Teacher Confidence & Competence: Examining Teacher Training in Historical Trauma-Informed Practices in Support of American Indian Students

by

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Dedication

To my loving wife who has unconditionally supported my dream of obtaining a doctorate degree and using the knowledge obtained from the program to help improve schools and provide students with the highest quality education possible. She inspired me each day and kept me motivated throughout this process. I greatly appreciate her love, support, and understanding as I had to sacrifice our time together and with family to dedicate myself to completing this research. Without her, this research would not be possible. This dissertation is also dedicated to my mother who has always supported my educational pursuits and career choices. I also dedicate this work to my father who passed away over 10 years ago and know he would be proud of all my accomplishments.

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Abstract

There is little research in the United States regarding historical/intergenerational trauma-informed practices for American Indian students. Although American Indian students are 0.6% of the total student population in Michigan, they are of greater risk to experience adverse conditions that may lead to trauma. This increased risk is rooted in a complex history of colonization and attempted assimilation through Indian boarding schools. The goal of these schools was to instill European/Euro-American Christian beliefs on Native Peoples. Although these schools no longer exist in Michigan, they led to intergenerational trauma and a distrust of public education. This qualitative research examined teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students and how teacher training influences confidence and competence. Two northern Michigan districts with an American Indian student population over 50% participated in the study. Data was collected through artifacts, focus groups, questionnaires/surveys, and teacher interviews. Teachers stated they do not feel confident and competent in historical trauma-informed practices citing concerns over the content, format, and frequency of past training sessions. Past training lacked detailed strategies to use with students and did not provide a comprehensive history of the Indian boarding schools to provide context to the trauma among tribal communities. Teachers feel responsible for addressing the social and emotional needs of students but fear that their lack of training may lead to their traumatizing or re-traumatizing students.

Keywords: American Indian, historical/intergenerational trauma, boarding schools, lack of training, confidence, competence, strategies, history, fear

CHAPTER 1: The History and Current Status of American Indian Education

This research explores how teacher training in historical trauma-informed practices influences teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence working with American Indian students from tribal communities with a history of intergenerational trauma.

Introduction

What are schools for? This was the fundamental question educator, author, film maker, and musician Barry Lane (2014) challenged an audience with during a TEDx session at Central Connecticut State University. Lane (2014) explained that the traditional structure or framework of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade public education is based on Frederick Winslow Taylor's theory of scientific management aimed at improving industrial efficiency through plans, patterns, and structure. According to Lane (2014), the framework of traditional public education is based on scientific management theory that fosters "rigor not vigor." Rigor creates an educational environment that is narrow minded and inflexible therefore challenging the humanistic nature of education. It stifles student creativity and prevents what Bath (2008) called the "contexts of healing" for students who need social and emotional supports. Schools can no longer be a place for just traditional learning but must also be "an epicenter of social and emotional development" (Paccione-Dyszlewaki, 2016, p. 8). For this to occur, Lane (2014) believed we should focus on vigor not rigor. Vigor is robustness, health, strength, vitality, life, passion, and determination while rigor is inflexibility, stiffness, harshness, severity, and strictness.

Public education traditionally gives priority to rigorous curriculum and instruction over the social and emotional well-being of students to increase academic achievement as defined by

specific metrics such as course grades, state and national assessments, time to completion, matriculation rates, graduation percentages, and student retention. The increased focus on academic achievement dates back to the business take-over of education from 1910 to 1930 as examined by Raymond E. Callahan (1962) in his landmark study *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces that have Shaped the Administration of Public Schools.* According to Callahan (1962), as soon as people became acquainted with scientific management procedures to improve efficiency in industry, there was pressure to apply scientific management to education. "Great energy was expended on using the available tests and on developing new tests or scales or rating sheets or anything else that would seem to provide tangible evidence of efficiency" (Callahan, 1962, p. 100). The focus of these achievement tests in the 1910s was language arts and mathematics along with developing systems to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers. Language arts and mathematics are still the two primary content areas examined for student proficiency. In addition, student growth in these areas is a legally mandated component in teacher and school administrator performance evaluations in Michigan therefore putting pressure on teachers and administrators to show significant student growth if they are to be rated effective or highly effective. For example, in Michigan, 25% of teacher and administrator performance reviews must include student growth measures in English Language Arts and mathematics for the 2018-2019 school year. This weighting increased to 40% for the 2019-2020 school year and thereafter (Michigan Department of Education, 2020).

In addition to the scientific management movement in education, the more recent development of rapid globalization, improvements in technology, and increased competition and school choice has increased the urgency for school reform and accountability. This increased urgency led to the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the most recent

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 which retained national and state-level standardized testing as a determination of student academic success.

Still misunderstood is how the mental well-being of students influence their academic performance and how teachers are prepared to have the confidence and feeling of competence in providing social and emotional supports for students. Mental health is a core element for academic success which often receives less attention from policymakers who direct their attention to the development of educational standards that define curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Not taken into consideration are the experiences of the child in and outside of school and their social and emotional needs. These standards are based on what policymakers deem essential for postsecondary preparation and workforce readiness. Often neglected is student preparation for "life readiness" and the development of a school-wide culture of learning, a sense of community, and strong relationships between students and school staff (Rutledge, Cohen-Vogel, Osborn-Lampkin, & Roberts, 2015, p. 1060). A school culture and climate that provide a physical, psychological, social, and emotional safe space for students is an environment in which the burdens/challenges students bring with them to school is acknowledged and addressed therefore creating a supportive space for students to learn. Important in providing a safe space for students to learn includes training teachers in trauma-informed practices, identifying and understanding the history/root causes of trauma, and understanding culturally responsive pedagogy to support trauma-informed strategies. Trauma-informed teacher training builds teacher confidence and competence in working with students with adverse experiences and trauma and not only provides a safe learning environment for students but a safe environment for teachers as they feel properly trained to support the social and emotional needs of students.

Unprecedented circumstances, such as natural or human catastrophes, have revised the hierarchy of academic verse social and emotional needs of students. For example, the increase in school shootings in the United States from 2009 to 2018 with 180 incidents and 356 victims (114 fatalities and 242 injuries) not only led to changes in school security protocols but redirected the focus of education professionals on the importance of student mental health and services such as grief counseling and examining why some of the perpetrators and collaborators of the shootings were current or former students (Walker, 2019).

The 2020-2022 COVID-19 global pandemic is another example of a situation that changed the priorities of schools from academics to the mental health and well-being of students. As cases rapidly increased in March 2020, schools across the country closed and moved learning remotely. In Michigan, the primary focus of schools was not on continuing the teaching and learning of subject-area content but on the social and emotional support of students. How were students feeling about this rapid closure of schools? How did they feel being sent home away from their friends, teachers, mentors, counselors, coaches, and other staff that become their family and support network during the school day? How do some students feel who have to return to a home environment that is not conducive for learning or have the necessary structure in place to focus and succeed in their academics?

Michigan schools took the approach of not teaching new content and instead focused on social and emotional learning, or what they referred to as "enrichment," during the first six weeks of remote learning during the pandemic. Michigan schools also prioritized how to provide meal services knowing that some students had food insecurities and that their only hot meal in a day may be at school. Therefore, schools provided meal pick-up services for students with such needs. Schools also addressed how they would provide specialized services for students with

disabilities and how they could bridge the technology divide by providing free Internet and laptops so students could connect remotely with their teachers and receive these "enrichment" services. This shift in priorities was based on the understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic was an adverse experience that could traumatize students. The pandemic changed the instructional core of schools from one skewed towards standardized curriculum and instruction to one of understanding how student mental health is critical for the overall well-being of students which will in turn provide a safe and stable space for students to academically achieve.

Although there is a growing understanding by education professionals on the benefits of a more balanced instructional core that includes a focus on both academics and the social, emotional, and mental health of students, "the importance of both the academic and social dimensions of schooling and their complementary and interdependent nature remains poorly understood, as do the conditions necessary for educators to link them effectively in schools and classrooms" (Rutledge et al., 2015, p. 1061). Students bring to school and the classroom a variety of experiences and circumstances including adversity. These adverse experiences affect students in different ways and may cause traumatic stress. "Although schools are not mental health facilities and teachers are not therapists, teaching today's students requires alternative strategies and skills compared to what worked a generation ago" (Oehlberg, 2008, p. 1).

Walkley and Cox (2013) believed the challenge to creating a school environment that is informed of the mental, social, and emotional needs of students is complicated due to a combination of factors. These include long-time teachers and staff clinging to routines and traditions, the stigma of being weak, teachers and staff lacking the knowledge and skills to assist students with mental health challenges, the lack of awareness of student needs, and the full commitment from leadership (Walkley & Cox, 2013, p. 124-125). Therefore, part of the answer

to Lane's (2014) question "What are schools for?" is to not only provide academic knowledge for postsecondary preparation, the workforce, and life readiness but provide what Bath (2008) referred to as the "pillars" that create a context for healing: a safe environment, strong connections between students and their mentor or caregiver, and helping students to manage their emotions and impulses. These essentials create schools that are not only sensitive to the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students but are also informed to take action to address student adverse experiences and trauma. This includes designing and implementing high-quality culturally sensitive training opportunities for teachers to build their confidence and competence when instructing and mentoring students exposed to adverse experiences.

From Adversity to Trauma

Everyone experiences some level of adversity in their lifetime; however, the age of the person facing adversity, the type of adversity, its frequency, source, and relationship of the source to the person are factors that influence a person's resilience and ability to cope with adversity. Although most children and families are successfully able to cope with adverse experiences and even traumatic events, some are not able to, therefore, posing a risk to physical and psychological well-being (Hansel et al., 2010). Research shows that children who are exposed to adverse experiences at an early age have an "increased risk for a broad range of development difficulties, affecting both cognitive and emotional adjustment" (Bick & Nelson, 2016, p. 177). According to Bick and Nelson (2016), "the timing of environmental input also heavily shapes the brain's potential for normative development" (p. 178). This is referred to as experience-expectant development which requires certain inputs at specific times of brain development for the brain to mature normally. If those inputs are negative or do not exist, normal brain development may not occur. It was not until the 1990s that early adverse experiences such

as the maltreatment of children in a family setting was officially given a name, Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are "potentially traumatic events that children experience from birth to age 18" (Bissonette & Shebby, 2017, p. 1). According to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), an organization founded by the United States Congress in response to the passing of the Children's Health Act of 2000, two-thirds of children have experienced an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) by the age of 16 and up to 46 million children have experienced psychological trauma in the United States from ACEs (NCTSN, 2017; McIntyre, Baker, & Overstreet, 2019, p. 95). ACEs may include, but are not limited to, the death of a loved one, poverty, family incarceration, substance abuse, divorce, violence, relocation, and physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse.

