that theme.

D. Special Needs-Individual Education Plans

Other critical information which surfaced after the interviews were conducted and emerged during the data analysis was that five out of six of the student participants had been diagnosed in their early years with some type of special needs or disability (refer to Table 11). As a result, five of the student participants also had Individual Education Plans (IEP’s). The remaining student had never been diagnosed with a special need, although both the parent and son admitted that he was on medications for depression and sleep disorders, which the parent stated was as a result of her incarceration.

Therefore, five out of six parent (refer to Table 10) interviews surrounded the provision of services and barriers to the students receiving benefits from these services in the IEP process. These five parents identified fourteen different concerns or weaknesses with the IEP process/services at their child's school. These IEP process/service concerns are outlined in Table 10 with three categories: Parent who voiced concern, IEP concerns, and Parents’ verbatim comments. A summary of how many IEP concerns were voiced by each parent is in the following bulleted list.

- Item 1 is representative of the same concern for both Participant A and F.
- Participant A had five other concerns.
- Participant B had two additional concerns.
- Participant C had one concern.
- Participant D and F had two concerns each for a total of four concerns.
- One unidentified participant voiced one concern.
Table 10

*Parents' Concerns Regarding Individual Education Plan (IEP) Components*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>IEP CONCERNS WITH PROCESS OR SERVICES</th>
<th>PARENTS' VERBATIM COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Two of the five parents of children with IEP's indicated that no one listened to them during the IEP process or at the meetings.</td>
<td><em>First example:</em> One mom stated that after her daughter's second suspension in kindergarten, she was down at the school screaming at &quot;Why won't you help us? I need another IEP and nobody would listen.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Second example:</em> The second mom stated that going into an IEP meeting by yourself, it can be so traumatic. It was a very hard struggle. I would leave there bawling, I was so upset. The extra support it takes, and they weren't listening to me. I know my child; I know what will work. And until they had someone with a degree or something, this is how we should do it, did they finally listen. It was so frustrating. I've been telling you this for years; I don't understand. They weren't listening to me. I ended up contacting a person in a tribal program to help me. This was early...I think it was in my son's kindergarten year, but this person's presence was very powerful and beneficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.a.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>The mother voiced her first concern by stating there was no follow through on the public school's part when her daughter came from a preschool program with an IEP already in place.</td>
<td>After her daughter's second school suspension, and they still would not put anything in place until she threatened to pull her daughter from school did they decide to do something. She pulled her daughter out of kindergarten for a little over two months until an IEP was set up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>This same mother would not put her daughter back in that classroom until an IEP was put in place.</td>
<td>She met first with the school before her went back, because she had certain ground rules in place that those teachers had to follow. But it wasn't so much that her daughter didn't know what she was doing, it was they didn't. She knew full well that she could not control herself in certain situations, she knew once she was told by the teachers, that if you need, you may excuse yourself from the room. She knew when she felt it coming on, she knew she had to head upstairs to that Special Education Room, because she wasn't going to be able to control it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. c. A  This same mother was made to feel inferior/inadequate in the IEP process.  They made it sound like I was dumb. It was a long road just to get (my daughter) through kindergarten.

2. d. A  There were ongoing problems.  In 1st grade, we still had a lot of problems, again they were locking her in that room.

2. e. A  Special education teacher called me and asked me if we have ever had her diagnosed, given her medications.  I can't remember what year it was, if it was the kindergarten year or the following year when the special education teacher called me and asked me if we've ever had her diagnosed, given her medication. I asked her "Do you have her file in front of you, because it clearly was written there. She's been getting medication for years now, and if you don't know this, what the hell do you think you're doing with her? How are you helping her? I was wild. I called down to the office, before I got to the office, there were people running out finding out what was going on. I couldn't believe it, the woman who was supposed to be helping my child, didn't even know what she was supposed to be taking. She'd already been working with her for some time, and not know her diagnosis. I thought that was absolutely ignorant of a person to think that they could help somebody without knowing what was wrong.

3. a. D  They need to step up their noticing of stuff--because they say they don't hear or they don't see (when it comes to bullying incidents).  My son has a behavioral IEP, and they need to step up their noticing of stuff, because they don't hear or they don't see (when it comes to bullying incidents). And, well they need to start hearing and seeing what it is the kids are doing.

3. b. D  Wrong diagnosis for seven years.  Mom to researcher: You saw him sit here for interview? Before that, he would have had to be all over the room because his hyperness [sic] was so bad. And they put him on Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) medicine, saying he had ADD. When he took the TOVA test at age 3, he couldn't do that. When he took it at age 10, he was off all the food and no medicines, and he told the psychologist how many flashes there were and how many he got wrong. When the psychologist did the test and corrected it, it was exactly what our son told him. He said he's never had a child tell him
4. C The school made statements to him about suspension or expulsion if his son was not forced to take the medication for his special needs diagnosis.

5. a. B Parent's first concern was not getting the right diagnosis.

5. b. B How long was the student expelled in fifth or sixth grade? The dad replied "They didn't say. They had IEP's and they tried different things."

6. a. F It is very important that parents receive IEP education and information about the process early on.

6. b. F Her child did not understand why he kept getting suspended.
7. Unidentified

Unprofessional conduct/comments, and trust violated by school employees.

The parent had been the brunt of unprofessional conduct, comments made to her, and correspondence about her. And she had her trust violated by a school employee who had revealed information at an IEP meeting that the parent had told the employee in confidence.

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1. Medication issues surrounding IEP’s.

According to parent responses, three out of six of the student participants had medication issues in which the medications the students were on for their disability either made no change for the student or the medications appeared to make the student worse. This factor was reiterated by Participants A, B, and F.

Another issue that appeared to impact four of six of the student participants was all related to prescription medications these students took for their disability. This issue affected Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6. According to the parent interviews, there were some horrendous side effects of some of the medications, difficulties when the parents attempted to take their child off their medications, as well as an incident in which one school was threatening suspension or expulsion if the parents did not make the student take his medications.

*First example:* Mom stated that her daughter had to be put on Prozac when she was 4. She also had to take Dexadrine, which is for the ADHD. It was pure hell, and she'd have these melt-downs when she was in pre-school. But when she was in kindergarten, the scariest parts were when she wasn't sleeping at night... She would be laying [sic] on the floor next to my bed drawing, with a flashlight on in the middle of the night...You could just tell every time there was something happening like at school or some big event where she'd get like that, and it was awful.

We actually had to take her off Prozac, because I didn't understand why a six or a seven year old child had to be on such a high medication. It's crazy. I started really reading up on it and
it really scared me, so I asked the doctor to get her off it.
(Participant A)

Second example: They said my son had ADHD at that age. It was the diagnosis the school tried to put on. We had an older son (in sixth grade then) that had the same diagnosis, and we had to put him on medication, and pretty much traumatized our son. And they wanted to do that with this son too. But now that we've already been through it, it shouldn't have to be like they're sleeping all the time, that you're not getting anything out of them any ways [sic].

So, yeah, our son has an anger issue, always has. As he's getting older now, it's getting a little bit better. They had put him on medications for awhile; we took him off it again. They tried to say they would do stuff to us, and I said 'Go ahead, try it. I said it's our responsibility to raise our children the way we feel is right, and doing the kind of medication I don't think is the right way to raise any child.' So they were going to suspend him completely from school, forever. I said 'Go ahead, if that's what you think you got to do, but you're wrong for doing it, because you can't force him to take medicine, and you can't force us to make him take the medicine.'
(Participant C)

Third example: Another dad was asked by the researcher if the medications for his son worked, and he replied: Huh, uh (no). They tried almost every stimulant. They would give him tics so bad that, you know, his lips would be raw. Then he was getting chest pains and we had to get him checked. His son stated: My lips got chapped so bad that it went down to here (pointing on his neck).

The dad stated: His skin was always cracked...chapped. And then there was albuterin, which was awful. It was an awful medication. He was on it, like...for more than a year. I just feel so bad now, knowing what the side effects were, off of that drug. Nightmares and dreams and just whatever. His son stated: My eyes were always swollen. Dad stated: So stimulants and it seems like medication, the side effects, even if they work on most people, they are severe on him, for some reason. There's been a lot of doctors. Then he named three different doctors. (Participant B)

Fourth example: I would leave IEP meetings in tears, and why they weren't providing services for him. It's just like they were setting him up to fail. They were making goals for him that were not attainable. It was very frustrating. It was the school, mostly
the school. I did end up having his medical doctor do a letter for me and we did try some trials of medications. They either didn't show any change for him, or it make him worse. Sometimes, he would just cry, and cry and cry and cry. I just said I can't do this to him anymore. So we stopped. We weren't going to try any more trials of medication. He was not on medication in kindergarten; they wanted him to. We tried a couple trials, but that was it. (Participant F)

E. Summary of Student Themes

Researcher analysis and summary of all interview data indicated there were several themes which are discussed in depth in Chapter 5. These themes are:

- **Six out of six** (100%) of the students interviewed had anger patterns and their parents were seeking solutions.

- **Five out of six** students:
  
  have a special needs or a disability (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
  
  had police involvement at school (Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
  
  faced safety dilemmas or perceived risks while at school (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
  
  had alternative educational placements--not at public school (Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)

- **Four out of six** students faced the challenge of transition (Participants 1, 3, 4, 6)

- **Three out of six** students:
  
  faced the challenge of communication issues (Participants 1, 3, 6)
  
  faced the challenge of bullying (Participants 1, 3, 4)
  
  have had restraints used on them at school (Participants 3, 4, 6)
  
  have been labeled at school (Participants 3, 4, 5)

- **Two out of six** students have had involvement with the judicial system
In Chapter 5 the researcher will present her six initial assumptions along with data or excerpts from this study, which compliment or contradicts these assumptions. Additional limitation factors will include the rationale for including Participant 6's data for this study although he was not interviewed, reasoning why the surveys on hope and despair and on the acculturation continuum were not used as initially planned, and more about unexpected outcomes of the study.

A final summary of all six students' school suspensions from kindergarten through eighth grade will be presented in Chapter Five (Table 13). This table will also highlight their IEP status, and alternative educational placements - not in a public school. Table 13 will be used to solidify the researcher's Prior Assumption 1.

Recommendations by Demmert (2001) and Powers (2005) and other experts are given relative to Native American student success. Recommendations for future studies will conclude Chapter Five.
V. CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

All races of children entering kindergarten face many challenges during their transition; however, in two, rural, public schools in northern Wisconsin, the challenges faced by Ojibwe kindergarten students have been somewhat extraordinary. Native American kindergarteners in these two schools have been faced with school suspension, a practice which does not appear to have extended to non-Native American kindergarten students at these same rural public schools. This qualitative research study has hoped to shed light on the phenomenon of the usage of kindergarten suspension for Ojibwe tribal students, as well as to discover in-depth perspectives regarding the suspension experience by the students and their parents.

