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IABD's goal is to maximize timely, quality, tightly written studies across the business and related communications disciplines. The compact length of articles in *Business Research Yearbook* does, however, impose a severe limitation on some contributions. We recognize there are instances where up to 30 or more pages are necessary to completely report data, so authors are free to subsequently publish extended and revised versions of their IABD research in other peer-reviewed forums provided the *Business Research Yearbook* version is credited. As one example of the growing IABD impact on scholarship, articles appearing in *Business Research Yearbook* are cited 10 times in the John A. Ledingham and Stephen D. Bruning, *Public Relations as Relationship Management* (Mahwah, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), and four times in Abbass F. Alkhafaji, *Strategic Management: Formulation, Implementation, and Control in a Dynamic Environment* (Binghamton, NY and London: Haworth Press, 2003).

Overall, for convention papers IABD is about at a 60% acceptance and 40% rejection rate, with acceptances declining each year as the organization progresses.

We hope this places the research contributions of refereed articles published by the editors of *Business Research Yearbook* in context.

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NATIVE PEOPLE AND SYSTEMIC BIAS IN THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Although systemic bias may not be racism, it is a form of prejudice. Systemic bias exists throughout society in the practices and attitudes that people face on a daily basis. Very often educational programs are set up to accommodate special needs, but, although well meaning, they incorporate this form of bias. Systemic bias inhibits student progress and often presupposes the need for cultural change. This paper reports a study of Canadian Native people and their experience with the public school system. Interviews were held with 19 students, 24 parents and community members, and nine faculty/administrators to assess how systemic bias affects their lives and education. Recommendations are made based on a comparison to what is happening in other jurisdictions and best practices for Native people. Most educators are unaware of systemic bias and when informed can make changes to reduce the incidence of this form of prejudice.

I. INTRODUCTION

Few studies exist and little has been written about systemic bias. This study looks at prejudice as identified by American Native peoples and attempts to distinguish racism from systemic bias. Comments from interviews with Native parents and educators are examined to show how racism and systemic bias are perceived in one school jurisdiction. Conclusions are drawn about the impact of systemic bias in Native education and recommendations are made to suggest how the incidence of systemic bias can be reduced in the public education of Native children.

Poor performance and high dropout rates among indigenous students may be a result of American education being so different from and apart from the lives of Indian people (Fisher and Campbell, 2007). According to Deloria, "The education that Indians receive today is the highly distilled product of Christian/European scientific and political encounters with the world .... [E]ducation has become something different and part from the lives of [Indian] people, and is seen as a set of technical beliefs that, upon mastering, admit the pupil to the social and economic structures of larger society" (1999, p. 138). De Plevitz writes, "Uncovering systemic issues will not solve the complex causes of poor performance, but may provide one front on which educators could reasonably begin," (2007, p. 68).

One glossary describes systemic bias as "the inherent tendency of a process to favor particular outcomes." It refers to human systems, while systemic error refers to non-human systems (i.e. scientific observations). Systemic bias may be the "result of underlying, often invisible mechanisms or unconscious perceptions by individuals in the system" (Glossary.com). One way to look at systemic bias is to consider the practices or policies of an organization. Inherent in these practices may be biases that favor or discourage one group or another. They don't take into account the differences among groups or individuals. Generally, all people are treated the same. Attitudes and beliefs as well as culture, both individual and organizational, may

be factors that create systemic bias. Often systemic bias is manifested in the failure of minority students to be able to meet the established standards while the dominant group meets those standards.

From a consumerism viewpoint, systemic bias involves the shared beliefs of those who participate. For instance, in a project run and used mostly by Americans, there will be a systemic bias towards American products. In a project run and used mostly by Internet users there will be a systemic bias towards technological solutions as being "good". This form of systemic bias arises from how people work together rather than from who participates.