When a child is exposed to any of these adverse experiences, one possible outcome of the exposure is trauma. "A traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to a child's life or bodily integrity" or could be a situation where a person is a witness to a traumatic event (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services *Being Trauma Informed and Responsive – Presentation Toolkit*, trauma is, "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (p. 5). These events can be acute, chronic, or complex. Acute trauma is due to a single event while chronic trauma is exposure to repeat adverse experiences (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016). If the source of the chronic trauma is from the primary caregiver or through extended exposure to a series of events over time, it is referred to as complex trauma (Bath,

2008; Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016).

Student exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the possible outcome of trauma is a health crisis that education professionals must not only be aware of but be trained to address so trauma-sensitive and informed policies, procedures, and practices are implemented. Training provides educators the knowledge of short and long-term psychological and physical ramifications of exposure to adverse conditions and how this exposure manifests into student challenges in school and over time. Children who experience ACEs are "more likely to have poor school performance, be less engaged in school, and repeat a grade" (Stempel et al., 2017, p. 838). They are also more likely to be chronically absent. According to Stempel et al. (2017), this time away from school is harmful as students miss critical learning opportunities. In addition, chronic absenteeism (missing 15 or more days in a single school year) is a predictor of school dropout (Stempel et al., 2017).

The effects of adverse experiences and trauma on students can easily be misdiagnosed by education professionals if not professionally trained to identify signs of trauma and how best to provide intervention and support services. Verbal and physical aggression by students and/or symptoms of social withdrawal such as a lack of motivation, productivity, and engagement may be interpreted as intentional and controllable when they are not. This may result in consequences that are punitive. Without understanding the root cause of such student behavior, education professionals misinterpret the behaviors and respond in a way that may be considered unsafe and traumatizing for students. Due to the proliferation of zero-tolerance policies, Porche, Fortuna, Lin, and Algeria (2011) believed there is an increase in suspensions and expulsions which in turn aggravate developmental problems that are associated with early exposures to adverse conditions. Therefore, it is critical that education professionals have the proper training to

implement trauma-sensitive and informed practices.

Among educational professionals, teachers are the key to identifying behavior changes in students, monitoring their behavior, and providing emotional support due to the substantial amount of time they spend working directly with students (Alisic et al., 2012). According to Alisic et al. (2012), they are the "linking pin between families and clinical services as schools are children's most important entry point to mental health care" (p. 98). Schools are often the first exposure to mental health services; however, according to a study by Alisic et al. (2012), teachers did not feel competent with how to provide emotional support to students who experienced adverse conditions and trauma. Sixty-three percent of teachers did not know how to identify students who required mental-health services and 51% did not know where to find the answers to student questions regarding the supports they needed (Alisic et al., 2012).

Trauma-Sensitive and Informed Schools

Although there is an increased interest by education professionals for a better understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how schools can transform into trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed schools, these two terms of trauma are often used interchangeably to have the same meaning. Trauma Informed Oregon, a statewide collaboration among the Oregon Health Authority, Portland State University, and the Oregon Pediatric Society, identified trauma-sensitive schools as those that have an awareness of the trauma's impact on students and how trauma can change their behavior; however, trauma-sensitive schools have not implemented policies, procedures, and practices to address ACEs and trauma (Trauma Informed Oregon, 2020). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2014), trauma-informed organizations are those that realize the impact of trauma, understand paths to recovery, recognize signs of trauma, and

respond through policies, procedures, and practices that help with recovery and prevent re-traumatization (p. 9). Trauma Informed Oregon believe all organizations should be trauma-informed and strive for trauma-informed care.

What defines trauma-informed care can be challenging. It involves identifying specific services to reduce symptoms, promote healing, and provide the skills for staff to help people exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic traumatic stress. Although Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich (2016) identified that the majority of children in America receive mental health services through school, that does not mean school personnel are properly trained to provide such services nor have the ability to identify what services and interventions are beyond their scope and expertise and should be directed to mental health professionals in the community. Providing mental health services also does not guarantee that these services are accurate, thorough, and culturally informed.

For schools to be trauma-informed, they need to focus on safety, making connections between students with trauma and their caregivers, and teaching students how to manage their emotions (Bath, 2008, p. 18). Of these three elements of trauma-informed schools, or what Bath (2008) described as "pillars," the essential element is creating a safe place for students to learn. If students do not feel safe, education becomes secondary and they stay in a constant state of fight, flight, or freeze which leads to difficulties with self-regulation of emotions (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016). On the guidance of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), there are six guiding principles of trauma-informed care. Safety is first, followed by trustworthiness and transparency; peer support and mutual self-help; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues (Trauma Informed Oregon, 2020). A school and classroom environment that is not

trauma-informed creates an unsafe environment for students exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma by misinterpreting or mislabeling student behavior. Bath (2008) indicated that challenging student behavior may be a sign of inner pain and that often pain-based behaviors are addressed with pain-based reactions (p. 19). These reactions may include verbal reprimands, suspensions, expulsions, and referrals for special education testing.

To establish a safe school environment, there must be strong and trusting relationships between students and their caregivers and/or mentors. Scientific evidence supports the importance of this relationship based on a study by Asay and Lambert (1999). In their study, Asay and Lambert (1999) determined that a caring and therapeutic relationship has twice the positive effect as the clinical therapeutic techniques used to help a person with trauma (Bath, 2008). No other education professional has more direct time with students than teachers; therefore, it is critical that teachers are the primary focus for training in trauma-informed practices. This training must also include the third pillar of trauma-informed care – helping students control their emotions and provide impulse management skills. Trauma training must include teaching students to self-regulate emotions and how teachers can "co-regulate" with students rather than using coercive techniques when emotions become challenging (Bath, 2008, p. 20).

Bath (2008) explained that teachers do not need to be therapists to implement these components of trauma-informed schools. Although, they do not need to be clinical mental health experts, many teachers feel ill-equipped to address the mental health needs of students (Walkley & Cox, 2013). Therefore, training and professional development in ACEs and trauma is important for teachers to build their confidence and competence in this hybrid role as educator and social emotional support. McIntyre, Baker, and Overstreet (2019) argued that a trauma-

informed system-level framework creates a staff educated in trauma practices and creates a school culture that promotes healing and prevents re-traumatizing.

The Origins of Adverse Childhood Experience and Trauma Research

Education professionals have increasingly gained awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma as a public health issue since the seminal ACE research study conducted in 1995 and 1997 by Felitti et al. (1998) at the Kaiser Permanente San Diego Health Appraisal Clinic. The study was the first time ACEs were used to described collective childhood adversities that, when exposed, may lead to psychological and/or physical health problems which can extend into and throughout adulthood. Felitti et al. (1998) surveyed all Kaiser Permanente Health Plan members who received a standard medical examination to determine their extent of childhood exposure to abuse and household disfunction. Although the health plan members surveyed were educated individuals with good incomes and access to quality health care, 63.9% experienced ACEs with 26% having at least one ACE (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016, p. 41). Among those who had at least one ACE, 85% were likely to have more than one (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016, p. 41).

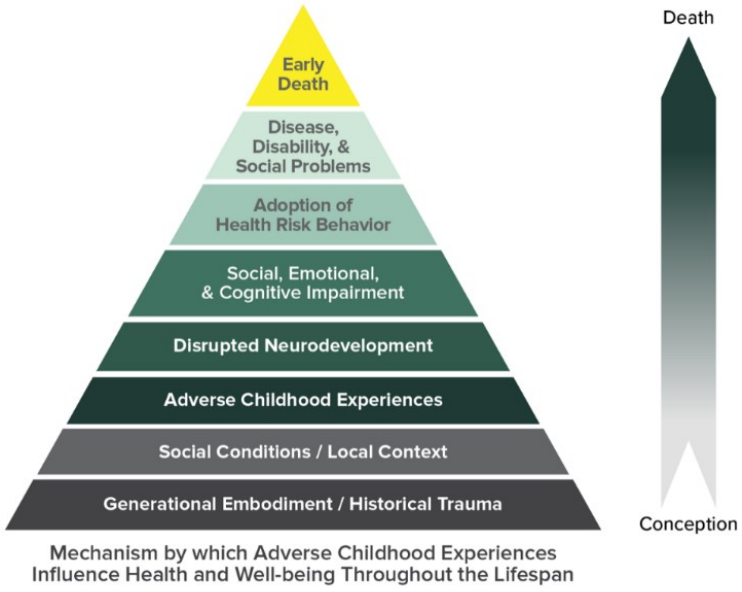
Felitti et al. (1998) concluded that the breadth and depth of exposure to adverse experiences was causally related to multiple risk factors through a person's lifespan and showed how exposure to adverse experiences can create social, emotional, and cognitive impairments that lead people to engage in behaviors that pose a risk to one's health therefore, increasing the probability of an early death (p. 256). Felitti et al. (1998) explained the importance of future research and training to understand the social, emotional, and medical issues caused by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how further training provides medical professionals with the confidence to work with patients exposed to adverse experiences (p. 256). This belief can be

expanded to teachers and is not limited to only medical professionals. Future research in ACEs and the possible trauma that may come from these experiences can provide a foundation of knowledge for the training of teachers and can build their sense of confidence and competence when working with students exposed to adverse experiences and trauma.

As an outcome of the Felitti et al. (1998) study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed the ACE Pyramid (Figure 1), a conceptual framework for understanding how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are related to risk factors that can lead to an early death.

Figure 1

The ACE Pyramid



Note: The ACE Pyramid is a conceptual framework of risk factors throughout the life span developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020).

Felitti et al. (1998) provided evidence that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a public health crisis and is not associated with a specific population or isolated to a specific

geographical area. However, the study did not identify how and why some populations are more at risk than others, such as American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. The Felitti et al. (1998) study did not ask why ACEs and trauma persists from childhood to adulthood and why trauma can carry over from one generation to another, a phenomenon known as intergenerational or historical trauma. This type of trauma is represented on the first/foundational tier of the ACE Pyramid but is not thoroughly explained.

Terminology

To properly examine the increased risks regarding adverse experiences and intergenerational or historical trauma of a specific group of people, it is important to note the use of the terms used to identify the target group of this study. *Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, American Indian and Alaska Native* (AI/AN)*, Native Americans,* and *Native Peoples* are used interchangeably in academic research. The term *Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* are the original inhabitants and descendants of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America and is the endorsed term by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Brave Heart et al., 2011). The term *American Indian and Alaska Native* (AI/AN) is the term officially endorsed by the National Congress of American Indians and the National Tribal Chairman's Association (Brave Heart et al., 2011). Some Indigenous scholars prefer the use of *Native Peoples* and/or *Native Americans* in their research and writing; therefore, the accurate identification and use of consistent terminology when studying the complicated history and educational status of tribal nations in the United States is challenging and important.