In Chapter Four, the researcher has critically analyzed and summarized the data from the student and parent interviews, as well as introduced a thorough review of the findings for six sub-questions posed in the study. First, a cross-case analysis was conducted to search for similarities and differences among the participants and their responses. Each result was critiqued individually, as well as collectively, especially regarding how the conclusions were related, and to what extent the findings impacted each other. The researcher also reported on any other alternative classification systems, patterns/ themes, and explanations from students and parents that were considered during analysis. The researcher has connected the analysis from Chapter Four to summarize significant information for deeper analysis and continued review in Chapter Five; please consult the tables and interview content to assist with understanding for Chapter Five.
In Chapter Five, the impacts of the kindergarten suspension experience on the students and families have been explored on a deeper basis from the emergent themes and data analysis from Chapter Four. The researcher has inserted the interview questions as reference for ease of reading. The findings were discussed with respect to the current literature and prior research. Differences were stated between this study and the findings of similar research, and how the results compared according to literature reviews. Further data was provided to examine (a) whether this study clarified contradictions between the outcomes in this research as compared to the literature, and (b) confirmed similarities in studies or proposed new theories of suspension. New information and unexpected outcomes of the study were presented.

A discussion was also conducted as to whether or not there were any qualifying and/or additional limitations of factors, in addition to any weaknesses to be addressed. Lastly, researcher assumptions were identified, as well as supporting information that compliment or contradict the assumptions, which include a summary table of the current status of the student participants. Furthermore, recommendations from Demmert (2001) and Powers (2005) for Native American student success, the researcher, and pertinent information from the interviews have been explored, in addition to the next steps in continued research for this topic.

A. Analyzing, Coding, and Synthesizing Data

The researcher’s methods for analyzing and synthesizing the data presented in this chapter were provided through the conceptual framework of Figure 4. The qualitative software program Nvivo (and other research methods) used multiple layers of synthesis; its construction was visually presented. Figure 4 presented the detailed, initial
preparation and organization of the data, plus the layers of analytical procedure, in an attempt to understand and explain the outcome.

**B. Other Considerations for Study**

Although this study looked at interviews of fifth through eighth grade Ojibwe tribal students that were suspended in kindergarten during a specific time period in two geographical locations, one additional student participant (Participant 6) fit all the eligibility requirements for participation in this study. Although this student was not interviewed, his mother was a participant. During the recruitment process, the mother agreed to be a study participant; however, she made the strong assertion that her 14-year-old son would not be a very good candidate to interview for this study. She vehemently stated the researcher would not be able to understand him due to how he communicates with people, as well as the manner in which he communicates.

This mother's response to any student-related questions has been recorded with the other five student responses. The son's demographic data and the responses given by his mother were considered as part of the data for this study.

**C. Final Summary of Themes**

At the conclusion of the parent and student interviews, several themes emerged. All of these student challenges, as well as the parent challenges, can be seen in a visual diagram at the end of this chapter - Figure 4.

The researcher highlighted the following topics which emerged from the data: (a) physical violence, (b) special needs, (c) perceived safety, (d) transition issues, (e) bullying, (f) restraints of students, and (g) being labeled. These themes were discussed in the following detailed discussions, and their relationship was presented as to how these themes are linked to the students’ experiences of suspensions.
1. Physical violence - Question One: What impact or memories does the Ojibwe tribal student recollect about his/her kindergarten school suspension.

Six out of six of the students’ recollections of their kindergarten school suspensions were indicative of physical violence (which included Parent Participant A’s interview for one student). Five out of six student responses about their kindergarten school suspension were indicative of direct physical violence. For example, one child bit a school liaison police officer, another student recalled actual physical fights with a male classmate, and physical objects were thrown. In the students’ responses to this question, they did not use the terminology of physical violence in their recollections, but the researcher ascertained this was a theme from reconstructing the students’ memories. (Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

The sixth student’s response, Participant 1, did not identify violence or any physical outbursts for this question; however, according to the parent’s interview, this participant had several outbursts/meltdowns during her kindergarten year.

In order to further study why there was physical violence in 100% of the students' kindergarten school suspensions would entail a further study which would ask specific questions in regards to the students' home life, family challenges, alcohol or drug use, domestic violence, and child abuse or perhaps analyze the school environment or look at additional training for teachers to help them with positive behavior management. These types of personal questions were not included in this specific study. All of the questions for this study explicitly dealt with the actual incident(s) of suspension. There could be a multitude of reasons why these students' kindergarten suspensions all involved physical violence, even besides the fact several of them were on medications for their special
needs diagnosis. However, the researcher can speak to the fact that the issues surrounding this study, including the theme of violence, might portray a pattern of school failure. This pattern of failure was discussed more in-depth under the Subsequent Effects heading as a cycle of school failure or success.

2. Special Needs—Question four: What are the beliefs of parents of suspended Ojibwe tribal kindergarten students about their child’s kindergarten experience.

Four of the six students in this study were identified as having special needs prior to attending kindergarten at the public school, and they all had Individual Education Plans (IEP's) in place. The fifth student exhibited challenging behavior every year beginning in kindergarten; however, he was not diagnosed with an official IEP diagnosis until third grade. The sixth student was never identified as having a special needs diagnosis, but he had anger issues and later on, depression issues.

Two parents and one student felt the students were labeled in school due to their kindergarten suspensions. Medication issues were a major concern, complaints the medications were not working, made the student worse, or the simple fact the parents refused to medicate their child (two parents). Two parents tried to resolve their child's issues by removing him/her from kindergarten about halfway through the school year. These parents felt the school did not know how to deal with their children properly, nor did they make accommodations for them while they were attending school.

Somehow, the school system or the IEP process failed these students and these parents. There appeared to be what the Researcher has named as a Cycle of School Failure or Success (Figure 5). After having conducted the participant interviews, and
understanding the internal and external factors involved in these kindergarten suspensions, the Researcher attempted to represent this cycle in a pictorial framework. This framework was recognized when these six children began receiving suspensions in kindergarten. This framework represents the fact that there could be success as well as failure, but in this study there was not any success. The school suspensions continued. Now, there must be a serious examination of the factors illuminated by this study, and changes must be made which can improve the outlook for these Native American Ojibwe students.

\textit{a. Medication issues at school.}

Three of the six parents (Participants A, C, F) described their child's negative kindergarten experience as resulting from major medication issues. Some of the medications which were prescribed to these students were: Albuterin, Dexadrine, Prozac, stimulants, depression medication, and sleep medication. (See Table 11.)

The topics of special needs, IEP's, and medication issues are all components of major challenges with five out of six students in this study. According to the parents' interviews, it appeared medication, and its influence upon children in schools, played an important role in its impact on their behavior in school. The parents expressed overwhelming frustration and voiced their dismay at the inability of the school staff to meet the needs of their children. The parents even expressed the fact their children knew they could not control their behavior at times, but they did not know how to handle it.

Information was also presented about school staff not always being aware of the medications the student was prescribed, and perhaps even its effect or impact on their mood and/or behavior. The parents talked about their child's meltdowns, anxiety, and
hyperactivity disorders, and how the medications were always a critical part of the picture; sometimes the school staff even recommended medication, and the parents did not want the medication. The rich information collected during the interviews appeared to indicate the school staff was not prepared when the special needs children entered the public school, even though they had IEP's in place.

Table 11

*Medication Status for Student Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>Type of Medication or Special Needs Diagnosis</th>
<th>Individual or IEP</th>
<th>Initial Age When Student Began Medication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prozac and Dexadrine for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Finally pinpointed diagnosis in 3rd grade (Age 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Anti-depressant and sleep medication</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Autism spectrum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**b. Perceived safety.**

All of the students in this study were vulnerable, because of their young age and also those students who were diagnosed with a special need. These students probably had a limited understanding of what the expectations were of them from their teacher and others at their new school. These students came from a very small and intimate classroom
in which the teacher/student ratio was much lower at their tribal preschool program.

Many times, the students had the same teacher for up to three years during that preschool experience. This concept of looping the teachers with each of their eight students for the first three years is a common foundation of Early Head Start programs. This practice allows the teacher, child and parent to bond a strong relationship during this time, as well as the teacher understands the child's personality and knows his strengths and capabilities.

There are two aspects of safety discussed in this section, the safety with the student's caretaker; and the safety with their peers. Safety is the foundation of education; it is of utmost importance the students and their parents feel they are safe when they leave for school on the bus or in the car. The student must feel safe when he enters the school, safe from injuring himself or others, safe from bullying or teasing from his peers. If the feeling of being secure and safe is not present to the student, then the ongoing feeling of not being safe will only escalate feelings of anxiety or insecurity when an incident occurs.

i. Student restraints.

Parents voiced their frustrations and fear about how certain incidents involving their child(ren) were handled at the school. Descriptive adjectives by the parents of some of these incidents included: an absolute nightmare, feeling bad and a struggle. One excerpt from a parent, which described this exact point, was presented in Chapter Four under Parent feelings.

Another parent talked about an incident with her son when he was in second or third grade, and how the teacher wanted him to participate in the activity with the other
students instead of bouncing a ball that he held in his hands. The whole incident became a physical restraint incident when the student would not quit bouncing the ball, then the principal was called and a police liaison officer entered the situation. The student had bruises he received during this physical altercation. The mom's statement was "They couldn't think outside the box. All he wanted to do was bounce the ball."

When responding to an earlier question about how her son would describe his kindergarten teacher, one unidentified parent described kindergarten as

\[\text{Very, very hard for my son, and it was actually painful for me. My son would come home with bruises. They would try to restrain him, and no one was trained on restraining, so they left bruises on his arms.}\]

She stated that if her older daughter was here, she would tell you that she took her brother off the bus one day, and he was in the fetal position, screaming. The mother went on to say the bus incident was one of the worst incidents, and the bruises they left on him, was awful, the more things happened to him at school, the more he didn't want to go.

\[\text{Later in the interview, the researcher asked this same mother: 'When you mentioned a little while ago that they would leave bruises on him when they restrained him, how did they restrain him? Mother replied 'I have no idea. I had no idea what they were doing. I know that after that happened...they all had to have training on how to restrain a child. I had called the school and talked to the school psychologist at that time. Yeah, that's when they did it.' (Unidentified parent)}\]

Since the theme of restraining some of the students emerged, the researcher decided to take a deeper look at what was actually occurring during the restraint incidents, and whether or not there were any similarities in what actually occurred between the different incidents of restraining students. This analysis indicated there were three res-
traint incidents, in which two of them had a similar physiological pattern of what occurred during the restraint incident.