A side effect of systemic bias may be oppression, but it is not the intended result. Racism, on the other hand, entails oppression which, along with its opposite "privilege," affects a range of people characterized by gender (sexism), sexuality (heterosexism), physical and mental ableness (ableism), age (ageism), class (classism), nationality, body size/shape, criminality, religion, and language/accent among others (Paradies, 2006). Racism can be expressed through stereotypes, prejudice or discrimination.

Jones (2000) has described racism as occurring at three distinct levels—internalized, interpersonal and systemic. Internalized racism incorporates racist attitudes, beliefs or ideologies within an actor's worldview. It may manifest as internalized dominance or internalized oppression. Internalized dominance is the incorporation of attitudes, beliefs or ideologies about the inferiority of other racial groups and/or the superiority of one's own racial group. On the other hand, internalized oppression is the incorporation of attitudes, beliefs or ideologies about the superiority of other racial groups and/or the inferiority of one's own racial group. Interpersonal racism involves interactions between actors while systemic racism is defined as the racist production, control and access to material, informational and symbolic resources within a society. Systemic racism includes institutionalized, structural, cultural, societal, and civilizational racism.

Systemic bias contrasts with institutional racism, a term coined by American black activist Stokely Carmichael in the late 1960s to describe organizational attempts to block reform. Following inquiries of the death of a black youth in Britain, Holdaway and O'Neill, 2006, citing Justice Macpherson (1999, Para. 6.34) defined institutional racism as: "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin." Institutional racism "can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." One way systemic bias is distinct from institutional racism is that it treats all people the same without regard to their differences. Institutional racism treats people differently and in doing so fails to provide them the standard of service given to the dominant group in society.

Many supposedly impartial practices have a tremendously discriminatory impact on racial and ethnic minorities, as well as women, girls and other protected groups. Examples are racial profiling by police, placing potentially toxic plants or waste treatment facilities in minority neighborhoods, height and weight requirements for employment and other selection procedures (Pinzler, 2001). Other examples of systemic bias are career selection and choice of major in college (Malveaux, 2005), the wage gender gap (Lucas, 2007), prison and court systems (Lee, 1999; MacLeod, 1999), and English-only language requirements (Pinzler, 2001). In the education system, systemic bias exists in funding mechanisms (Fisher and Elhav, 1996), meeting special needs (Alur, 2007), testing and delivery approaches. This is not a complete list. Systemic

bias permeates North American society in one form or another. For each of these instances exists an example of racism, thus we see the inherent danger of systemic bias.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Our claim is that systemic bias affects the teaching and delivery of programs to Native people. However, not only does it affect the teaching of Indians, but systemic bias also occurs in the teaching (or lack) of Native history and culture to non-Native populations. What is taught about Indian history and culture distorts the facts. Starnes (2006) states: "It is not surprising that most schools – even schools on reservations – emphasize a history and culture that does not include American Indians." However, she continues, "American Indian cultures are filled with great thinkers and doers and with histories at least as complex and exciting as those included in the largely Eurocentric body of knowledge acquired by America's graduating seniors. And whether or not we can name Indian contributions to our democracy and our daily lives, they do exist." (p. 186).

Because of cultural stereotyping, often created in Hollywood, and misinformation in schools, most people think that there is only one Indian culture and one Indian language. In fact, more than 500 tribal nations exist in the United States, each with its own unique history, culture and language.

Often the poor educational outcomes among indigenous students are blamed on Native peoples for not responding to opportunities or on racist motives by government or educational authorities. However, De Plevitz (2007) claims a partial explanation for poor performance is the less obvious educational policies and practices of government agencies. While these policies and practices may appear to be race-neutral, they are "based on underlying assumptions that are not in accordance with indigenous experience or culture, and which therefore disadvantage the indigenous students who struggle to comply with them" (pp. 54-55).