Since the context of this study is within the United States, the term American Indian and Alaska Native will be used throughout the study or AI/AN for short. American Indian (AI) is used in specific parts of this study when discussing issues specific/unique to American Indian

communities and cultures that do not pertain to Alaska Native cultures. The term Indigenous people(s) will be used in parts of this study only when specific resources are cited as using this term. It is with utmost respect for all Native Peoples that these terms are used in this study.

A Condensed History of American Indian Education

Since the arrival of Europeans, American Indian (AI) cultures and customs have been threatened including the traditional AI methods of educating children which includes teachers being members of the family or tribe with a focus on lessons that are integrated as part of daily life, ceremonies, and customs (Nuby & Smith, 2012). Racism, oppression, and discrimination against AI communities was executed through U.S. policies and legislation addressing what was referred to as the "Indian Problem." The purpose for many of these policies was to enculturate AI children through the establishment of boarding schools in an effort to remove the "savage" within them (Nuby & Smith, 2012). According to Nuby & Smith (2012), these policies were a national tragedy leading to intergenerational/historical trauma over generations. The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways in Mount Pleasant, Michigan refers to these policies not as a national tragedy but a cultural genocide creating intergenerational trauma across multiple generations leading to increases in alcoholism, diabetes, abuse, and suicides among members of the Michigan Native communities (2011, p. 19).

To understand historical trauma within the American Indian (AI) communities and its effect on the current state of AI education, it is important to know the history and evolution of AI education and policies in the United States. Garrett (1996) identified five stages of U.S. government policy for examining the historical trauma incurred by AI communities: The removal period (1600s to 1840s), the reservation period (1860 to 1920s), the reorganization period (1930s to 1950s), the termination period (1950s to 1960s), and the self-determination

period (1973 to the present).

The Removal Period

The removal period from the 1600s to the 1840s saw the establishment of the Office of Indian Affairs within the War Department, which eventually became the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The primary responsibility of this agency was the education of the American Indian (AI) and to "manage" the "savages" through education, war, and relocation (Nuby & Smith, 2012). The approach of warfare and relocation was supported by the Indian Removal Act of 1830 which relocated AIs as the desire for westward expansion of the country grew. The policy was strongly enforced by President Andrew Jackson and eventually led to what is commonly known as the Trail of Tears.

The Reservation Period

The reservation period between 1860 and the 1920s saw the anglicizing of American Indians (AI) through the creation of boarding schools, an approach recommended by the Indian Peace Commission of 1886 to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. According to Adams (1995), "because of the common school's alleged ability to assimilate, it was looked upon as an ideal instrument for absorbing peoples and ideologies that stood in the path of the republic's millennial destiny" (p. 18). Adams (1995) stated there were three arguments as to why schools were looked upon as the perfect instrument to assimilate American Indians. First, there was a strong belief that older generations of AIs were incapable of being civilized since they were attached to their old ways and customs; therefore, the younger generation would be more flexible and easily influenced. The second argument was speed and efficiency. Civilizing the AI through schools would skip the lengthy social and cultural evolution and speed up the "civilization" of the AI. The third argument was economic. It was determined that educating American Indians was more

cost effective. Education would help AIs to be self-sufficient and reduce the financial burden and dependency on the United States government for clothing and food rations due to forced relocations. According to the view of the United States government, providing an education was less expensive than warfare and killing American Indians. For example, Carl Schurz, a United States Senator and reformer within the new Republican Party, calculated the cost at nearly a million dollars to kill an American Indian in warfare verses $1,200 to educate a child for eight years (Adams, 2012, p. 20). Henry Teller, the Secretary of the Interior from 1882-1885, calculated the cost of warfare against AIs over a 10-year period to exceed $22 million which was four times the cost of educating 30,000 AI children for one year (Adams, 1995, p. 20).

In his book, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*, Adams (1995) identified that American Indians (AIs) were considered savages, and there was a strong belief among reformers that civilizing the AI through structured education was the ethical and moral thing to do. “To educate the Indian in the ways of civilized life…is to preserve him from extinction, not as an Indian, but as a human being” (Adams, 1992, p, 21). American Indians were not only considered savages but were also considered intellectually and physically inferior according to Estelle Reel, the first superintendent of the American Indian Boarding Schools (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011).

The goal of the American Indian (AI) boarding schools were to remove tribal identities, strip the children of their native language, and instill new cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices that were European/Euro-American and Christian (Bissonette & Shebby, 2017, p. 2). The AI boarding school movement was heavily systematized by Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889 to 1893, which included the alignment of the day schools, reservation boarding schools, and off-reservation schools (Adams, 1995, p. 62). In

addition, Commissioner Morgan believed in a standardized curriculum toward the civilization of AIs. This was accomplished by focusing first on teaching American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students how to speak, read, and write in English. Students were taught that the use of their original language was the "devil's tongue" and sinful (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011). Commissioner Morgan's approach also focused on the importance of instruction in core branches of knowledge such as English, mathematics, geography, nature studies, physiology, history, and industrial trades (Adams, 1995, p. 142).

Another component of the American Indian (AI) boarding schools was to individualize American Indian students. This goal focused on teaching students to be self-reliant and to value labor and private property which conflicted with the culture of AI communities who value communal living and property. The third goal of the boarding schools was Christianization which was based on the belief that the social evolution of man was only possible through a strong foundation of Christian morality (Adams, 1995). The Jesuits were leading educators and managed many of the boarding schools. Priests and nuns were assigned to run the boarding schools and they strictly controlled the day which included religious worship and prayer regularly with lessons on sin to instill feelings of guilt and shame. This focus on Christianity strongly governed the policies and everyday procedures of the schools such as having gender segregated classes. Citizenship training was another goal of the boarding schools which included an education in United States history, principles of a democratic government, the Constitution, and political structures and laws.

These four goals aimed to totally transform students and eradicate their former self (Adams, 1995). In a speech delivered at the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction in 1892 by Captain Richard H. Pratt, he articulated his focus on "civilizing" and

"Americanizing" American Indians. "A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian Massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man" (Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, n.d., p. 1).

In 1879, Captain Pratt started the Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School in Pennsylvania, the first Indian boarding school in the United States, after receiving funding from Congress due to the results from a social experiment he conducted with Apache prisoners of war (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011). During this experiment, he successfully assimilated most of the Apache prisoners into the White and Christian culture. It was assumed that these students would return to their reservations after being assimilated into the White and Christian culture to convert other members of the American Indian (AI) communities.

The Carlisle model expanded across the United States after the passing of the Indian Appropriation Act on May 17, 1882. This act provided the funding for the building of additional schools for American Indian (AI) youth. According to Indian boarding school historian Warren Petoskey in the documentary *Indian School: A Survivor's Story,* there were over 560 Indian boarding schools at one time with only 26 of these schools managed by the United States government (Givens, 2010). The ones not managed directly by the U.S. government were managed by Catholic and Protestant churches which received funding from the government. This expansion of the AI boarding schools included three in Michigan: The Mount Pleasant Industrial Boarding School in Mount Pleasant, Holy Childhood of Jesus Indian School in Harbor Springs, and the Holy Name Boarding School/Holy Name Day School in Assinins (Baraga). The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School was established to fulfill part of the 1855 treaty with

the Anishinabek in Michigan and operated from 1893 through 1934 under the supervision of the United States government (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011; Fox, 2015). The Holy Name Boarding School/Holy Name Day School was established in 1887 and Holy Childhood of Jesus Indian School was established in 1829 and in existence until 1983. These three AI boarding schools created a deeply traumatic legacy across generations of Native Peoples in Michigan, and the intergenerational trauma has manifested in physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and academic problems among AI students in Michigan. It has also led to a distrust of the public school system among Native peoples.

At the beginning of this movement, children were sent voluntarily, but by 1890 United States government policy changed and the transferring of American Indian (AI) children to these boarding schools was mandatory and enforced with threats of holding rations of food, supplies, and even possible incarceration (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). This mandatory removal of children was such a concern of parents that many hid their children from government officials in fear they would be sent away to one of the boarding schools. According to Warren Petoskey, the child and grandchild of Michigan Indian boarding school survivors, “Many of the women it was said when they took the children from the home, they sang the child’s death song because when that child came home, they would never be the same again” (Givens, 2010).

Although not every student in these boarding schools had a traumatic experience many did. Children were forced from their homes and community and relocated by train to a foreign location where many spent a minimum eight years learning the culture, language, religion, and dress of the dominant White culture (Brave Heart, 1998). The assimilation of these children began upon arrival. For example, as children arrived at the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School, they were called “dirty Indians,” disrobed, disinfected using pesticides,

personal belongings taken, given uniforms, and their long hair cut (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011, p. 10). The cutting of their hair was a purposeful attempt to eradicate their strong cultural identity. Long hair has important cultural and spiritual significance for American Indian (AI) peoples; therefore, the cutting of their hair was humiliating and a direct attack on their identity. These actions were remarkably like those of Nazi officials during the Holocaust when Jewish men were forced to shave the beards of other Jewish men in public.

In addition to the forced cutting of hair, another method of taking away American Indian (AI) identity was to change their name to a European Christian name; although, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the time, Thomas J. Morgan, along with the Director of the Bureau of Ethnology, John Wesley Powell, endorsed a circular that was sent to Indian Agents and Superintendents of Schools asking them to preserve the AI family name as best as possible (Littlefield Jr. & Underhill, 1971). However, instead of preserving the family name, it gave officials permission to change the names of AI students to European Christian names since the family names were difficult to pronounce and remember (Littlefield Jr. & Underhill, 1971).

During the time American Indian (AI) children were students in these boarding schools, they were forced to work as day laborers with their compensation taken to help pay the costs of running the school. Robert Roche, a survivor from one of the Michigan Indian boarding schools, explained in the documentary *Indian School: A Survivor's Story* that school officials worked the students all day and night. Many survivors in the documentary, including Darwin Addle and Roxanne Jones, explained in their interviews that discipline was consistently harsh and school officials used their fists, leather straps, bags of beans, and other instruments to issue punishment (Givens, 2010). Gloria King, the daughter of an Indian boarding school student and survivor, told

the story of her mother witnessing the school master throwing a boy to the floor and kicked him down the stairs from the third floor of the school for speaking in his Native language while arguing with another student (Givens, 2010). According to Gloria King's mother, the young boy did not survive his injuries.