*a. Physiological pattern in restraint incidents.*

There were three examples of restraint incidents, but in the second and third examples, a pattern of seven steps was identified by the researcher. Please read the descriptions of the incidents as quoted below from the parent interviews.

*Second example:* In kindergarten, they took my five year old and brought him to this other room, with this police officer, and a school psychologist...He had bitten another student for taking a Lego from him. And he was kicking and screaming...they tried to remove him, who's kicking and screaming, and they hurt him in the process. ...And, you know, he kicked the police officer and slapped the female school employee. And being a sensory kid, he was out of it. Just crying and screaming. He couldn't calm down. (Participant D)

*Third example:* Yes, he was very violent, and he was kicking, screaming. He was, I think he punched the principal a few times. Yeah, and they were trying to restrain him, and ...*all he wanted to do was bounce the ball!*... I think that was second or third grade. (Participant F)

In reading the verbatim accounts of three students who were restrained during separate suspension incidents at school, the researcher acknowledged seven sequential phases that happened during two of these incidents. A physiological pattern for the Second and Third examples listed below are identical with the exception that in the second example, the kindergarten student had an outburst of crying and being out-of-control with his emotions. He could not calm down.

When these students were restrained during these incidents, their perceptions of being safe were violated. Perhaps even if they had sensory integration issues, their physical boundaries were violated, with the physical touching and restraint by an adult. The
child may have felt he/she could no longer trust his caregiver, because of the violent and physical nature of the restraint incidents. The violence was exhibited by both the student and the restraining adult in both examples. The students were kicking, hitting, biting, or punching the adults. The researcher, in trying to understand about this phenomenon, is looking for any type of similarity within the restraint incidents. This search for similarities or contrasts lead to the researcher to creating these seven phases of the restraint incident. It is not clear whether these seven phases are interconnected or if an intervention at any point could have stopped the escalation of the incident. Perhaps a different approach earlier at any one step could have changed the outcome. A physical confrontation may not have needed to occur.

1. Adult intervention at the peak of the student's physical outburst or over the student’s refusal to quit bouncing the ball.

2. After physical intervention by the adults, the student's agitation appears to increase or the student displays a violent outburst. (Mother states the student has sensory issues in Second example.)

3. Kicking and screaming by the student.

4. Police intervention.

5. Physical violence of the student directed at another person [i.e.: In second example, student kicked police officer and slapped school staff member; third example, student punched principal.]

6. Police or adult physical intervention to restrain student.

7. The student's sensory state was over stimulated by this incident; student was crying, was out of it and could not calm down (according to parent).
It is important to realize these seven steps involve both student violence and adult violence in the restraint intervention. It is also critical to understand that all of the six students have memories of their kindergarten suspension incidents as involving physical violence. All of the parents also have identified physical violence as a part of their child's kindergarten suspension experience.

**ii. Bullying.**

One student talked about physical safety when it came to bullying incidents at the school. Participant 4 responded that bullying, name calling, and getting into fights were his challenges at school. He felt one of the reasons he was bullied in his class was because he was one of the youngest students in his class. He told the researcher and his mother the following:

> Like when I'm at the kids' center, I never get picked on. That's where I see the kids are nice to me. Cause [sic] Mom, what you don't realize or know is that the reason the kids are being mean to me in school is cause [sic] that's where the group is. When they get separated, you can get them on their good side. When they're together though, the group is mean. That's how it goes. (Participant 4)

Another parent also described a bullying incident.

Researcher asked: 'And had you told the school about the bullying?' Parent replies: 'Oh, I did. I was down in that office screaming about everything. My child came home with a huge scratch across the chest, like dug down into where it was bleeding, because the child had attacked her and nobody did anything about it. So I had actually pulled her out of class and brought her into the principal's office. And he still did nothing. A few days later is when her older sibling attacked that child. It doesn't matter which one of my children I have, I can tell you stories that'll make your hair stand up, because it's awful down there. They don't care.' (Participant A)
D. Subsequent Effects of Suspensions

**Question two: Does the Ojibwe tribal student believe the suspension has impacted his/her subsequent school experience.**

The findings regarding students’ own beliefs about whether or not their kindergarten suspension impacted their subsequent school experience were inconclusive. The students’ verbatim responses to this were unique, and not even one identifying theme was predominant. Perhaps the students did not totally understand the question, or maybe they felt insecure about whether or not their response was correct, or perhaps the students felt emotional immaturity due to their young ages. Another theory could be that due to their level of maturity, with the differing priorities in their young lives, this question and its long-term potential for impact was not of consequence to the, especially since this study included events that occurred from five to eight years prior to this point in time. The question may not have been of immediate interest to them.

According to Garrett (2003), one of the traditional Native American values consists of a present-time orientation. He states that special educators and other service providers working with Native youth must have a general understanding of the culture from which these students come, as well as a specific understanding of the worldview of the specific student. This could be the reason the students did not appear to have a predominant theme in response to this question. If the students value the present-time orientation as Garrett (2003) stated, the memories of their kindergarten suspension may have appeared to them to be too far back in the past.
Question five: What are the parent's thoughts about whether or not there were any subsequent effects at school that related to his or her child's kindergarten suspension.

The parents' recollections of the kindergarten suspension and the students' recollections are not identical nor are they similar in context. The parents' responses provided a contextual framework for each question that provided a holistic concept of the entire incident. Their responses provided the entire picture of the incident while the students' responses only provided a tiny, miniscule slice of the picture.

There were a variety of parent perceptions in response to this question. Four out of six parents, responded yes to this question, that, indeed, there were subsequent effects at school that related to their child's kindergarten suspension; two other parents did not feel there were subsequent effects at school that related to his/her child's kindergarten suspension.

Two parents felt their children seemed to be in control of their circumstances. In other words, if their children felt they needed to be out of school rather than in the situation, they may have deliberately created some type of disturbance at school that caused their parents to be called to pick them up. The parents felt these students controlled or somewhat planned their behavior so they would get suspended, thereby having themselves removed from the circumstance by their parent(s). Other parents felt their child was either labeled a troublemaker or the parent blamed the teacher for making accusations without knowing who else and why the incident occurred.

Yes, the researcher ascertained that there were subsequent effects at school that related to these students' kindergarten suspensions. A cycle of not being successful
started with these students at age five and continued on for the time period of this study once they began receiving suspensions. Three out of six of the students who participated in this study were still being suspended from kindergarten to sixth grade; two were still being suspended from kindergarten to eighth grade. School suspensions are not the answer to improving students' behavior or alleviating bad behavior. One student's suspensions did not continue throughout her schooling, because she had an IEP stipulation which stated if she was sent home one day, she was allowed to return to school the next day. So she was not counted in Table 13: *Summary of Suspensions or Expulsions in K-8th Grades* as being suspended after kindergarten according to her mother.

E. Student (and Parent) Challenges

**Question six: What challenges or barriers do you think your child faces at school now, and if so, what are they.**

Although this question was asked about whether or not the parents felt their child faced any challenges at school, all of the parents responded with answers to barriers they faced in their own personal lives in dealing with their child's incidents of suspension.

There were several key challenges parents described in this study, such as the disruption to their jobs due to daily or frequent telephone calls, the multitude of issues created with restraining their children, such as police involvement, lack of staff training on proper techniques, teacher complaints, and the physiological theme in two incidents. In addition, there were medication issues associated with their child's special needs diagnosis, and the major barrier resulting from the lack of appropriate IEP services or resources in a timely manner. (See Table 10)
Parents' voices are critical at their child's school. A relationship between the school and the parents has to have open communication as a key ingredient. If there is a disconnect with the school and the parents, then this relationship does not work. In this study, the parents' voices and their perspectives were not asked for, or if given, were not heard. It appeared to be difficult emotionally for the parents to hear and deal with how the situations were handled at school.

In a national survey of 234 American Indian parents and community members in regards to their attitudes about education, satisfaction with schools, the degree to which schools value Indian culture, their parental involvement and school expectations for their children, Robinson-Zanartu and Majel-Dixon (1996) found the statement with the strongest rating of agreement from this survey was "I am important in my child's education." Several narratives in this study echoed the following:

- Include parents in every phase of the student's education.
- Indian people want to be involved in their child's education.
- Let me know what you expect from my children.
- Listen to what I expect from the school.
- Work with us.

I think it is significant to note Question Six was directed towards the parents in the study and the question was asked of them: *What challenges or barriers did you think your child faces at school now, and if so, what are the challenges?* Although the parents were not directly asked to identify what challenges they had in dealing with their child's suspension, all of the parents reported what their own challenges were as parents.
This point was critical to the researcher because it indicated an important point was missing in considering study questions. The questions were so focused on looking at the students and their feelings associated with their suspensions, the researcher overlooked the parents and their own issues in dealing with their child's suspension(s). Fortunately, it was an important enough issue for the parents, as all of them identified their challenges and barriers during their interviews, even without the question being directed towards them about their own personal sacrifices regarding this issue.

**Question three: Does the student face any challenges or barriers at school now.**

Each student identified a unique challenge that was not duplicated by any other student in this study. One may wish to consider their responses to Question Two about subsequent effects of kindergarten suspension, in which these students based their responses on *the moment*.

Each student identified a unique challenge. Participant 1 and 3 faced physical challenges: Participant 1 with catching or running activities in her physical education class and the second student with doing schoolwork.

Participant 2 and 6 identified more *internal* or self-identity issues such as being interpersonal, antisocial, and trust issues or the second student's internalized fear of not being able to control his physical actions or meltdowns at school.

Participant 4 and 5 looked at *external* factors, such as other students bullying him or name calling, and getting into fights at school; the second student did not like teachers and authority figures, because he felt he was treated differently at school as a *bad kid*. 
1. Transition issues.

Transition issues begin in public school immediately when students enter kindergarten if there is not sufficient preparation and communication between the parents and school prior to the child's entry. Middle school is also well-known to be the next major transition area for Native American elementary students, and it is documented in many literature resources regarding the theory of cultural discontinuity and transition issues (Caskey, 2008; Garrett, 1995, 2003; Morgan, 2009; and Powers, 2005). Middle school entry, depending on the school district, usually begins in either fifth or sixth grade.

Besides the physiological changes which may be occurring with prepubescent children and their hormonal changes, there is also the factor of transitioning into a totally different phase of education, one in which the middle school student no longer has just one main teacher, students are assigned multiple teachers along with multiple classes. This challenge was identified in Participant 1’s quote.