As Deloria (1999) points out, "European civilization has a determined and continuing desire to spread its view of the world to non-European countries." (p. 137). This includes indigenous peoples in North America and elsewhere. Even though the policy of assimilation was officially abandoned in the 1970s, according to De Plevitz (2007), this is still the aim, although unconscious, of government. "While they are apparently being offered the same educational opportunities as other students, Indigenous students may be experiencing the unintentional consequences of historical policies or economic practices." (p. 68). The most striking example of systemic bias is the operation of the Eurocentric model of education which, by its nature, fails to endorse indigenous core values and understandings. According to De Plevitz (2007), "Indigenous people who are successful in mainstream terms have learned to live in two worlds." Members of the dominant culture don't have to live in two worlds, but "it seems to be a primary goal of education for Indigenous students" (De Plevitz, 2007, p. 67).

According to Deloria (1999, pp. 138-139), education today trains professionals; it doesn't produce people. The separation of learning into professional expertise and personal growth is "an insurmountable barrier for many Indian students and raises severe emotional problems as they seek to sort out the proper principles from these two isolated parts of human experience." In traditional Indian society there is no separation. In fact, the goal in traditional societies is "to ensure personal growth and then to develop professional expertise."

Professor Jim Bates, a Lakota/Nakota, has noted how he has had to re-educate American-Indian graduates from accredited social work programs to function competently in tribal social services. Professor Bates noted that many tribes did not want to hire professional social workers for tribal

services as they were not viewed as effective with Indian people, in that they were "just too complicated" for Indians to trust. Bates speaks about the need for a "shadow curriculum" for native indigenous students, a curriculum that would be grounded upon core indigenous values and traditional philosophical assumptions; a curriculum that would more appropriately prepare traditional Indians for social work in their respective tribes within the framework of their own traditional heritage (Voss, 2005).

As in the United States, Canadian Native children on reserves are often taught by Native people in Native schools under band direction but ultimately funded and supervised by the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Children that live off reserves or on reserves where there are no reserve schools are taught in the public school system, using the curriculum and methods mandated by provincial departments of education. Racism is reported in these schools (Fisher and Campbell, 2007). Our hypothesis is that much of the racism in school systems is in fact systemic bias.

III. METHODOLOGY

As part of a qualitative study to determine how to help Native students be successful in public schools, 19 students, 24 parents and community members, and 13 teachers and administrators from a Northern Alberta public school system were interviewed. (Three of the educators were Native.) Interview guides were developed for each group. Responses were transcribed and analyzed for themes. From these themes, conclusions were drawn and recommendations suggested.

IV. FINDINGS

Parents were asked why so many Indians drop out. One of the often repeated reasons was prejudice or racism. Most parents (16 of 24) indicated they received no encouragement, but were rather discouraged, in school. Seven parents identified racism and prejudice specifically as the major reasons for discouragement. "Prejudice discouraged me. I didn't fit in," said one parent.

Many of the responses suggested racism does exist. One parent felt left out because he didn't get invited to trips, events or games. A parent said she was discouraged by "being Native, having to defend myself with teachers and students."

One parent said racism "wasn't very bad or was nearly non-existent in the city schools, but in the smaller schools it is everywhere. The sad thing about it was that a lot of the teachers showed me racism as well."

Although the following examples were described as racism, they seem instead to be examples of systemic bias. One parent described a problem that is not unique to Native students. "I was not encouraged when I had something to complete or complimented when I finished something. It was more like, 'Oh, you actually finished. I thought you wouldn't.' I was made to feel like I was worthless and not wanted."

Another parent said there is "no equality in teacher time for students. If a child is not [keeping up] that child is pushed along."

One student gets the impression that his teachers think native students are slower than other students. He asked one teacher about why she treated him differently and she said, "I never taught Natives before."

A parent said she didn't see anything wrong with the school itself. "They [just] don't care about the Native children."

Ask teachers and they would say they are not prejudiced. In fact, three of the faculty we interviewed were Natives. Here are some of their comments that suggest systemic bias. Their comments support a Eurocentric educational system for Native students.

"Our kids tend to be slower, more time needed to grasp issues."

"Students learn best by being at school every day."

"They need proper rest, food, encouragement and to know they are part of a school student body whereby rules and guidelines need to be adhered to. With our local aboriginal children, these things are often missing."