Sexual abuse occurred in addition to the physical abuse. Warren Petoskey discussed in the documentary *Indian School: A Survivor's Story* how numerous survivors of the Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School told of girls being raped by the school maintenance man and how school officials said that it did not happen and was their imagination, an "apparition," because of puberty (Givens, 2010). Petoskey explained how this sexual abuse personally effected his aunt who was raped in the Mount Pleasant school which led to substantial mental health issues and was responsible for her becoming a prostitute (Givens, 2010). Gloria King's mother told her stories of girls getting pregnant and performing self-abortions that led to their dying due to excessive bleeding. Robert Roche explained how girls were getting pregnant and that the babies mysteriously disappeared along with the records of these pregnancies (Givens, 2010). Roche explained that many school records and reports went missing including school records of attendance at the boarding school and his time at Marquette University. The keeper of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission Records did acknowledge the fact that there were school reporting gaps along with missing and incomplete reports (Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 2020).

In addition to physical and sexual abuse, the conditions of these schools were unsatisfactory and health hazards. The Indian boarding schools were often overcrowded, unsanitary, and lacked proper food for students which led to illness, disease, and malnourishment. These conditions, in combination with the lack of proper medical care, spread

diseases among the student body including tuberculosis and influenza with some students dying from illness.

All communication with the families of students was highly monitored, controlled, and censored. Letters home were confiscated or destroyed if they complained of mistreatment and letters from their families were intercepted and not given to students, claiming such communication would distract students from their academics (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011, p. 10). In addition, there were concerns that any communication from families may counter the work of assimilation and may instill ideas of resistance. According to Darwin Apple, a boarding school survivor from the Holy Childhood of Jesus School in Harbor Springs, Michigan, it was the focus of these boarding schools to break up the family and to become your new family, but one that used tactics of torture to get what they wanted (Givens, 2010).

The culture, language, customs, and spirituality of the children attending these boarding schools was expunged through a highly structured and controlled program of academics, work, and prayer. They were consistently informed that they were savages, and their native language was the "devil's tongue" (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011). They were forbidden to speak their native language and could only speak English although "the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue" (Reyhner, 2012, p. 31). If they violated this rule, they could possibly be beaten, their mouths washed out with lye soap, or placed in confinement (Nuby & Smith, 2012).

When these young people returned to their families and communities, they were outcasts for they were no longer considered a member of the tribal nation, instead they were representatives of the dominant White culture (Nuby & Smith, 2012). However, what added to

this trauma was the fact that the dominant White society did not fully accept them either, even though they orchestrated the assimilation of these children. What was left were a group of assimilated young adults with no true identity who were considered outcasts by two different worlds consequently creating individual and community levels of trauma passed down from generation to generation leading to distrust, anger, and confusion towards the White community and White established institutions (Nuby & Smith, 2012). According to Michigan boarding school survivor Robert Roche, the schools were designed to "rewrite who you were" (Givens, 2010). According to Kay Givens McGowan, adjunct anthropology and sociology professor at Eastern Michigan University, this unresolved trauma of being an outcast in two worlds is one of the reasons why the suicide rate among Native Peoples is two and a half times the national rate (Givens, 2010).

The Reorganization Period

The period from the 1920s to the 1950s began to see a shift in the affairs of American Indian (AI) education due to a commission organized by the Institute for Government Research (Brookings Institute) and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The purpose of the commission was to investigate and make recommendations about Indian affairs in the United States (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011). Lewis Meriam was selected as the Technical Director of the commission and after a two-year examination of Indian affairs, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, also known as The Meriam Report, was published in 1928. The report identified numerous problems with various government policies including the AI boarding schools. The report recommended eliminating the "Uniform Course of Study" which focused on teaching the values of the dominant culture, recommended sending students back to their community schools, improve the quality of the food and diet of children in schools, the

creation of new positions in education, providing transportation for students, reduce the overcrowding of schools, hire a labor force to reduce the number of students working so they could focus on their education, and secure an adequate supply of qualified employees including teachers, school administrators, and directors for boys and girls activities. (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011; Meriam et al., 1928). The Meriam Report also recommended that Indian Service provide children with the necessary skills to adapt to the acculturation of the two worlds – American society and the AI community.

The Meriam Report identified the need for specialized curriculum and instruction that is culturally sensitive to American Indian (AI) students and based on the philosophy of John Dewey's progressive education movement (Reynher, 2012). One of the reasons for this recommendation for culturally sensitive education was the diversity of the AI tribal nations with each having their own customs, language, and traditions. Therefore, the Meriam Report stated that the methods applied in the average public schools in the United States could not be applied safely to AI education (Meriam et al., 1928, p. 347). "Indian tribes and individual Indians within the tribes vary so much that a standard content and method of education, no matter how carefully they might be prepared, would be worse than futile" (Meriam et al., 1928, p. 347).

The Termination Period

The involvement of the United States in World War II saw the reallocation of funds and personnel away from the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the war effort. In addition, a Republican-controlled Congress after World War II led to a movement to dissolve American Indian (AI) reservations and a return to English-only education in schools for AI students (Reyhner, 2012). However, during the same period, there was an increased concern for human rights, especially after the atrocities of the Holocaust, with the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This focus on human rights included a movement toward people having the power to control their own destiny leading to U.S. policies regarding self-determination for AI people starting in the 1960s (Reyhner, 2012). This self-determination movement led to AI controlled schools and a focus on culturally responsive and linguistically diverse education (Reyhner, 2012).

In 1969, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy – A National Challenge*, also known as the Kennedy Report, was released. This report by the Special Subcommittee on Indian Education from the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare - United States Senate condemned previous government policies toward tribal nations and recommended American Indian (AI) education programs be established by the AI community. In addition, the report stated that "special efforts should be made to encourage and assist the public schools in improving the quality of their programs for Indian children" (Subcommittee on Indian Education, 1969, p. 105). The report identified that the crucial problem regarding the education of AI children was the fractured relationship between the White and AI communities which led to the alienation of AI communities, thus "dampening both their potential for full self-development and their opportunities for gaining experience to control their own affairs" (Subcommittee on Indian Education, 1969, p 105). The subcommittee made numerous specific recommendations that helped to achieve the goals of increasing AI participation in the development of educational programs for AI children including summer school and year-round pre-school programs.

The Self-Determination Period

The Kennedy Report framed the self-determination period starting in the 1970s. This period included legislation aimed at providing tribal nations the autonomy to run their own schools. It was in a message by President Richard Nixon on July 8, 1970 to the United States

Congress that affirmed centuries of injustice that has led to American Indian (AI) peoples ranking at the bottom of education, employment, income, and health. In his argument for self-determination without termination of federal support, Nixon (1970) stated "the time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions" (p. 565).

Two acts led the way toward self-determination in education for American Indian (AI) communities. The Indian Education Act of 1972, which is a component of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, established the Office of Indian Education and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education whose members are appointed by the President of the United States. The main function of this council was to advise the Secretary of Education on the administration and funding of AI education. In 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act was enacted allowing tribal nations to administer education funds as they saw fit. Both acts allowed AI communities to have local control of the Bureau of Indian Affair schools and allowed for the funding of educational programs for AI children on and off reservations (Nuby & Smith, 2012).

In 1990, the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force was established and released their final report in 1991 *Indian Nations at Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action*. In the report, the task force identified why American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) peoples are at risk and the report defined 10 goals/priorities to provide a strategic framework for the improvement of schools that serve these communities. These goals included: Readiness for school, maintaining native language and culture, literacy, academic achievement, high school graduation, highly qualified school personnel, safe schools, adult education and life-long learning, school restructuring, and community partnerships (Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, 1991).

The Final Report of the White House Conference on Indian Education explored the feasibility of developing an independent Board of Indian Education (The White House Conference on Indian Education, 1992). The purpose of the board was to make recommendations for educational programming and to address the needs of American Indian (AI) students. The outcome of the conference were 113 resolutions among 12 categories including identifying supports and barriers to these resolutions (The White House Conference on Indian Education, 1992). A recommendation from the conference was for a research agenda to be created for the future of AI education and this agenda would be developed by leaders and educators within the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities.

An important outcome following the conference final report was Presidential Executive Order no. 13096 (1998) signed by President William J. Clinton which identified six goals federal agencies should focus on to improve American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education. These six goals included: (1) improvements in reading and mathematics; (2) improving high school completion and postsecondary rates; (3) reduce factors that prevent academic performance; (4) improve school environments; (5) improve science education; and (6) improve educational technology and access to technology for AI/AN students (Exec. Order No. 13,096, 1998, p. 42,681). These goals would be accomplished through the creation of a diverse member task force, the creation of an interagency plan, the development of an interagency resource guide to inform AI/AN students of programs and resources they could benefit from, examining achievement and retention data, evaluating educational practices, examining the role of language and culture in education strategies, creating regional forums to identify and share best practices, and identify schools to serve as models for exceptional AI/AN student education (Exec. Order No. 13,096, 1998).

Current Status of American Indian and Alaska Native Education

The Indian Boarding School movement focused on the assimilation of American Indian (AI) students that not only traumatized students who attended these schools but fractured the AI communities at large and across generations. The historical trauma caused by governmental policies of colonization and assimilation based on the belief of Manifest Destiny and racial and cultural superiority created difficult conditions for AI communities to heal from the trauma, consequently leading to significant educational challenges for current AI students.

Ten years after President Clinton's Executive Order 13,096 identifying strategies for improving American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published the *Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008,* a study examining the preprimary, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational progress of AI/AN children and adults. The NCES 2008 report showed AI/AN students had significant challenges and underperformed academically when compared to other racial and ethnic groups. For example, 66% of AI/AN students reported absences from schools compared to a range of 36% to 57% for other racial/ethnic groups and AI/AN students had a higher rate of suspensions when compared to other groups except for African American students (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. iv). AI/AN students also had a higher school dropout rate at 15% compared to other race/ethnic groups with only Hispanic students having a higher dropout rate at 21% (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. iv). The higher absenteeism and dropout rates translated into a lower percentage of AI/AN students receiving a high school diploma. Another challenge included in the report was a substantially higher percentage of AI/AN student's receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA) at 14% compared to other racial/ethnic groups with an average 9% of the general population receiving services under IDEA (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. iv). In addition, the NCES 2008 report showed a substantially higher use of alcohol among AI/AN students between the ages of 12 and 17 when compared to other racial/ethnic groups which ranged between 8% and 11% (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. iv).

The 2015 National Indian Education Study

The 2015 National Indian Education Study (NIES), a component of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), examines the conditions of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education in the United States. The NIES is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education and was initially reported every two years from 2005 to 2011. After 2011, the report was and still is published every four years with the most recent report being 2015.