Like every single year I felt nervous. Nervous about the different classrooms. Next year I will probably feel even more nervous because I had to go to a whole bunch of different rooms, find my classes, remember my combination for my locker. When researcher asked: ‘Why do you think you are nervous?’ The student replied: Because it's like trying new things, but you don't know what will happen.

Self-identity issues also begin to emerge for Native American students during this phase. If students have not already noticed cultural differences between themselves and their classmates, middle school is the logical time when Native American students notice differences. This is when some theorists claim cultural discontinuity issues may occur (Caskey, 2008; Garrett, 1995, 2003; Morgan, 2009; and Powers, 2005).
2. Communication.

Another challenge for students was communication. Interaction with Native American students by non-Native teachers could result in differences in cultural expectations and communication differences. According to Garrett (2003), many contemporary concerns for Native youth may be linked to, at least in part, this cultural clash. Native youth may experience conflict when they have internalized, or attempt to internalize, the unfamiliar values of the dominant society. The chasm between mainstream expectations and the cultural values of Native peoples has been referred to as cultural discontinuity (Caskey, 2008; Garrett, 1995, 2003; Morgan, 2009; and Powers, 2005).

The acculturation continuum scale was discussed in Chapter Two; however it was not used in this study to see what level of acculturation each student was on the continuum chart. This scale would be an excellent tool for future studies regarding Native American students, and it might help to identify whether cultural discontinuity is truly an issue in our society today.

Table 12 has been included to show a comparison between Native American and Mainstream Society Values to help the reader better understand some of the cultural values and beliefs of both. This table is critical for the reader to understand some of the foundational differences in beliefs and values between the Native American students and their teachers, who most like would be Caucasian or a non-Native American teacher. In small, isolated, rural areas the salary and limited social conveniences may not be as inviting to teacher applicants as a large, metropolitan area. Even the simplest of tasks in a public school, such as cooperation with the group rather than domination of the group
during a class activity is mentioned in this table. It could be a conflict for the student if
the teacher ordered him/her to do something in the class that was against their beliefs.

Table 12

Comparison of Native American and Mainstream Society Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Traditional Native Values</th>
<th>Common Mainstream Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Saving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Domination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noninterference</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of being</td>
<td>Winning, aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of tribe and extended family</td>
<td>Individualism and the nuclear family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony with nature</td>
<td>Mastery over nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for explanation of natural phenomena according to the spiritual realm</td>
<td>Preference for scientific explanations for everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep respect for elders</td>
<td>Reverence for youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present-time orientation</td>
<td>Future-time orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clock watching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Labeling.

The parents reported they felt their child(ren) was labeled at school, as well as the students also recognized they were labeled at school as either a behavioral child, a *bad kid* or a troublemaker. When the researcher asked Question Five to one of the older students about whether or not he thought this suspension had any impact on him in the years following kindergarten, he responded in a monotone voice that he didn't think it
mattered. The researcher went on to ask this student about a comment he made earlier in his interview about being described as a *troublemaker*, and whether it was adults who were labeling him. The student responded "yes."

Labeling students with negative labels adds to the already "broken relationship" with the school and students and parents in this study. Labeling in the context of being called just a *bad kid* does not build a positive relationship, nor does it promote a supportive environment and bond with the teacher. Labeling is another one of those negative consequences that seemed to exist with the phenomenon of kindergarten suspension. The use of labeling or even the perception of being labeled has no reason to be in any school district unless it is a positive label, such as an honor roll student or a valedictorian or salutatorian.

Smith and Mack (2006) talked about the power of words and labels in their article. They stated that labeling and disparaging words encourage negative self-concepts, less positive interactions with teachers, more teacher criticism, reduced levels of interest by parents, negative stereotyping by teachers and learned helplessness by students. Another author in this same article, Haynes (1986) also reiterated that attribution and self-esteem are affected by verbal and written language. Both are determined by the positive and negative messages one receives from significant others. Haynes (1986) pointed out:

...many students experience difficulty in school, not because of low intelligence, lack of ability or even lack of effort but because they have made the assessment that they are incapable of performing well. Somehow, somewhere, from someone they received a negative message about their capability, internalized it, believed it and it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. (p.42)

Figure 4 follows and is representative of the final summary of themes.
FIGURE 4
Data Analysis Procedure and Final Summary of Themes

12 individual interviews
12 individual verbatim transcripts

FORMATT ALL QUESTIONS INPUT INTO NVIVO

6 individual Parents
and their responses to 15 questions

All 6 Parent Responses
GROUPED together for each question

6 individual Students
and their responses to 11 questions

All 6 Student Responses
GROUPED together for each question

PARENT THEMES

ANGER PATTERNS-4/6
BULLYING-3/6
STUDENT SAFETY-PERCEIVED RISKS - 5/6
POLICE LIAISON INVOLVEMENT - 5/6
TRANSITION 4/6
COMMUNICATION-3/6

PARENT THEMES

MEDICATION ISSUES RELATED TO IEP'S-5/6
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PLACEMENT-4/6
JUVENTILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT-2/6
PARENTS' OWN CHALLENGES

PARENT THEMES

MELTDOWNS-6/6
BULLYING-3/6
LABELING-3/6
TRUST ISSUES-1/6
SCHOOLWORK 1/6
PHYSICAL CHALLENGE 1/6

STUDENT THEMES

CHILDHOOD CRISIS-3/6
DISCRIMINATION-3/6
OUTSIDER-3/6
UNWANTED ATTENTION 1/6
F. Researcher's Initial Assumptions

The researcher's six initial assumptions are presented along with literature excerpts that either confirmed the assumption or challenged it. The researcher also presented suspension data from this study (Table 13), as well as other studies outlined in the literature review, which either confirmed or challenged these assumptions.

1. Prior assumption one.

Native American Ojibwe children whom were suspended in kindergarten have a higher likelihood of continuing to be suspended throughout their school years in the two rural public schools specified in this study.

a. State of Maryland study.

The prior assumption 1 identified by the researcher was supported in the Krezmien, Leone, and Achilles (2006) State of Maryland study. Krezmien, Leone, and Achilles (2006) collected suspension data in the state of Maryland for the years 1995 - 2003. Their study was entitled: Suspension, Race, and Disability: An Analysis of State-wide Practices and Reporting. They used a logistic regression model to examine disproportionate suspension rates for students by race with African American, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian with White being the reference category.

We found that for African American and American Indian students the odds of being suspended increased over time... The trends suggest that the increased rates of suspension in the state (Maryland) disproportionately and negatively affected students from these two racial groups.

The increases in the disparity of disciplinary treatment over time were unexpected...In fact, there was clear evidence in which increases in suspension rates were accompanied by a deepening of the inequity in disciplinary treatment across racial groups. (p. 222)
b. Suspension data from kindergarten study.

The suspension data extrapolated from the both student and parent interviews conducted for this study also showed an increase in the number of study participants whom are suspended each school year. The participants were asked if they had memories of other school suspensions after kindergarten, and to describe those memories.

A diagrammed chart of any ongoing suspension incidents after kindergarten and/or alternative educational placements was extrapolated from the student/parent interviews. See Table 13- Summary of Suspensions or Expulsions in K-8 Grades For Six Student Research Participants. This information was presented for all six student participants. An analysis of this ongoing suspension data after kindergarten for these six students was critiqued.

Beginning in third and fifth grades the data indicated five out of six of the students had been suspended (with the exception of Participant 1 who had an IEP stipulation). In sixth, seventh and eighth grades, 100% of the study participants were either suspended, chose to be home-schooled (due to frustration with ongoing suspensions) or one was enrolled in public school part-time. This study did not show if there was disparity of disciplinary treatment, because it did not analyze and compare the actual categories of behaviors/rationale given for all students' kindergarten suspensions.

Also, in regards to prior assumption one, the U.S. Department of Education's (2004) study for national suspension rates for grades kindergarten through 12th grade students (Figure 2), American Indian/Alaskan Native students had the second highest suspension rates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age &amp; Grade</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>1st Grade</th>
<th>2nd Grade</th>
<th>3rd Grade</th>
<th>4th Grade</th>
<th>5th Grade</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th>7th Grade</th>
<th>8th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 1/2 - 5th</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>*IEP stipulation</td>
<td>*IEP stipulation</td>
<td>*IEP stipulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 yr - 6th</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Expulsion</td>
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<td>Participant 2</td>
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<td>relatives-Different school</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 1/2 - 6th</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>1/2 year @</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>Alternative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/2 year - Alternative</td>
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<td>Educational</td>
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<td>Educational Placement</td>
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<td>11 yr - 6th</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>14 yr - 8th</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Not in home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
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<td>Educational Placement</td>
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<td>14 yr - 8th</td>
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<td>Home Schooled</td>
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<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Pulled out of kindergarten</td>
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<td>Most of year</td>
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<td>mid year</td>
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100% 4 of 6 5 of 6 4 of 6 5 of 6 100% 100% 100%

*IEP stipulation stated that if student was sent home, student was allowed to return to school next day.
2. Prior assumption two.

The researcher's prior assumption two was the transition from a Native American preschool or Head Start program into a public school had great challenges with the expectations and social mores, as well as the higher level of expectations and focus on academics from the public school kindergarten teachers.

There were many current articles on transition issues with kindergarten students transitioning into a public school environment from a preschool or head start environment, and several articles discussed possible cultural discontinuity for Native American students during their transition into middle school (Caskey, 2008; Garrett, 1995, 2003; Morgan, 2009; and Powers, 2005).

Powers (2005) stated a potential difference in elementary curricula and the curricula in later grades:

Elementary curricula and instructional methods may be more aligned to Native cultural values (e.g., cooperation, thematic or holistic learning, oral recital) than those in the later grades. Hornett (1990) suggests the developmental changes within the child contribute to the cultural gap. He argued that as American Indian children develop, they gain social awareness and their cultural identity becomes stronger; thus, they become more cognizant of the cultural disconnect between their non-Indian school and their Indian culture (p. 338).

According to the researcher's experience with this study, it appeared the transition issues did not stop just at kindergarten, they continued on and possibly intensified even more by middle school as was voiced by four out of six participants in this study. Participants 1, 3, 4, 6 indicated they had challenges or barriers with transition issues. In looking at this study, originally the researcher only considered transition as an issue in entering kindergarten with Native American Ojibwe students; however, this study has
indicated the transition issues again surfaced in middle school. The participants who were involved in this study were five middle school students and one elementary student.

3. Prior assumption three.

The researcher's prior assumption was there was a difference in the expectations, social mores, curriculum, public school classroom environment, and how the preschool or head start teacher relates/communicates with the Native American Ojibwe children as compared to how the public school kindergarten teacher related to the child(ren).