The same teacher said she felt Native students are unsuccessful because they don't get enough support from home. To be successful they need to be taught in "a strict environment." They need structure so they can learn. They need special education programs in academics and teachers require a lot of patience to work with aboriginal students.

A Native teacher in the public school system said: "I believe that the adults and subsequently the children, can no longer rest on the laurels of their ancestors and it is way past time that they brought something to the table that would garner the respect and acceptance they seek from non-Native society. I don't think anyone in any society can gain any modicum of success just because they are. Native people nowadays do injustice to the ethic of hard work and self-reliance that their forefathers practiced. This is what they should be taught."

While some comments were less than complimentary about Native students, the same teachers showed understanding when providing suggestions for change. For example, one teacher said, "Teachers need to develop trust with individuals so students feel a connection with their educational environment."

A high school teacher said "the status quo does not work. Squeezing a rectangle into a circle does not work!" The question is "how to change what is?" Mainstream education is not working for Native students. If "we can't change what is," we need to "accept what is" and "move within what already exists." The same teacher described the need for affective rather than cognitive learning.

"By developing pride in their history, understanding their leaders and their achievement, they can see value of the historical past, themselves and their future." Aboriginal students learn best in a "warm-caring environment that does not place different learning values on them and involves different learning activities, methods and techniques." Native students need "to have support, role models, positive reinforcement and understanding."

V. CONCLUSIONS

Because these were Natives talking about Indian teachers and Native teachers talking about Indian students, it became apparent that in most cases it might not be individual or institutional racism, but systemic bias at play. While racism may exist in school systems supporting Native children, systemic bias is also apparent. Much of what is called racism is in fact systemic bias. Because it is possible that systemic bias supports racist thinking and behaviors, reducing problems of systemic bias may in fact lead to a reduction in racism. However, in addition, further measures may need to be instituted to deal with the problems of racism. Changing the system will not completely eradicate racism. Re-education and changing attitudes will be needed to change racist thinking and behaviors.

Systemic bias may be a major reason that so many Native students fail to complete school. Recognizing systemic bias may be a first step in eliminating the problem. A declaration of bias may help reduce systemic bias by making it visible. Part of the declaration would recognize that our approach to Native education doesn't work well. We are trying to teach Native students using white cultural standards and teaching methods. We can change this situation by bringing native teachers into classrooms. But judging by the comments of the three native teachers interviewed, merely increasing the number of native teachers will not necessarily solve the problem of systemic bias, unless those native teachers have been trained to understand, embrace, and appreciate their own cultural approach to learning and cognition. Thus they would be able to inject it appropriately into their teaching by using not only cognitive but also affective teaching methods. In addition, all teachers need to develop a caring atmosphere where the students learn by experience and are evaluated that way instead of with standardized tests only.
Montana has passed legislation, called Indian Education for All (IEFA), which may do much to reduce systemic bias and lessen racism. Under IEFA every child in the state will learn about Indian history and culture. Instituting similar programs in the other states and provinces of Canada might begin to deal with the problems of systemic bias and racism in both countries. Teachers would learn about native culture and how to present it. A program about Native history and culture would signal the importance of Indian education and thus help reduce systemic bias. It might help re-educate teachers and students alike and assist in changing racist attitudes.

In the context of social work, Professor Bates spoke about the need for a "shadow curriculum" for Native students, "a curriculum that would be grounded upon core indigenous values and traditional philosophical assumptions," that would "appropriately prepare traditional Indians for ... work in their respective tribes within the framework of their own traditional heritage" (Voss, 2005). However, "offering classes on indigenous culture is only a beginning, not a solution. Underlying policies need to be tested to see whether they are racially discriminatory," writes De Plevitz (2007, p. 68). While dealing with systemic bias may not solve the complex problems related to Indian education, they may provide a place to begin.

The Montana Indian Education For All legislation suggests that if anything is to be done about racism and individual prejudice we must first attack systemic bias.

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