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) fourth- and eighth-grade students complete the NAEP exam for reading and mathematics then complete a survey to capture their perceptions regarding how their culture, language, and traditions are integrated into their academics and lives. The study reports the findings as a collective of all AI/AN students and in three mutually exclusive categories: low-density, high-density, and Bureau of Indian Education schools (Ninneman et al., 2017, p. 4). Density refers to the percentage representation of AI/AN students in schools compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

The 2015 National Indian Education Study (NIES) surveyed approximately 8,500 fourth-grade students and 8,200 eighth-grade students along with teachers and school administrators. The study included performance results in reading and mathematics for 14 states with a large enough number of students to make reporting results significant. The first results of the study

were published in 2017 with a follow-up report published in 2019. The 2017 NIES report focused on two themes – the extent that American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) culture is represented in school curriculum and to what extent school resources are dedicated to improving the academic achievement of AI/AN students (Ninneman et al., 2017, p. 1).

The National Indian Education Study – Student Perception

In addition to examining achievement in reading and mathematics, the *National Indian Education Study* (NIES, 2015) acquires information through surveys from American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students, their teachers, and administration. The answers to these questions provided a deeper understanding of their experiences and perceptions in and outside of school.

The 2015 survey asked students about their knowledge of Native culture and heritage, about who in their lives taught them the most about American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) traditions, and if they participate in AI/AN activities. In fourth grade, 48% of students stated they know nothing or little about their heritage; however, that percentage decreased to 36% for eighth grade. When asked about where they acquired the knowledge of AI/AN traditions, over 50% of fourth- and eighth-grade students indicated their families. Sixteen percent of fourth graders and 11% of eighth graders were taught their traditions from teachers. However, 17% for both grade levels indicated that no one taught them about the cultural traditions of their people. This may explain why there is a significantly high number of AI/AN students who indicated they never or infrequently participate in AI/AN related activity.

One element of historical trauma incurred by the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people is loss of language. The teaching of English and the elimination of Native languages was a significant goal of the Indian Boarding Schools and the result of this effort is

evident in student responses regarding home language use on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) student perception survey.

Students were first asked if members of their family spoke their Native language at home. Fifty-six percent of fourth graders and 59% of eighth graders stated their Indigenous language is never used with 12% to 13% stating it is only used once or twice a month. Between 20% and 22% of students indicated it is used every day. This is one of the reasons why many schools with higher AI/AN student populations in Michigan have a teacher dedicated to teaching students their Native language, although many of these teachers do not speak the Native language as their first language. These schools believe it is important to preserve the language through teaching at least conversational levels of the language.

Students were also asked if they have class or classes in school that are taught in their AI/AN language. Most students indicated they do not. Seventy-eight percent of fourth graders and 83% of eighth graders indicated their school does not offer classes which incorporate Native languages or the classes seldom use their Native language during class.

The National Indian Education Study – Teacher Perception

The teacher survey portion of the *National Indian Education Study* (NIES, 2015) focuses on identifying ways teachers try to develop an understanding of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) culture in four categories: knowledge and skill development, culturally specific instruction, reading/language arts, and mathematics. Teachers were asked about the sources they use to growth their knowledge and skills for teaching AI/AN students. Thirty-seven to thirty-eight percent of fourth-grade teachers evenly identified they acquire knowledge from independent reading, personal or family background, and living and/or working within the community. Twenty-two percent of teachers surveyed identified they acquire knowledge on how

to teach AI/AN students through coursework. The results were different for eighth-grade teachers who identified that living and/or working within the AI/AN communities was their primary source of knowledge and information. They were consistent with the fourth-grade teacher responses about coursework being the least used source for acquiring this knowledge. Eighteen percent of eighth-grade teachers identified coursework as a source.

The low percentage of teachers identifying coursework as a primary source of acquiring knowledge and skills regarding teaching practices for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students is consistent with teacher responses to a survey question from the *National Indian Education Study 2015.* The question asked teachers how many times in the past two years they attended professional or community-based programs to develop culturally specific instructional practices (Ninneman et al., 2017, p. 13). Seventy one percent of fourth-grade teachers and 75% of eighth-grade teachers never attended a professional or community-based program in culturally specific practices and 18% of teachers attended one to two programs over the last two years (Ninneman et al., 2017, p. 13). The lack of teacher participation in professional development opportunities that would improve culturally relevant instructional practices is one reason why 32% of fourth-grade teachers and 59% of eighth-grade teachers identified on the survey that they never implemented culturally relevant instructional practices for AI/AN students in their classrooms. Only 8% of fourth-grade teachers and 4% of eighth-grade teachers stated they implemented AI/AN instructional practices to a large extent.

The National Indian Education Study (NIES) provided specific examples through teacher surveys of the lack of culturally relevant instructional practices in reading, language arts, and mathematics classes. Between 15% and 22% of fourth- and eighth grade reading teachers reported having American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students write about their own

experiences or issues affecting AI/AN people. Nineteen to twenty-five percent of these teachers reported they had students read about current issues within the AI/AN communities. Incorporating culturally relevant instruction for AI/AN students was even lower in mathematics classes. Eleven to fifteen percent of fourth-grade mathematics teachers and 8% to 10% of eighth grade teachers reported they incorporated AI/AN cultural topics in their classes.

Another component of cultural relevancy is the quantity and quality of instructional materials used that pertain to American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. Teachers were asked if the number of books and materials specific to AI/AN students was sufficient with 44% of fourth-grade teachers stating yes and 55% of eighth-grade teachers agreeing. Teachers were also asked if the quality of the material was satisfactory for AI/AN students with 47% of fourth grade and 55% of eighth-grade teachers agreeing.

One of the questions on the teacher survey portion of the *National Indian Education Study* (NIES) examined the racial and ethnic diversity of teachers working with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. This is important because "some studies have shown that where students and teachers share the same culture, learning is enhanced" (Ninneman et al., 2017, p. 15). In 2015, 80% of teachers in high density AI/AN schools where White with 14-16% of teachers reporting they are AI/AN.

The National Indian Education Study – School Administrators

In the *2015 National Indian Education Study* (NIES), school administrators were asked about American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) community engagement in school events and culturally relevant materials available to students. Administrator survey results showed that Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools had a significantly higher percentage of AI/AN community members visiting the school to discuss issues and share traditions and cultural

information than low density. High density schools exhibited a much greater emphasis on community involvement in eighth grade verses fourth grade. However, the school administrator survey showed a decrease from fourth to eighth grade in the percentage of participation in Indian education parent groups in high density public schools. The percentage went from 41% in fourth grade to 30% in eighth grade.

A Closer Look

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Education published a follow-up report regarding the initial findings from the *2015 National Indian Education Study* (NIES). The follow-up report examined two-additional themes: contextual factors for high and low performing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and how they viewed themselves in terms of their Native culture, language, and goals for the future (Rampey et al., 2019, p. 1). Unlike the initial report, which included reading and mathematics performance data, the follow-up report was exclusively a summary of survey responses from AI/AN students with only one teacher question. The new report explained the reason for the follow-up and for focusing exclusively on survey results. “Although average scores provide a measure for comparing AI/AN students to other racial/ethnic groups or examining trends, emphasizing a singular score may lead to simplistic interpretations” (Rampey et al., 2019, p. 1).

One section of the *2015 National Indian Education Study* report examined five composite variables which were derived by combining the results of multiple related survey questions. The composite variables included: (1) interest in reading about cultures; (2) engagement at school; (3) perceptions about effort in school; (4) exposure to Native languages; and (5) cultural knowledge (Rampey et al., 2019, p. 11). For the first composite variable regarding reading about cultures, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) fourth- and eighth-grade students

indicated that between 25% and 30% are interested in reading about their history and culture. They were also interested in reading about other traditions and cultures. For engagement in school, students were asked if they put a lot of effort into schoolwork, desired to be the best student, enjoyed challenging classes, and had a sense of belonging in their school. Sixty-two percent of fourth grade and 48% of eighth-grade students strongly agreed with these questions about engagement. The third composite variable dealt with Native languages with 47% of fourth-grade AI/AN students and 52% of eighth-grade students indicating they are never exposed to their Native language either at home or in school. Six percent of fourth graders and 4% of eighth graders stated that they are often exposed to their Native language. This variable relates to the next variable on the depth of cultural knowledge students have. When eighth graders were asked about their cultural knowledge, 13% indicated they had no knowledge, 31% a little, 40% some, and 16% a lot (Rampey et al., 2019, p. 19).

The 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress – Reading and Mathematics

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2019) is a Congress mandated project administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and assesses students nationally and by state in reading and mathematics and at the national level in science, writing, arts, civics, geography, economics, U.S history, and technology and engineering literacy. It is known as The Nation's Report Card and is a valuable data source to examine the current state of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups of students.

The NAEP reading and mathematics assessments are given each year during fourth and eighth grade, and it identifies the percentage of students at *Below Basic*, *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* NAEP levels. The *Basic* level is considered the minimum baseline of performance

with the goal of students scoring at *Proficient* or *Advanced*. For the 2019 NAEP for fourth-grade reading, 50% of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students scored *Below Basic* compared to 23% of White students. For eighth-grade reading, 41% of AI/AN students scored *Below Basic* verses 18% for White students. Only 19% of fourth-grade and eighth-grade AI/AN students scored *Proficient* or *Advanced*. Even more concerning is the increase of eighth-grade students scoring *Below Basic* in reading from the 2017 to the 2019 exam. In 2017, 37% of eighth-grade AI/AN students scored *Below Basic* in reading and in 2019 that number increased to 41%.

Poor academic performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) occurred in mathematics in addition to reading. In fourth-grade mathematics, 33% of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students scored *Below Basic* compared to 11% of White students. For fourth-grade mathematics, 49% of AI/AN students scored *Below Basic* verses 20% of White students. Another concerning trend was the decrease in proficiency of AI/AN students in mathematics as they advance in grade. For example, during fourth grade, 24% of AI/AN students were at *Proficient* and *Advanced* in mathematics; however, in eighth grade, that percentage dropped to 15%. Comparing the performance of AI/AN students to White students, a significant achievement gap exists. For fourth-grade mathematics, only 11% of White students scored *Below Basic* verses 33% for AI/AN students. This gap is even larger during eighth grade with 20% of White students *Below Basic* in mathematics verses 49% for AI/AN students.