One parent discussed the difference in the public school environment from her daughter's preschool program.

It's a different environment for them, and it's a really hard environment, and I just cringe every time I have to send them to school. And now, my other daughters, they have to be there. It's required, and it just tortures me to send them to that school, but we can't afford to send them to a different school. And our other choices, are they really any better? So I have a lot of hard feelings about the school. We're trying to get them through, trying to get their education so they can move on. (Participant A)

According to Clay (1998) the differences between preschool and kindergarten settings include teacher expectations and interactions, physical environment, peer group interactions, curriculum, and parent involvement.

Preschool children with disabilities were mainstreamed in kindergarten encountered more frequent teacher-directed, large group activities. In kindergarten children were expected to behave and learn more independently than in preschool. Also, kindergarten teachers provided less frequent praise and corrective feedback than preschool teachers (p. 43).

Although Clay's study highlighted preschool children with disabilities, some of her findings were relevant to this study, because there were five out of six student participants in this study who also had a disability or special needs diagnosis.
Transition activities may occur occasionally within the public school arena for preschool children entering kindergarten; however, evidently, these transition efforts are not sufficient. More recommendations for increasing students’ academic success and preparation for their entrance into the public school kindergarten classroom environment are discussed in the recommendations section.

a. Perceived racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination or perceived racial discrimination was brought up explicitly during two parents’ interviews, one of the parents only mentioned it very briefly. In the course of all eleven interviews, no specific questions were directed at parents or students which asked them whether or not they felt racism existed at their school or was connected in any way to their suspension(s). So, the fact only two parents and none of the students mentioned discriminatory practices as a challenge to their child or family was not anticipated by the researcher. The suspension statistics for both schools appeared to indicate a disproportionate suspension rate of Native American Ojibwe students if you correlated the suspension rate with the percentage of Native American students enrolled in the school districts. Therefore, the researcher assumed there might be some connection to the disproportionate suspension rates to either socioeconomic discrimination or racial discrimination. This was a prior assumption, but the question related to perceived racial discrimination was not asked specifically so not to influence the interview responses or outcomes of the study.

Nobody should have to go through with what these kids have gone through...your childhood should be the best thing you ever remember in your entire life. And these are the memories these kids hold, is being discriminated against, or to be put down, it’s just awful...It’s really hard to walk both sides of this world...but I can’t imagine what my children have to feel,
knowing that they have to walk both sides of the world and they
don’t know which way to turn. You give them all the tools you
can, but eventually, it’s just not going to be enough. (Unidenti-
fied parent due to sensitive nature of quote)

The second parent described the reason a school district may be more inclined to
identify Native American students with a disability, his opinion was this allows them to
secure additional funding for them as special needs students besides the extra funding
they may already receive for being a minority student, which then helps the school
district. In his mind, this meant the more students who were diagnosed with a disability,
the more funding the school received for its budget. This argument about Native Ameri-
can students being diagnosed with a disability disproportionately more so than the Cauca-
sian or other ethnicity student was not a new concept.

4. Prior assumption four.

Native American children were being labeled in kindergarten as behavioral chil-
dren, troubled kids, or *bad kids* once they began getting suspended in kindergarten.
Fifty percent of the parents in this study or three out of six parents identified their child as
being labeled in school, Participants 3, 4 and 5, so the assumption was accurate.

The concept of being labeled first emerged as one of the challenges students face
at school now, which was Question Three. The issue of being labeled was also one of the
researcher's prior assumptions, which was addressed in this section. Three examples of
students in this study who have the perception of being labeled follows. One student was
perceived as a *troublemaker*; another student was labeled as a *behavioral child* in
kindergarten; another student was labeled a *bad kid*, the mother thought it was because of
her incarceration. The parents describe the behaviors that led to the kindergarten
suspensions.
• **a. Scary behavior to others** - It wasn't even a meltdown, she would flip, screaming and throwing things. Scary for a lot of kids. Now she has a reputation, kids are afraid of her now. The student had a hard time going to school, knowing that kids don't want to play with her. Teachers did nothing to try and help her in the beginning. (Participant A)

• **b. Targeted/labeled** - He seemed targeted after the first suspension, and he was labeled as being a behavioral child. The student didn't know how or what to do with his behavioral issues. (Participant D)

• **c. Impact of food allergies** - At age three, we didn't know what was wrong with our son. When he was 9 1/2 years old, we found out it was foods and stuff. He's so allergic to so many foods that his temper was so out of control because he was so toxic [sic] in his body. (Participant D)

• **d. Defiant and mean behavior** - My son would throw shoes at some teachers. He'd cry, be verbal, swear. (Participant C)

If fifty percent of the parents in this study felt their child(ren) were being labeled at their school in a negative manner, and even the students identified being labeled in some of their interviews, then this labeling process or the perception of their child being labeled must be removed. This negative concept must be changed to a positive reinforcement for good behavior or more positive feedback to the parents through open communication, daily or weekly. The communication needs to be on a regular, consistent basis, and for not only the bad behaviors, but for the good behaviors as well.

**5. Prior assumption five.**

Ongoing suspensions in school do not produce a favorable outcome for most Native American students and their families.

The data collected from this phenomenological study of kindergarten suspension indicates the number of study participants who received school suspensions increased each year, beginning in third grade. Initially in first grade, there were four out of six
participants' being suspended, by third and fifth grade, it was five out of six participants that were being suspended. (Table 13)

Graduation and dropout national statistics have identified other unfavorable outcomes for American Indians such as the U.S. Department of Education (2006) study. This study stated American Indians have the lowest graduation rate for all races at 75% (Figure 1), and the American Indian dropout rate was between 13-25%. (Figure 3)

Two parents expressed their thoughts about the process of suspension and the fact they do not think it works. These parents' statements are in unison to the Researcher's assumption, as well as the conclusion of the U.S. Department of Education's study (2006) in which the study reiterates the suspension of students does not alleviate or alter the problem.

I just wish there was another way to go about everything, instead of suspensions, and making kids feel like it's their fault. You know, cause [sic] that's what, even though he could not help it, he got suspended. And I can see when he lays [sic] his hands on someone, yes, that's a suspension. But, getting up out of your seat because you have an illness, you know, you just can't sit down. And you get suspended for that...I think that's wrong. (Participant B)

I don't think that suspensions do help, because it just takes time away from them, their education, you know. Why can't they work with the kid, you know, more before getting to that point? Yeah, I just don't think that's right. And then, kids would rather be suspended and be home and play games and do whatever-instead of being in school, doing what they have to do. (Participant E)

a. Parent solutions.

It appeared in this study the disciplinary model used for kindergarten suspensions has not been effective. Two of the six parents stated their frustration with the school and both parents felt it was necessary for them to take their child out of school during their
kindergarten year. One child was taken out of school for a little over two months and the second child was taken out for half the school year. Both parents felt the school officials didn't know how to deal with their children or couldn't make accommodations for them. As one mother so aptly described it: "They waited too long, and a big key was that it was like a power struggle, and if you don't comply, they couldn't think outside the box."

6. Prior assumption six.

The consequence of school suspension to eliminate bad behavior does not appear to influence these study participants, because the percentage of school suspensions for these study participants appears to increase, as well as continue into middle school. (Refer to Table 13).

According to Algozzine, Christian, Marr, McClanahan, and White (2008) in results from their two studies of problem behavior in elementary schools, it was not surprising that an overall increase in the number of office referrals received by students was evident as they progressed through grade levels, showing fifth graders with more referrals for problem behaviors than any other grade level across all schools. They noted also the number of referrals for kindergarten students tended to vary significantly, and one possible explanation for infractions committed by kindergarteners was their difficulty transitioning to a school setting.

The researcher does not have all the answers as far as what comes next in lieu of the disciplinary model of school suspensions, but the information gathered from this research project will help begin the discussion among parents, community, tribal and school officials. The researcher has provided many theories and facts provided in current
literature, as well as recommendations, and the suggestions of researchers in the field of Native American academic student success to help make change in school districts.

G. Unexpected Data

One parent participant’s quote regarding the geographical location of the study summarized an important demographic variable for consideration:

Rural communities have a hard time trying to get services for these kids. There's not a lot out there, and after they turn a certain age, there's like... nothing for these kids. Nothing for these kids. No support services at all. If I didn't have our tribe behind me, he wouldn't...I mean, we still wouldn't have these kinds of programs. (Participant E)

Yes, this parent's observation is accurate in the researcher’s opinion as an educator and scholar. Services and resources for special education students are limited in small, rural areas. School districts with limited budgets in rural areas may often share the financial burden of costs for a school psychologist, therapists, specialists, and even special education directors. Two school districts nearby do share many of their positions and fund some of them as part time for each school district.

Special education services for autism and an autism waiver program has only recently been an additional innovative program which has provided services to many youth in the past two years in the geographical location of the study. The location of the study was more than 100 miles away from any major metropolitan city, so parents, communities and school districts must push extra hard for sufficient funds to provide these fundamental services. And, yes, tribal communities sometimes have to look elsewhere for additional funds to create their own programs and resources to aid parents, and it is most likely true what this parent said about as the children become older and older students, it is even more difficult to find those resources for them. Unfortunately, this is
more likely than not to happen if the parents do not have a voice in their schools or in their districts, especially Native American parents, such as were in this study.

1. Police intervention or involvement.

Five of six of the students in this study had police intervention in one or more of their suspension incidents while they were in school. One participant had been enrolled in two different schools during the kindergarten year. Participant 3 and 6 did not have police intervention at the second school. Researcher clarified with parents if there was any question as to which school had police intervention in relationship to their child's suspension incidents. The specific results are listed.

- Participants 1 and 4 had police involvement in kindergarten in which a police officer was attempting to restrain the student.
- Participants 2, 5, 6 had police involvement in kindergarten.
- Participant F (parent) was not sure whether her son's restraint incident was in second grade or in third grade.
- Participant 5 had a fifth grade suspension incident, in which no restraints were used, but there was police involvement.
- Police interventions with five students were at one public school.
- Participant 3 had other incidents in which one teacher used restraints on him; however, there was no police intervention in any of these incidents.

a. School/police liaison.

The researcher questioned whether the 100% police intervention at School I was solely due to the availability of a school/police liaison position in the school district or whether the policies, procedures, or practices of the two school districts were different in
responding to physical altercations with students. The answer to this question cannot be
determined through this study.

2. Alternative educational placements - Non public school.

According to both student and parent interviews, five of six students in this study
had alternative educational placements other than the public school. Alternative educa-
tional placement was defined for this study as involvement with other educational facili-
ties in which they received mental health assessment, evaluation, educational and coun-
seling services, 30 day assessment/diagnosis in a locked unit, day-group counseling ser-
VICES or home-schooling in their home.