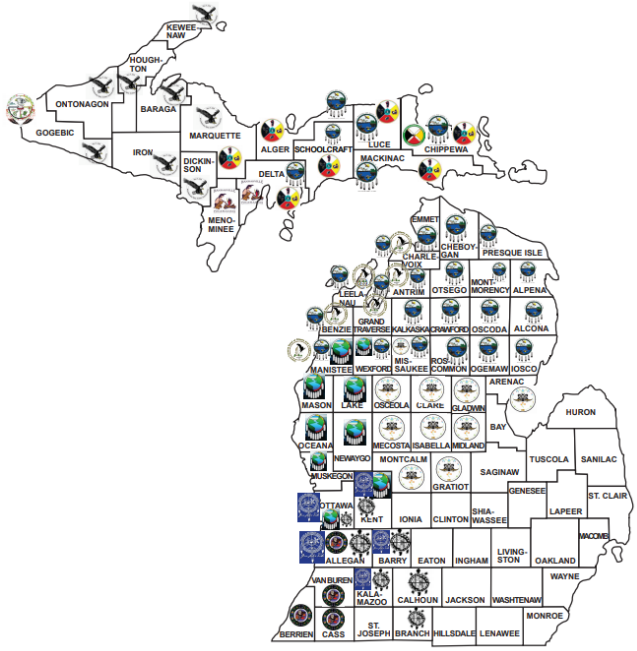
American Indian and Alaska Native education in Michigan

Michigan has 12 federally recognized tribal nations which are geographically concentrated in the north and west counties of the state (Figure 2). This federal recognition provides these nations with a special status under federal laws and treaties; however, it is

important to understand that there are additional American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) groups that reside in Michigan who are not federally recognized.

Figure 2

Native American Affairs Tribal Service Area Matrix (Map Reference)



Note: Each tribal logo represents one of the 12 federally recognized tribal nations by the United States. Each nation is considered a sovereign government with direct jurisdiction over its citizens and territory. Native American Affairs, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (2016).

According to the United States Census Bureau (2012), the 2010 Michigan census identified 62,007 individuals who reported American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) “alone” as their race/ethnicity and 77,088 as “in combination” for a total “alone or in combination” population of 139,095 (p. 7). This is an increase of 11.8% from the AI/AN population recorded on the 2000 census of 124,412 (United States Census Bureau, 2012, p. 7). According to the

2020-2021 school count, there were 1,437,612 pre-K through 12th grade students in Michigan of which 8,570 are AI/AN (see Table 1).

Table 1

Michigan Student Count Snapshot by Race/Ethnicity, 2020-21, All Grades

Student Group	Student Count	Percent of Total
White	933,993	64.97%
African American	254,724	17.72%
Hispanic/Latino	121,324	8.44%
Two or More Races	67,029	4.66%
Asian	50,740	3.53%
American Indian or Alaska Native	8,570	0.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1,232	.09%
Total	1,437,612	100%

Note: The table represents the student count for the 2020-2021 school year for all grades, pre-K through 12th grade in all Michigan public school districts. MI School Data (2020).

A considerable concentration of AI/AN students live in the northern portions of Michigan. Of the 8,570 AI/AN students in Michigan, 42% live and attend school within the 15 counties that make up the Upper Peninsula where five of the 12 federally recognized tribal nations in Michigan reside. Over 26.78% of AI/AN students in Michigan reside within the jurisdiction of one Intermediate School District (ISD) in the Upper Peninsula where AI/AN students make up 35.67% of the student population.

MI School Data is the official portal for educational data in the State of Michigan and oversight of the portal is conducted by the Center for Educational Performance and Information, also known as CEPI. Michigan schools and colleges report a variety of educational data in the areas of early childhood, K-12 education, special education, postsecondary education, and workforce data. CEPI makes this data and information available to the public through MI School

Data which is then used by schools, districts, parents, and policy makers to make informed decisions and to guarantee school transparency. When examining MI School Data, the academic challenges of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students in Michigan is apparent when compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

Like the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), academic proficiency in Michigan is primarily tracked in two subject areas, English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Michigan state testing in these areas showed similar academic performance and achievement gaps between American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and other racial/ethnic groups. For example, in 2019, 41.43% of AI/AN students showed proficiency in ELA and 29.62% in mathematics (MI School Data, 2019). This is below the academic performance of White students and below the performance of all students combined. Over 56% of White students showed proficiency in ELA with over 46% in mathematics. When compared to all students in Michigan, 49.69% showed proficiency in ELA and 39.95% in mathematics which is a proficiency gap of 8.26% in ELA and 10.33% in math. AI/AN students are also graduating at a lesser rate than all students in Michigan. The 2019 graduate rate for AI/AN students was 70.12% compared to 80.64% for all Michigan students (MI School Data, 2019).

Another concerning trend among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students in Michigan is the disproportionate representation of students receiving special education services compared to other races/ethnicities (see Table 2).

Table 2

2019-2020 Proportion of Students with Special Needs by Race/Ethnicity

Student Group	Students with Disabilities	Percent of State	Percent of Group
American Indian/Alaska Native	1,721	0.82%	18.98%
Asian	3,537	1.68%	6.81%
African American	40,680	19.32%	15.15%
Hispanic/Latino	17,049	8.1%	13.79%
Native Hawaiian	162	0.08%	12.85%
Two or more races	9,804	4.66%	14.80%
White	137,597	65.35%	14.06%

Note: The racial/ethnic information for students with disabilities is adapted from the 2019-2020 Special Education Data Portraits: Educational Setting and Demographics Snapshot report and the Student Count Snapshot report from MI School Data (2019).

Although the number of AI/AN students with disabilities is only 0.82% of the total population of students with disabilities in Michigan, the percentage of students with disabilities within the AI/AN student group is much high than other racial/ethnic groups. Nearly 19% of all AI/AN students receive special services which is the highest of all racial/ethnic groups with African American students second at 15.15%.

Examining the four, five, and six-year cohort status of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students shows challenges regarding graduation rates. For the 2018-2019 school year, 825 AI/AN students were in the 4-year cohort with 577 graduating for a graduation rate of 69.94% (MI School Data, 2019). This is the lowest 4-year graduation rate of any race/ethnicity. Some of this is due to school dropout; however, AI/AN students have the third highest dropout behind African American students and Native Hawaiian students; therefore, a partial reason for the lower graduation rate is due to not completing courses within four years. In fact, the 2018-

2019 school year was the third consecutive year of a decrease in the AI/AN student dropout rate. However, data shows that when students do not graduate in four years, the 5-year and 6-year dropout rates increase rapidly. For example, AI/AN student dropout increased from the 4-year cohort at 12.58% to 19.10% in the 5-year cohort and 21.44% for the 6-year cohort (MI School Data, 2019).

The Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) and MI School Data also showed a concerning issue regarding American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) college progression in Michigan. In 2019, 695 AI/AN students graduated high school in Michigan with 368 (52.95%) first-year, first-time college students (MI School Data, 2019). For the 2019-2020 school year, only eight or 1.15% of AI/AN college students earned a certificate in a program and no AI/AN students were reported earning a two- or four-year degree. Of the students who attended college, 30% were reported as needing college remedial coursework verses 25.3% reported for all students in the state attending college for the first time. AI/AN students needing remedial college coursework is second to African American students at 47%.

Conceptual Frameworks for Historical Trauma Research

Examining the effects of historical trauma on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students along with the perceptions of teacher competence and confidence regarding working with students who have historical trauma is complex. According to Betty Kay McGowan, adjunct professor of anthropology and sociology at Eastern Michigan University, historical trauma is trauma that was not resolved in the generation that endured the trauma; therefore, it gets internalized and passed down to their children and future generations (Givens, 2010). It is a shared trauma that AI/AN communities have suffered greatly from over many generations due to policies and practices of imperialism, colonialism, Manifest Destiny, racism,

and attempted assimilation through education. This historical trauma has led to substantial physical, social, emotional, and academic issues within AI/AN communities and these issues are best examined through three theoretical frameworks: Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit).

Ecological Systems Theory

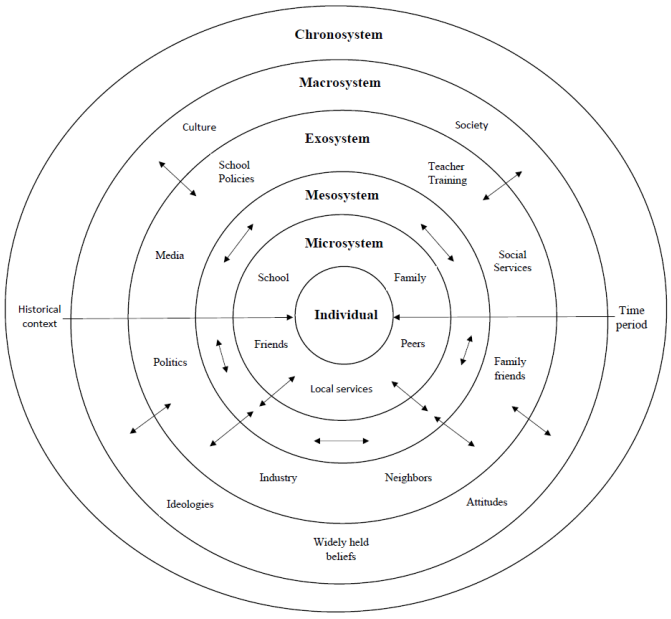
American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities are diverse and unique in language, culture, customs, spirituality, and traditions. Federal and state government agencies can provide data regarding the number of AI/AN students attending school, their academic achievement, the extent of student remediation needed, graduation rates, dropout rates, and suspension and expulsion data, but they are unable to contextualize the environment and ecological systems in which AI/AN students live and attend school. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed there is a substantial gap in scientific knowledge regarding the context of child rearing. "We know much more about children than about the environment in which they live or the processes through which these environments affect the course of development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 844). Bronfenbrenner (1979) saw a need for developing a theoretical framework to identify these environments, their components, and how they interact reciprocally with each other. Swanson (2003) referred to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory as a process-person-context model that examines the developmental process of a child at different levels of environmental context (p. 750).

Swanson (2003) believed researchers in child development often make a mistake by focusing exclusively on "proximal constituents" or people and groups that are the closest to an individual and has frequent and direct influence/impact (p. 750). According to Bronfenbrenner

(1979), this is the microsystem which includes the student's family, school, and neighborhood. However, Bronfenbrenner (1986) believed there were more external influences that are important for the healthy development of children, and it is important to address the question, "How are intrafamilial processes affected by extrafamilial conditions?" (p. 723). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems framework contextualized the explicit and implicit external systems/environments that affect the family and the child and showed their interactivity with each another. These systems are the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the later addition of the chronosystem (see Figure 3) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1994). Understanding these systems and their interactivity with one another is critical for understanding the effects of historical trauma not only on an individual but on a community across generations.

Figure 3

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979, 1986, 1994)



Note: This is an adaptation of Swanson's (2003) graphical representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 1994) Ecological Systems Theory. This revised version includes the chronosystem which shows how time and historical context influences all ecological systems. The model also

gives additional examples for each system with the arrows showing the interactivity and reciprocal nature of the systems.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) made an important distinction between the implicit and explicit worlds of individuals. The foundation of his theory is based on the idea of "life space" developed by Kurt Lewin (1931) who believed "the environment of greatest relevance for the scientific understanding of behavior and development is reality not as it exists in the so-called objective world but as it appears in the mind of the person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 23). It is critical to understand how environments are perceived and how a person interacts with different environments and within environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 23). The interconnectivity of the different systems that Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified and defined is important because these interactions increase the development of a child and can take many forms such as shared activities, two-way communication, and the sharing of information within each setting with one another (p. 848).