The decisions for out of school placements for these students may have been
informally made by the student’s parents, or it might have been recommended or man-
dated by school professionals, or a court system. If the out of school placements were
voluntary or mandated by a school or court system, this fact was not clarified by the
researcher through further questioning. Information from the study indicated some of
these services lasted from a minimum of one week to a maximum of three years. Five out
of six students were involved in these out-of-school placements, with the exception of
Participant 4.

3. Judicial system involvement.

Student or parent involvement with the judicial system was an unexpected out-
come for this study, in which the fact emerged which indicated two of six students as
well as their parents were involved in the legal system. This information was voluntarily
presented through their interviews.
Judicial system involvement was defined through the student/parent interviews for the purposes of this study as: (a) disorderly conduct, (b) consent decree, (d) criminal damage to property, (e) probation, (f) restitution, (g) community service, (h) foster care, (i) out-of-home placement with other family members, and (j) court-ordered placement in a juvenile detention facility. One student was involved with four out of nine of the judicial services, while the other student was involved with seven out of nine of the judicial services. It was presumed the majority of the judicial system involvement was with the county court system in which the students resided; however, it is possible there may have been some tribal court involvement.

Two out of six students had involvement with the judicial system. These two students were involved with the judicial legal system through the act of committing a crime as well as possibly through other out of home placements. The assumption was that most of the nine judicial services mentioned in this study involved county court, but there may have been some tribal court involvement for foster care or out-of-home placement with other family members.

The researcher did not ask the parents for clarification as to which court system was involved when these discussions were brought up during the interviews. The researcher respected the fact the parent was sharing sensitive information, and did not want to disrupt the bond of confidence the parent had with the researcher at such a critical moment.

4. Tribal court involvement with students.

Local tribal court systems may have ordinances for a children’s code for minors under the age of 18, which means the tribal court can have jurisdiction in the case. These
ordinances can involve primary procedures for minors for truancy, underage consumption of alcohol, and custody issues. Under the same local tribal court, some chapters of the ordinance which are specifically listed under this code and which could be relevant to two participants in this study are: (a) emergency custody, (b) guardianship. During the interviews, there were two students and two parents who identified out of home placements for the students, however it was not identified whether these placements were through county court or tribal court, or if it was an emergency custody or guardianship placement through tribal court.

H. Limitations/Weaknesses of the Study

The researcher acknowledged there were multiple ways of interpreting data and also that this concluding chapter showed the subjective nature of this qualitative research study. It is the responsibility of the researcher when studying a subject, to perform the research necessary, tie in all current, relevant literature to the study, and then at the end, to add personal voice when all the research steps for presenting findings and outcomes for the study have been accomplished. First, the researcher will discuss the limitations/weaknesses of the study in relationship to the design, sample, methods, generalizability, validity, and potential bias. Secondly, there will be a discussion regarding the limitations/weaknesses in retrospect to other factors; such as tools, which were discussed for use but were not implemented, advantages or disadvantages to interview questions which relied solely on memory, and the pros and cons of interviewing younger vs. older student participants.

The design of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to use individual interviews conducted with each student, as well as his/her parents, to describe the
suspension experience through their memories of the event(s) in an attempt to capture both the parent and student’s perceptions regarding this occurrence. This study was to explore how the student's suspension impacted his/her subsequent school experience. Demographic data regarding family composition was also collected as a multiple data method.

All individual interviews were audiotaped through a voice-recording mechanism while using open-ended questions to allow the participant to freely narrate their story. The advantage of using the phenomenological method of a qualitative research method was that the data will be in richer detail, and derived straight from the source, versus speculation regarding statistics.

The sampling used for this study was homogeneous sampling. Purposeful sampling was used, which lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. According to Patton (1990), information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

A multiple data collection method, called triangulation, was used. The use of multiple data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data. Participant interviews and document collection were used in this study; however the researcher did not use participant observation via videotaping due to the subject matter and the intrusiveness of videotaping the interviews. This research required the involvement of others, and the development of a relationship based on trust and rapport in performing the interviews. The researcher entered into their social system in a way that demonstrated that the participants were valued, that is, that the worth of their time and attention and association was appreciated. (Glesne, 1999, p. 29-32, 101)
The generalizability of this study, according to Glesne (1999), is when qualitative inquirers look to the specific, both to understand it in particular and to understand something of the world in general. In short, researchers conduct qualitative studies not merely for their own sake, but rather in the reasonable hope of bringing something grander than the case to the attention of others. Researchers hope for a description and analysis of its complexity that identify concepts not previously seen or fully appreciated. (p. 153) This generalizability concept was used to perform research on this topic.

Researcher bias was a potential factor in that the researcher was employed at one of the three school districts more than thirteen years ago as an in-school suspension monitor. At that time, the researcher was subconsciously aware that the majority of the students who were in the suspension room were largely Native American students. This memory from thirteen years ago however, did not impact this research or the research outcomes in a biased manner due to the length of the time span.

Other limitations for this study which were discussed in Chapter Two were: a) the small number of participants interviewed, b) the limited sampling of students due to the time frame of kindergarten suspensions studied, c) the recruitment methods performed by other collaborating partners, and d) the fact this study relied solely on the memories of the students and their parents.

This research study only involved Native American Ojibwe students that were suspended in kindergarten during the time period of 1998-2007, and were students or previous students of two school districts in this study. This suspension study does not include any other grade nor can it be generalized to include all Native American students of other tribes, other reservations or in other geographic regions.
1. Two tools discussed but not implemented.

There were two tools, discussed in Chapter Two, which were not implemented for use in this study due to time constraints. Both tools could be valuable surveys to use in future studies of subjects that involve Native American children or youth.

   a. Acculturation questionnaire and continuum.

   The first tool was the acculturation questionnaire (Chapter Two), which was compiled by Herring (1996); LaFromboise, Trimble, and Mohatt (1990), and the second tool was Snyder's (1994) six question Hope Scale, which was discussed in Chapter Two.

   The acculturation continuum most likely would be a useful tool for educators to better understand each tribal group and their differences, and what those differences are. The acculturation continuum presented a table with helpful indicators as to the possible level of acculturation for students. The continuum shared the core values, which would be relative for five levels of acculturation: traditional, marginal, bicultural, assimilated, and pantraditional. Individuals differ in terms of their level of acculturation, geographic setting, and socioeconomic status. This tool could be useful in a future study to determine variances between tribal groups or how differences in tribal beliefs and acculturation might possibly impact outcomes.

   b. Snyder’s Hope Scale.

   Snyder's (1994) Hope Scale also was discussed, and this tool might be beneficial in future studies as well to determine the level of hope and despair for students or parents. There were six questions associated with this tool that sought to understand the level of hope and or despair of the individual.
2. Memories of kindergarten suspensions.

The researcher relied on the students' and parents' memories to describe their experience, which may or may not be accurate. This was a limitation for the study, although two of the youngest students out of six remembered their kindergarten suspension incidents vividly.

Another limiting factor that surfaced during the student interviews was the fact the researcher sometimes had to reword the question to a simpler format in order to elicit a response from some of the participants. Two student participants had excellent memories and word usage skills in describing their kindergarten suspension experiences, while two other students appeared to be more introverted and shy when responding to questions. One student vacillated between sharing his memories eagerly and other times, his father carried the conversation and responded to the questions.

a. Younger versus older students.

The two students who were the most engaged and responsive during the interviews with their stories were also the two youngest students in this study. These two students eagerly described their suspension incidents in great detail. The researcher pondered if the younger students had stronger memories of their experiences or more vivid memories because they were traumatic experiences that remained intact in their minds or whether they just remembered them because the incidents occurred more recently in their lives than the older students. The older students did not engage with the researcher as much in telling their story as the younger students, and the older students appeared to need more coaxing in order to respond. One older student did not offer much descriptive information, and it appeared he did not have or did not wish to remember those kindergarten suspension incidents (or other grade suspensions either).
Some difficulties existed in receiving definitive responses from the students. For example, when the students were asked Question Two about whether or not they believed the suspension impacted their subsequent school experience, their responses were inconclusive.

According to Morgan (2009) research shows that Native American students tend to reflect more than mainstream students. Reflective students take more time than other students as they gather more evidence before offering an answer. There is a connection between this behavior and the culture of Native Americans. In traditional Native American homes, there is strong emphasis on performing an activity correctly. As a result, Native American students may not attempt to answer unfamiliar questions for fear of not performing well.

3. **Phenomenological approach.**

Grbich (2004) states phenomenology is an approach which attempts to understand the hidden meanings, and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these. Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between researcher and respondents or between researcher and texts (p. 84).

This qualitative phenomenological study provided in-depth and intimate description of six students and their parents' experiences with kindergarten suspension. The researcher felt there was a wealth of data and information that was derived from the interviews. The researcher feels that this study has contributed much knowledge to the rare literature on this topic. The researcher felt gratitude that these stories could be shared with readers, in the best manner possible and with the fullest and most authentic replica-
tion of the parents and students' voices so they can be heard.

I. Therapeutic Holding and Other Student Therapies

1. Student Restraint Training

The professional term of restraint as defined by The International Society of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurses (1999) is:

Any physical method of restricting an individual's freedom of movement, physical activity, or normal access to his or her body. It is sometimes used to describe three different types of restraint procedures: mechanical, ambulatory, and chemical.

Mechanical restraint entails the use of any device or object (e.g., tape, tiedowns, calming blanket, body carrier) to limit an individual's body movement to prevent or manage out-of-control behavior.

Ambulatory restraint is also known as manual restraint or "therapeutic holding" (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee, 1997). It involves one or more people using their bodies to restrict another individual's body movement as a means for reestablishing behavioral control and establishing and maintaining safety for the out-of-control student, other students, and staff (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2000).

Chemical restraint uses medication to control behavior or restrict a patient's freedom of movement, and is typically used only in institutional or hospital programs (p. 154).

According to Ryan and Peterson (2004), there are strict guidelines which govern the use of physical restraint in most medical, psychiatric, and law enforcement applications, however there has been no such accreditation requirements for schools or many other child care agencies. The lack of these commonly accepted guidelines or accreditation standards in schools makes those who use physical restraint more susceptible to misunderstanding and abuse, let alone improper implementation. Moses (2000) states school staff may lack training in effective behavioral interventions necessary for the prevention of emotional outbursts that are typically associated with children who have severe behavioral problems.
The concept of physical restraint has been thrust into the mainstream of public education, mostly due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which established the principle of serving children with special needs in the least restrictive environment. Schools are now challenged to demonstrate practices that prevent or contain challenging and sometimes violent behaviors. Physical restraint may be one element of these practices according to Skiba and Peterson (2002). Unfortunately, there has been almost no research conducted in a school environment to examine the circumstances when physical restraint was employed, if it was prevalent, appropriate application, or efficacy of the physical restraint. Day (2002) claimed there is very little empirical support for therapeutic benefits to children receiving restraint, and there was also no evidence for any potential side effects of restraint.