It is easy to fall into the trap of examining only the microsystem or environment with the most direct and immediate impact on an individual because it is the most familiar and well known; however, Swanson (2003) explained the importance of research beyond the historical focus on proximal constituents of family, friends, peers, school, and local services and how microsystems interact with each other to create what Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified as the mesosystem. Swanson (2003) believed it is critical to broaden theorizing to understand the complexities of child development within and across multiple contexts because children do not develop in isolation. Children develop through interaction with various environments including what Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 1994) identified as the exosystem, macrosystem, and the

chronosystem. However, it is important to not only focus on the development of the individual but also the development of schools as a critical element within a student's microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that schools are often an alienating setting and are becoming increasingly isolated from the home. This isolation and alienation are evident within schools and prevents schools form having a social identity and forming a common community with a shared responsibility (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 848).

According to Meagan Rides at the Door and Trautman (2019), it is the obligation of systems, such as schools, that interact with the most vulnerable populations to be trauma-informed and culturally competent if they are to meet the unique needs of a community with a long history of oppression and discrimination. Therefore, for schools to meet the needs of the community, they must work on interactivity with the community and to address Bronfenbrenner's (1979) concern that they are alienating institutions. For example, school policies, procedures, and practices with higher populations of American Indian (AI) students do not fully address the historical trauma AI students are exposed to which in turn further marginalizes AI students. These policies reside in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model in the exosystem.

The exosystem incudes elements that do not directly interact with students but have significant influence on the microsystems that do directly influence an individual. School district policies and teacher professional development are two examples within the exosystem that influence the microsystems of a child (Crosby, 2015). The exosystem also includes social services within the community and policies that determine how placement is made and reunification conducted as part of the child welfare/foster care system (Farineau, 2016). Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained there is a two-step casual sequence when using the exosystem

to provide context for understanding the influence it has on child development. The first step is to connect events in the external setting to processes within the microsystems and then link the processes within the microsystems to developmental changes in a child within a specific setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 237).

Bronfenbrenner's (1986) original model identified the macrosystem as the highest ecological system; however, the Ecological Systems Theory was later modified to include the chronosystem which is the historical context and time period of existence. The macrosystem are the attitudes, ideas, and widely held beliefs of a society or what Farineau (2016) called the "cultural milieu" (p. 142). It includes legislative policies "as well as cultural perceptions of socioeconomic status, race, and gender" and includes stereotypes as well as stigmatization that can influence individuals with feelings of inferiority and being disconnected (Crosby, 2015, p. 224; Farineau, 2016, p. 142). The macrosystem and chronosystem are critical to understanding the racial and ethnic implications of time and place and how it impacts policies and widely held beliefs that may lead to groups disproportionately being represented. For example, studying the impact over time of the forced relocation of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children to boarding schools can lead to possible answers as to the reason for AI/AN students in Michigan having the lowest 4-year cohort graduation rate of all racial and ethnic groups.

According to Crosby (2015), ecological theory explains the importance of an individual's ability to adapt to the changing elements and environments within their ecosystem. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) leading to trauma may inhibit a child to adapt and self-regulate their behavior. The inability to adapt due to trauma impedes development (Crosby, 2015). "Youths are put at a greater risk of developing unhealthy and maladaptive behaviors when elements of their ecosystem are compromised" (Crosby, 2015, p. 224). Therefore, a strong

foundation of knowledge regarding ecological systems that affect children is an important component to developing trauma-informed schools, educational practices, and designing teacher professional development about ACEs, trauma, and historical trauma.

Critical Race and Tribal Critical Race Theories

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the mid-1970s from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) with an emphasis on how the practice of law is applied to specific groups (Brayboy, 2005). It is the relationship between race, racism, and power which includes an examination of systemic individual and institutional acts of racism over time as well as areas of subordination (Writer, 2012, p. 56; Brayboy, 2005). CRT examines how racism, discrimination, oppression, and even microaggressions are often disguised through shared values and neutral scientific theories and principles (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 27; Yosso, 2005, p. 74). CRT also examines how White privilege is protected and maintained and how the dominant culture narrative can be transformed. Without transformation, the continuation of racism and oppression, which includes internal oppression, are forces that lead to destructive behaviors (Brave Heart, 1998). According to the CDC ACE Pyramid, these behaviors could possibly escalate and lead to an early death.

Writer (2012) stated that the goal of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is to create an alternative reality using storytelling which "allows for the contestation, deconstruction, and reshaping of the master narrative" (p. 57). Experiential knowledge is important to CRT and a key source of data comes from testimonies, storytelling, and personal narratives (Brayboy, 2005; Writer, 2012).

The mid 1990s saw Critical Race Theory (CRT) applied to the field of education by confronting and challenging traditional views of education (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy (2005) believed that CRT exposed racism that was so deeply rooted in the consciousness of schools that

it was invisible (p. 428). Brayboy (2005) also discovered that CRT did not address the specific needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) students but instead focused exclusively on a black-white binary. It did not take into consideration the historical context of racism rooted in colonization and the attempted assimilation of American Indian (AI) tribal nations through education. "Without this knowledge, eliminated from the master narrative by those in power, one cannot appreciate the lengths to which colonizing forces went to destroy Native Peoples occupying the content" (Writer, 2012, p. 57). To address this shortfall, Brayboy (2005) identified nine tenets that created a more culturally specific and more accurate perspective of race and racism issues related to Indigenous peoples known as Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). These nine tenets are as follows (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429-430):

1. Colonization is endemic in society.
2. Colonization is endemic due to imperialism, White supremacy, and the priority of material gain.
3. Indigenous people are in a state of inbetweeness.
4. Indigenous people desire sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
5. Culture, knowledge, and power have a different meaning when viewed through the lens of Indigenous people.
6. Government and educational policies and practices have historically focused on assimilation.
7. To understand the lives of Indigenous people and their differences, it is important to have knowledge of their beliefs, customs, traditions, and practices.
8. Storytelling is a source of data.

9. Theory and practice must be used to create social change.

These tenets are not self-sustaining and are very much connected, influenced, or dependent on the other. Due to their interconnectivity, these tenants can be consolidated to assist with adopting them for a conceptual study of historical trauma of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. For example, colonization is endemic in society due to a history of government policies of imperialism, assimilation, White supremacy, and a focus on material gain which has influenced school policies. Due to this long history of policies that are rooted in race and racism, Indigenous people are in a constant state of inbetweeness which creates an increased desire for sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification. To properly examine teacher training in historical trauma as a vital component of trauma-informed school practices, it is key to understand that culture, knowledge, and power have a different meaning when viewed through the lens of Indigenous people; therefore, it is important to have knowledge of different beliefs, customs, traditions, and practices. An example of this is the value placed on storytelling by the American Indian (AI) tribal nations as a means of historical preservation and the teaching of life lessons from one generation to another. The information from these stories is a vital source of data for researchers and is important for developing theory and practice to create social change.

The primary tenet of Tribal Crit is that colonization is endemic in society and driven by imperialism, White supremacy, and the dominant culture's focus on material gains (Brayboy, 2005). The interest convergence principle developed by NYU law professor Derrick Bell Jr. (1980) supports the notion that colonization is endemic in society. Bell Jr. (1980) believed that "racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites" (p. 523). Castagno and Lee (2007) explained interest convergence as the majority group's tolerating

the advances of minority groups when it advances the self-interest of the majority group (p. 4). Although Bell Jr. (1980) developed the interest convergence principle with a black-white binary using *Brown v. Board of Education* as the primary example, it is relevant to the historical trauma incurred by American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students from the boarding school system.

The "inbetweeness" Brayboy (2005) acknowledged explains the differences in how society identifies American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities with some viewing these communities as a racialized group and others taking a legal/political perspective. Brayboy (2005) argued that AI/AN people struggle to be recognized as both and that society does not understand the extent of the diversity among AI/AN peoples. For example, beyond the 12 federally recognized tribal nations in Michigan, there are other American Indian (AI) groups not federally recognized which further marginalizes an already marginalized group. This diversity extends beyond tribal recognition and includes the various languages, customs, cultures, traditions, and beliefs of each tribal nation. By recognizing these differences, it will lead to tribal autonomy, sovereignty, self-determination, and self-identification. By examining institutions through an Indigenous lens, culture, knowledge, and power take on a new meaning. For knowledge, it takes the form of cultural, survival, and academic (Brayboy, 2005). "This strategic use of multiple forms of knowledge generates power that is situated, dynamic, and historically influenced" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 435). Community-based examinations of issues through an Indigenous lens creates sovereignty and the ability to change and adapt. By doing so, theory and practice merge to create social change.

Statement of the Problem

According to Oehlberg (2008), "The field of education, from pre-school through teacher

training, cannot ignore the issue of traumatic stress if schools are to meet the expectations of parents, community, and the nation" (p. 1). This obligation to address the traumatic stress of students is even more challenging when the origins of trauma span many generations and is deeply embedded within a community such as the historical trauma among American Indian (AI) communities due to colonization and attempted assimilation that has led to cultural genocide. This requires strategic, extensive, and continuous teacher training in culturally responsive instruction that is trauma sensitive and informed. This training also requires addressing the difficult balance of the academic and non-academic needs of students. "Schools can no longer be just a place where a child goes just to learn to read and write; they must focus equally on becoming an epicenter of social and emotional development" (Paccione-Dyszlewski, 2016, p. 8).

Being a trauma informed school requires understanding knowledge capacity and when to direct services from schools to mental health professionals in the community. This requires the establishment and fostering of trusting school-community relationships. The current models for trauma-sensitive and informed schools for American Indian (AI) students fall short in three areas: (1) trauma-informed models that are culturally responsive; (2) trust in the public education system among the AI communities; and (3) teacher training in historical trauma-informed pedagogical principles and curriculum.

Mendelson et al. (2015) identified schools as natural settings for the prevention of trauma. Schools are natural settings for trauma-support services because of the significant amount of time students spend in school and the mental health services and support available to them. According to the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), students on average in the United States attend 180 days of school with the average length of the school day being 6.8 hours (Craw, 2020). This amounts to 1,224 hours or 28.3% of the time in which

students are in school for a 180-day period. This is a significant amount of contact time with students; therefore, schools have an important responsibility to not only educate students but to provide social and emotional support. Teachers are especially important as frontline workers in trauma intervention since they work with students daily and build strong levels of trust. This makes schools "the most common institutional entry point to mental health services" (Crosby, 2015, pp. 224).