One unexpected outcome that surfaced in this study was that students were restrained during their suspension incidents. Frequently, the restraining was done by a police liaison officer who was a funded position in one of the schools. There were several occasions also, in which one teacher or another adult did restrain students. One parent quote described a conversation she had with a teacher and the teacher's trepidations about restraint training.

The question was raised by a parent during interviews as to whether or not the staff had been properly trained in how to safely restrain students. In this example, a parent participant shares her experience, which captures the need for training on how to properly and safely restrain students.

Unidentified parent participant talked about a statement made to her at a sporting event by a teacher: 'I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but I heard, you know, that you're bringing your son back? Can I ask you why?' The mother res-
ponded: 'Well, because he wants friends. He told me he wants to make friends.' The teacher said 'Oh, well, you know all of us have to take a training now on restraining?' Mother stated to her 'Yeah, I know about that. I was made aware of that. You know, everybody should have a refresher. We don't know what's going to happen, so it's good to be prepared.'

Recommendations for use of physical restraint in school settings according to Ryan and Peterson (2004) are:

- Restraint should never be performed as a means of punishment or to force compliance from a student.

- Physical restraint procedures should never be performed by untrained personnel.

- The courts have established that very limited forms of mechanical restraint is permissible with students in a school setting that physical or ambulatory restraint should be administered only when the safety of the student, peers, or staff members is at risk. Staff must use the safest method available, with the minimal amount of force necessary. Once a restraint is used, it should be discontinued as soon as possible.

- No restraint should be administered in such a manner that it prevents a student from breathing or speaking. The student's physical status, including respiration and skin color, should be monitored continuously throughout the restraint procedure.

- Procedures for reporting and notification should be in place:

  1. Following the administration of a physical restraint, the staff member who administered the restraint should verbally notify an administrator as soon as possible.

  2. Within 24 hours, a written report should be provided to the administrator.

  3. In addition, the administrator should verbally inform the student's parents or guardians of the restraint as soon as possible.

  4. Written reports to the parents, including a description of the event and staff involved, should be postmarked no later than three working days following an incident (p. 164).

The researcher recommends that the schools that use restraints of students need to
clarify the use of restraints in their school, what the procedure is, who can restrain, and also ensure that all teachers have restraint training to accommodate the safety of the students.

2. Other student therapies.

Parents are an integral component to the school climate, and many times they may be a forgotten part of the solution for their children. Many times parents may have ideas that can help benefit their child, but unfortunately, our school systems may not reach out and seek their input before a crisis occurs. In this study, four parents shared some solutions they used with their children, such as equine therapy, counseling therapy, and daily communications, both positive and negative, between the teacher and parent. Another parent recommended special accommodations should be made for students that needed it; she continued to say her son was easily distracted or overstimulated by too many visual displays on the classroom walls or by constant noise. She felt it was a significant, positive step in the right direction when one teacher was asked and agreed to re-arrange areas of her classroom to accommodate the student's needs.

J. Academic success

Academic success is a desirable outcome for the students in this study. Not only should we look at their kindergarten suspension and the challenges that emerged for both the Ojibwe students and their parents, but we need to also broaden our vision to include recommendations from the experts on school success for our Native American students.

Following are several recommendations: two by Powers (2005) on anti-bullying and anger management, nine by Demmert (2001) on academic success and two by Clay (1998) on transition and combining professional development for preschool and kinder-
garten teachers. Rossi (1994) completes this section with his four recommendations to help with student motivation.

1. Bullying behaviors and anti-bullying approaches.

Three out of six of the students in this study identified being bullied as one of their challenges. All of the participants identified physical violence or displays of anger as another challenge for them. Powers' (2005) recommendation for promotion of school-wide anti-bullying, anger management, and substance abuse programs to curb declines in student achievement was a logical next step.

According to an article by Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, and Hymel (2010) they found that victims of bullying and bully-victims were less likely to be high achievers in school than students who were bystanders. Low achievement was not associated with bullying others. In a study of sixth graders, there was significantly poorer school adjustment (e.g. doing well on schoolwork, getting along with classmates, following rules, doing homework) among students who were bullies, victims, or bully-victims as compared with students who were not involved. Other students have demonstrated that children who are bullied are more likely to avoid school or even drop out (p. 39).

Involvement in bullying does not automatically place a child at risk for poor achievement, but it can be one of a combination of factors that undermine a child's engagement in school, underscoring the need for educators to pay particular attention to children who are victimized. School climate is an important consideration in understanding school bullying, because adult supervision decreases as students move from elementary to middle and secondary school. In turn, less structure and supervision is
associated with concomitant increases in student bullying, particularly in locations such as playgrounds, lunchrooms, and hallways (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 2001). Students often report feeling unsafe and afraid in unsupervised places in and around schools (Aster, Meyer, and Pitner, 2001).

Kasen (2004) also noted that bullying is strongly influenced by peer behaviors and reactions. Bystanders can have a powerful effect on bullying, positive or negative. One observational study of students found that peers were involved in 85% of bullying episodes, usually by providing attention to the bullying or actually joining in the aggression (p. 39).

One study found that up to 94% of students with disabilities reported experiencing some form of victimization. These students experienced increased verbal abuse (e.g., name-calling, mimicking disability characteristics, teasing), social exclusion, and physical aggression when compared with students without disabilities (Little, 2002, p. 40).

The most promising results were reported for whole-school anti-bullying efforts, including those to establish school-wide rules and consequences for bullying, teacher training, conflict resolution strategies, and classroom curricula and individual training. School-wide programs were found to be far more effective in reducing bullying and victimization than were classroom curriculum programs or social skills training strategies (p. 42).
2. Anger management and/or physical aggression.

In a survey of 500 students and their mothers over a 2.5 year interval, Kasen (2004), indicated that students in highly conflicted schools, where teachers are ineffective in maintaining order and students defied teachers and engaged in fighting and vandalism, showed an increase in verbal and physical aggression, even after controlling for baseline aggression. Students who attended schools that emphasized learning showed a decrease in aggression.

The researcher recommendation for schools is that anti-bullying efforts need to be increased, even if the schools currently have some measurement of anti-bullying efforts in the school. Bullying of students is still a current issue, and the impacts of bullying are far reaching.

3. Incorporate school-wide screenings to identify underachievement of Native American students.

The second recommendation of Powers (2005) is to incorporate school-wide screenings to identify American Indian students before underachievement becomes entrenched, and to establish an intervention plan when the Native American students begin to fall behind in achievement or attendance. Their developmental needs, individual assets, and vulnerabilities should all be considered. There are many aspects of early child education impacting approaches to learning, such as promoting positive attitudes about school while in kindergarten to enhance early American Indian/Alaskan Native child academic skill development.
4. Key factors to improve academic performance among Native American students.

Five out of six students in this study felt they faced safety dilemmas or perceived risks while at school. In reading Demmert's key factors, he presented the importance of providing a safe, challenging, and enriched environment early in the life of a child. Demmert also discussed the significance of culture and Native language programs in the school, the culture of the school and whether it is congruent with the culture of the community, which all correlate to the findings in this study of the child knowing who they are as a Native American student. Demmert also indicates the importance of the participant of Native American parents in the educational process as well as the responsibility and ownership of the school by the parents and community. This study also showed the impact of social capital of the school and the communication with the parents and community. All of the factors presented by Demmert can help increase Native American student success, which also important to the Native American students in this study.

Demmert (2001) includes statistics and strategies to help Native American students achieve academic success through the following nine points.

1. Providing opportunities for early development of language and other skills can have significant influence on how well these children will do academically in their later life as students.

2. The environment in which young Native American children learn influences the development of their many intelligences; therefore, parents and educators who wish to promote the development of smart, healthy, well-adjusted children must provide a safe, challenging, and enriched environment early in the life of a child.

3. The importance of Native language and cultural programs in schools has a multi-pronged impact. Native language and cultural programs: 1) provide motivation for students, 2) promote a positive sense of identity and self, and 3) support improved academic performance among Native American students.
4. Levels of congruency between the culture of the school and the culture of the community served can be an important factor in community attitudes towards the school.

5. Community attitudes and participation of parents in the educational process appear to be critical elements for teachers to be more successful with Native students.

6. Responsibility for and ownership of schools by parents and other community members are also significantly tied to success of the schools.

7. Knowledge about characteristics of successful Native American students is somewhat limited but information tells us that positive life experiences, sense of purpose, early goal setting, and knowledge of basic skills contribute to a student’s ability to successfully navigate the process of schooling.

8. Social and economic circumstances of families and communities have some level of influence on student performance.

9. Native American traditional values and practices of students and families, when clearly understood in the modern context, may be significant assets to learning (p. 50-51).

5. Professional development for increased cultural awareness, sensitivity and positive transition practices for Native American kindergarten students.

Moore, Beatty, and Perez-Mendez (1995) recommend that elementary principals and preschool administrators should require joint professional development training for kindergarten and preschool classroom personnel that include: cultural awareness and sensitivity in areas of culture, language, and diversity to achieve cross-cultural communication and competence, including how to use self-reflection tools to assess cultural competence. Clay (1998) recommends promotion of positive transition practices for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) children into kindergarten.

The issue of transition was voiced as a challenge for four out of the six students in this study. There were two transition phases that appeared to impact these students. The first phase was during the time when preschool children enter into the public school kindergarten. The second transitional phase was when the elementary students leave the elementary and enter into middle school.
The researcher recommends that there is a need to increase additional cultural sensitivity/competency efforts for teachers in working successfully with Native American students. Teachers need to be culturally competent in understanding their worldviews as being different to how Native American students may think and what their values are. Teachers need to know what works best for Native American students in their learning styles, the curriculum used, and how the teacher responds and communicates with Native American students to achieve their optimal performance in school.

6. **Student motivation to stay in school - Four key components.**

After an Ojibwe student was suspended from kindergarten, a *Cycle of School Failure or Success* (Figure 5), was developed by the researcher to show one out of four possible outcomes which were predicted for this student. This *Cycle of School Failure or Success* correlates to Rossi's (1994) fourth key component of student motivation, in which Rossi discussed how suspensions related to dropping out of school.

The *Cycle of School Failure* (Figure 5) indicates one outcome of ongoing suspensions for these students, followed by absenteeism, dropping grades, failing in classes, with the end result of possibly dropping out of school. Rossi's (1994) statistic regarding 15% of surveyed dropouts also reported that *being suspended or expelled* from school led directly to their decision to drop out was of utmost significance to this study. His study showed a correlation to school suspensions, dropping out of school, and a sense of hopelessness that many youth may display in their behaviors in order to damage their chances of getting a good education.

Rossi (1994) lists four key components for student motivation to stay in school and to work hard on school learning goals.
1. **Opportunities for success in school work**

   In order for students to feel successful in their schoolwork, they have to give their best efforts to their classroom assignments. Many students that are at-risk may experience only frustration and failure in their search for academic recognition and rewards. According to the National Educational Longitudinal Study Dropout Study, three reasons students’ listed were: "I didn't like school," "I was failing school," and "I couldn't keep up with my schoolwork." Good grades, teacher praise, and family pride give students motivation to stay in school.

   Many students from poor or minority backgrounds are particularly at risk of being deprived of opportunities for school success because they have weaker resources at home and in their communities (social capital) to support learning of academic subjects. Although their families often care deeply about their school success, parents' educational accomplishments may also be weak, and their neighborhoods may have serious distractions from schoolwork, which places the students at a continuing disadvantage in competing for academic rewards. At-risk students usually begin school less well-prepared for schoolwork and remain well below average for their entire school careers.

2. **Human climate of caring and support**

   It is important for students to feel that the adults in their school are supporting them and are ready to help them pursue their school goals, but many poor or minority students rarely experience a close positive experience with school adults. Or they fail to believe teachers and other school officials are there to support their efforts and ambitions as learners. Students at-risk see the institution of school as an often hostile holding pen for them during those growing years. These students are likely to feel socially alienated from their schools, and the school climate may fail to emphasize academic excellence. Poor or minority students are often the victims of misunderstandings about teachers' directions or intentions because of the cultural differences between them, and they are sometimes the targets of remaining prejudicial attitudes of some educators toward racial-ethnic minorities and lower socioeconomic-background students.

3. **Relevance of school to students' community and future**

   Students need to be able to relate their schoolwork to their own lives and future goals if they are to take their classroom learning seriously. Schoolwork may make little sense to many poor or minority students, because their classroom assignments/tasks may seem boring and meaningless, with very little connection to their own expectations or their own experiences. The curriculum at all levels continues to give very little attention to the cultural traditions and historic contributions of minority cultures, which may be from the individual students' own ethnic heritage. This creates further barriers to finding inherent interest and stimulation in their schoolwork.

4. **Help with students' personal problems**

   In order for students to focus on their school roles and responsibilities, they need to be free of serious personal problems, such as hunger, substance abuse, teenage parenthood, or abusive homes. Many at-risk students come from families or
neighborhoods that may present major obstacles to their attention and energy for schoolwork.

About 15% of surveyed dropouts also reported that being suspended or expelled from school led directly to their decision to drop out, which suggests that a mismatch of school demands and personal coping skills is another huge source of the problem. The unemployment, crime, and family instability in many poor neighborhoods create a breeding ground for various youth problems. This can also lead to a sense of hopelessness that causes many youth to display behaviors that damage their chances of getting a good education (pps. 258-264).

7. Closing parent quote.

If you look at the ones that have already graduated, that haven't moved on to something else, it's because they're afraid. They're afraid of the experience they may have. They don't know that their experience could be better if they just make it better. They don't know this because nobody tried to tell them, that there's life besides this school, there's life besides our reservation. Nobody tries to help them move on. I see so many of these kids, just fail, because nobody tried to help them. There's got to be help. We could change it at some point, break that circle open, we got to do something. It's got to change. (Participant A)

K. Final summation

The challenges presented by this topic of kindergarten suspensions appeared to present a multifaceted system of issues all interrelated to this subject. There certainly were numerous ways kindergarten suspensions of Native American Ojibwe students can be improved. The entire presenting problem indicated transition issues with kindergarten students in which it appeared in this study were not addressed properly, especially since the majority of the students in this study, four out of five, were already identified as having IEP's before they enrolled in kindergarten. Medication issues, restraining issues, police involvement, insufficient training of teachers, possible lack of sufficient resources, all these could have been addressed early on in the child's IEP process. It appeared from
the interviews many of the students were suspended early in their kindergarten year and suffered ongoing consequences up through eighth grade.

However, the researcher can speak to the fact that the issues surrounding this study seem to portray a *Cycle of School Failure*, with no end in sight unless positive changes are made in disciplinary practices, additional training and resources for staff for behavioral issues, intensive analysis of IEP children transitioning into the public school in kindergarten and their needs/services/medication, stronger, more cohesive IEP teams which may need to meet more often than is mandated by IDEA, and more outreach services to parents of at-risk students sooner.

Tribal governments and/or a tribal representative should advocate for the community to make sure needed services for tribal children with IEP's are being provided in a timely manner so that these children can have an ultimately smooth transition into the public school. The public schools and tribal governments can and should collaborate to ensure resources and services are made available to these children.

One of the schools in this study changed their practice and policy of suspending kindergarteners approximately five years ago, however the policy of kindergarten suspension was practiced for a period of ten years prior to this change. Although this practice was discontinued for kindergarten suspensions in one school, Table 13 indicates that most of the students in this study were still being suspended throughout their school years up through the eighth grade, (the interviews began in 2012).

The researcher hoped this doctoral study would begin the conversation between school administrators, teachers, specialists, school psychologists, tribal officials, parents,
and concerned community members about the massive amount of work that needs to be done so this type of disproportionate suspension and *Cycle of School Failure* stops here.
FIGURE 5
Cycle of School Failure or Success
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

NAME OF RESERVATION OR TRIBAL BAND
SAMPLE TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION # _________________________

RESOLUTION PERTAINING TO SUPPORTING A DISSERTATION PROJECT involving _______tribal members, and proposed by LaVonne Chenault-Goslin. Her study is entitled: “A Phenomenological Study of Kindergarten Suspension of Ojibwe Tribal Students in Two Rural Wisconsin Public Schools.”

WHEREAS: The ________ Tribal Council is the governing body of the Name of Tribal Band of Location of Chippewa or Indians of Wisconsin; and,

WHEREAS: The mission of the Name of Tribal Council (adopted date) and whereas stated in the Tribe’s Mission Statement is “To promote, plan and provide for the health, welfare, education, environmental protection, cultural preservation and economic well being of tribal members and to protect Treaty Rights now and in the future”; and

WHEREAS: The Name of Researcher’s Job Location 2010-2011 Mission Statement states (approved by Tribal Council on_____): “Traditional Ojibwe values will guide our efforts to promote the spiritual, emotional, physical and cognitive wellness of the children, families, and community we serve.”

WHEREAS: The Name of Researcher’s Job Center recognizes that our children are our greatest asset and they are the future building blocks for our tribe’s foundation.

WHEREAS: My study “A Phenomenological Study of Kindergarten Suspension of Ojibwe Tribal Students in Two Rural Wisconsin Public Schools” recognizes the importance of our children’s growth and development and their social, emotional, cognitive, and intellectual well-being as they prepare to leave our center to enter the public school.

This study recognizes there may be cultural dissonance between the values the children are taught at our center and the values that may be expected of them when they enter kindergarten. This study seeks to understand the phenomenon of kindergarten suspension through the eyes of Ojibwe students and their parents from two rural public schools in Wisconsin.
WHEREAS: Ms. Chenault-Goslin is employed as the director. She is requesting the support of the ______ Tribal Council to pursue the recruitment of participants for her study in a collaborative effort with the tribal education director. An Initial Recruitment Flyer has been developed by the researcher to be sent home by the tribal education director to tribal members who were kindergarten students during the focus years.

This process will ensure that the identity and contact information of any and all tribal members that participate in this study will remain confidential. There will not be any identifying information named in the study of either the participants or the schools involved.

All copying and mailing costs will be incurred by the researcher.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That the ______ Tribal Council fully endorses the proposed research project by LaVonne Chenault-Goslin, to recruit and interview no more than eight total Ojibwe tribal students in two different school districts that were suspended in kindergarten during the years 1998-2007. If any students are minors under the age of 18, parental consent is needed. One primary-caregiving parent per student will also be recruited to participate in this study.

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned Secretary of the Tribal Council of the Name of Tribal Band, a federally recognized Indian Tribe, hereby certify that the Tribal Council is composed of ___ members, of whom ____, constituting a quorum, were present at a meeting thereof duly called, noticed, and convened, held on the ___ day of _________, 2012, and foregoing resolution was adopted at said meeting by an affirmative vote of _____ members and that said resolution has not been rescinded or amended in any way.

________________________________
Secretary, Name of Tribal Council
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions - Student Research Participant

- Tell me how you think others would describe you.

- Please describe to me what you remember about the first day of kindergarten…starting with what you did to prepare for school that day. Who was in this memory?

- What thoughts/feelings come to your mind when you think about your teacher in kindergarten?

- What special memories do you have about your first day in kindergarten class? Who was in this memory?

- Please tell me your happiest memory of school when you were in kindergarten.

- Please describe to me your saddest or angriest memory of school when you were in kindergarten.

- Do you remember ever getting in trouble by the teacher in your class?

- Do you recall ever being suspended when you were in kindergarten? Please tell me what you remember.

- Do you recall any other school suspension after kindergarten? Tell me about it.

- Describe to me if you think this suspension had any impact on you in the years following kindergarten.

- Please tell me if you think you face any challenges or barriers at school now, and if so, what are they.
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions - Parent Research Participant

- Are you the primary/sole caregiver of the student research participant?
- What is your race/ethnicity, age?
- Please state other family members living in your household and their relationship to the student.
- Do you live: a) On a reservation, b) Rural area but not reservation, c) Urban/city
- What income range do you feel your family fits: poverty level, middle, high?
- Describe to me how you see your son (or daughter) as a person.
- Please tell me how you think your son (or daughter) would describe their kindergarten teacher.
- Please tell me what you remember about your child’s first day in kindergarten.
- What do you remember about happy memories for your child when he (she) was in kindergarten?
- What do you remember about sad or any memories for your child when he/she was in kindergarten?
- Please tell me about your child’s first time that you were aware he (she) got in trouble in kindergarten?
- Please describe to me your memories of the day you were told your child was suspended in kindergarten.
- Do you recollect any other school suspensions for your child after kindergarten? Please describe that occurrence to me.
- Please describe to me whether or not you think your child’s kindergarten suspension had any impact on his (her) school years following kindergarten.
- Please explain to me if you think your child faces any challenges or barriers at school now and if so, what are they?