Crosby (2015) studied teacher perspectives about working with students who experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma. Their study revealed that teachers did not know how to balance their traditional classroom responsibilities and needs of students with trauma-informed practices. Teachers indicated that they would like professional training in trauma-informed instructional practices, interventions and relationship building to better support students. In addition, Crosby, Howell, and Thomas (2018) indicated that teachers feel it is necessary that school staff have input on administrative decisions to foster more investment and cooperation among administrators, teaching, and support staff to develop a trauma-informed school climate, policies, and procedures.

Oehlberg (2008) explained that being trauma-informed and sensitive goes beyond identifying students with trauma and referring them for support services. It includes understanding that trauma can be historical/intergenerational, such as the case with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities, and this form of trauma may lead to risky behaviors that are not only a threat to academic performance and grade completion but can be a threat to the quality and longevity of life. If schools are the natural setting and entry point for mental health services for students with trauma, why is there little teacher preparation focusing on how to implement historical trauma informed practices and interventions in schools with

higher populations of AI students? Trauma informed practices in schools are often not culturally responsive and relevant to AI students. These practices do not address the AI communities' distrust of the public education system in the United States which was designed by the same dominant culture which designed and implemented the Indian boarding schools that led to a cultural genocide. These current trauma-informed practices by many schools do not address the education disparity gap between AIs and other groups and does not address the lack of cultural relevance and cultural bias of classroom curriculum and pedagogical principles of instruction (Martinez, 2014).

With minimal research on culturally responsive teacher preparation in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and historical trauma of students from American Indian (AI) communities, we do not know the perceived levels of confidence and competence teachers have regarding working with students with historical trauma. What are those perceived levels, and do they differ between teachers in reservation schools and teachers in schools outside a reservation? In addition, we do not know the similarities or differences in trauma-informed policies and procedures and the training of teachers between different types of schools. What historical trauma training is provided for teachers? What are the similarities and differences in trauma-informed school models?

Organization of the Research Study

Chapter 1 identifies Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and intergenerational/historical trauma as a significant threat to the mental health and physical well-being of American Indian (AI) students and the importance of historical trauma-informed schools to help support students work through this trauma to improve their mental health which in turn will assist in establishing a strong foundation for academics. The chapter identifies that a

component of a historical trauma-informed school is the proper teacher preparation and training in historical trauma and effective classroom practices that strike a proper balance between a focus on the mental health of students and academics. Chapter 1 provides a history of American Indian (AI) education and the boarding school movement in the United States and more specifically in Michigan along with the origins and evolution of historical trauma among AI communities. This condensed historical examination of the boarding school movement is used to contextualize the current state of AI education in the United States with a closer examination of the current state of AI education in Michigan. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory are the conceptual frameworks that are the foundation of this study and are aligned and interwoven into the four constructs of the study: the problem, purpose, significance, and research questions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 12).

Chapter 2 examines literature pertaining to historical trauma, trauma-informed schools, culturally responsive schools, and teacher training and preparation in historical trauma and American Indian (AI) education. The literature review uses the theoretical frameworks of Ecological Systems Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Tribal Critical Race Theory to examine past research and existing knowledge regarding historical trauma-informed school models and teacher preparation to determine issues that need to be researched further in an effort to improve the quality and equality of education for AI students.

Chapter 3 reviews the problem, purpose, and significance of the study and identifies the research questions, research methodology, data collection strategies, and methods for data analysis. Chapter 4 includes an analysis of the findings from the data collected. The structure of the study, including data collection and analysis, is dictated by the three theoretical frameworks

identified for the study which helps to “illuminate” information from the data collected and make meaningful conclusions (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 21). From this data analysis, Chapter 5 identifies implications for practice, and makes recommendations for future research on historical trauma-informed schools and teacher preparation as it relates specifically to American Indian (AI) students.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Trauma, as a result of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), is well-researched since the landmark CDC-Kaiser Permanente study conducted by Felitti et al. (1998) which led to the development of the ACE Pyramid by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). This increase in ACEs and trauma research has led to a focus on developing trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed schools. However, the focus lacks inclusivity and responsiveness to all students and cultures. For example, there is a significant absence in the development of trauma-informed schools centered on the historical/intergenerational trauma of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. The lack of attention has led to insufficient teacher training and understanding of how best to support and provide interventions for AI/AN students with historical trauma. Therefore, trauma-informed schools are being established but are often not culturally responsive to the needs and challenges of AI/AN students and their community's history of trauma.

The approach to making schools in the United States more trauma-informed is what Howard (2019) described in his study of the Australian education system as "emergent" and "piecemeal." Both education systems are emergent because most schools focus on trauma sensitivity which is only an awareness of trauma. Trauma-sensitive schools are a start; however, the goal of all schools should be trauma-informed which requires transformational leadership and changes in policies, procedures, and practices (Trauma Informed Oregon, 2020; Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018). In addition, schools are still working on what Rutledge et al. (2015) identified as the dual role of schools – to attend to both the academic and social-emotional needs

of students. Due to this dual role, teachers have expressed their frustration and need for assistance because they are having difficulties with balancing this dual responsibility of meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of students (Crosby, Howell, & Thomas, 2018).

The effort for more trauma-informed schools in the United States is piecemeal because there is no coordinated effort of materials and a framework for establishing trauma-informed schools (Howard, 2019). There are numerous federal, state, and local resources regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and trauma-sensitive and -informed schools; however, these resources are not coordinated by a central authority and there is no universal framework for the development of trauma-informed schools. Although there is an abundance of materials, these resources severely lack information and recommendations regarding the historical trauma among the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities.

The following literature review will examine past research regarding historical trauma within the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities and how school systems are or are not incorporating historical trauma as it relates to these communities into the development of their trauma-informed school models. Research will be reviewed regarding the cultural and historical issues of student trauma which, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (2014), is one of the six guiding principles for the implementation of trauma-informed schools. Literature will also be examined to determine the extent to which teachers are trained in trauma-informed practices that are culturally inclusive and responsive of AI/AN students.

The Literature Review Process

The inclusion and exclusion of literature regarding historical trauma-informed schools that are culturally responsive of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students was based

on the literature review framework developed by Perfect et al. (2016) who examined school-related outcomes of students exposed to trauma. Perfect et al. (2016) created a procedure represented in a flow chart to show how they searched for articles and determined inclusion and exclusion in their research. This process and flowchart served as a guide for this literature regarding historical trauma, trauma-informed schools, the cultural inclusion and responsiveness of schools, and the training teachers are provided in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and the historical trauma of AI/AN students. Exclusions adopted from Perfect et al. (2016) included: book reviews, ineligible population, medical/injury related trauma, full text not available, not peer reviewed, and poor outcome/fit. Also adopted from the Perfect et al. (2016) model was the inclusion of certain databases, references from other literature reviews, and serendipitous discoveries. Although the approach for this literature review was based on Perfect et al. (2016), it does not fully replicate the approach.

Peer reviewed articles were discovered using the following databases: ProQuest, SAGE Journals, SpringerLink, Elsevier Journals, APA PsycNet, and JSTOR. These databases were selected for the following reasons: Their professional stature as high-quality multidisciplinary databases for research, ability to refine searches using various advanced filter options, providing links to related articles to help expand research, providing full-text articles, and easy options to adjust date ranges and inclusion and exclusion criteria such as the type of source (journal article, book, newspaper, magazine, and others). APA PsycNet was used extensively due to its advanced search filter functions allowing for searches by age group, methodology, population group, and other specific filter criteria. The references from articles selected for use provided additional sources to examine with close attention paid to frequently cited articles regarding the historical trauma of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students, trauma-informed school

models, and teacher training in trauma-informed instructional and support practices. Governmental and non-government organizations/agencies and their publications were discovered through references in various articles.

Limiting the search to the past five years was the initial intention; however, some articles cited older sources that needed to be included in this review due to their status within trauma and trauma-informed school research as determined by the frequency in which they are cited in articles. Therefore, the literature search expanded to the past 10 years which increased the amount of literature for review and provided a more comprehensive examination of past research regarding historical trauma and trauma-informed school models. Some exceptions were made to include articles prior to 2010 if the article added value to the literature review or was considered landmark research in historical trauma and practices.

The diverse strategies and expanded timeframe for finding literature yielded a substantial amount to examine and analyze. It prevented missing important literature that would help support this research in historical trauma-informed school models for schools with higher populations of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. As Perfect et al. (2016) stated, “over 8% of articles may be missed even if researchers expanded the types of databases” and that “serendipitous” discoveries (i.e., chance findings or browsing) may be more effective than examining traditional search venues” (p. 11). Therefore, in addition to finding articles through citations, databases, and library collection searches, articles were discovered through recommendations from conversations with scholars in historical trauma regarding AI/AN communities and students.

Initial searches of the databases focused on the following key words in various combinations: historical trauma, American Indian, Native American, Indigenous populations,

Native Peoples, First Nations, Indian boarding schools, trauma-informed schools, trauma-informed teaching, historical trauma framework, cultural inclusion, cultural responsiveness, teacher trauma training, trauma professional development, teacher competence, and teacher confidence. The abstracts of articles were examined first, and exclusions made for the following reasons: Book review, dissertation, unable to locate the full text, references not provided, concerns regarding the source, ineligible population, design of the study, concerns regarding the relevance to the topic, incorrect type of trauma, and limitations to the study. Articles not excluded were organized into four categories for a more in-depth reading and analysis: The historical/intergenerational trauma of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs), an examination of trauma-informed school models/frameworks, cultural responsiveness to trauma-informed approaches, and teacher training in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma with a specific focus on what training is provided to teachers regarding the historical trauma of AI/AN students. Although the literature is categorized into four categories, it is important to understand that they are not mutually exclusive, and the literature may extend into multiple categories of trauma research.

The literature review is guided by the theoretical frameworks of Ecological Systems Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Tribal Critical Race Theory which are intrinsically linked to the literature (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Throughout the literature review, these theoretical frameworks will be referenced to provide a logical understanding of the literature, to make connections, and to determine gaps in research regarding historical trauma of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and teacher training in historical trauma as a component of trauma-informed school models.

Historical/Intergenerational Trauma Among Tribal Nations

Intergenerational trauma, also known as historical trauma, is a form of "complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance" (Mohatt et al., 2014, p. 129). Historical trauma is different than systemic or structural racism because it focuses on the past events as genocidal or ethnocidal in their intent (Maegan Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019, p. 370). Historical trauma is a "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma" and is identified by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation of Canada as a disease (Brave Heart et al., 2011, p. 283; Sotero, 2006). What makes historical trauma like a disease is "the maladaptive social and behavioral patterns that were created in response to the trauma experience, absorbed into the culture and transmitted as learned behavior from generation to generation" (Sotero, 2006, p. 96). It is the exposure to adverse experiences at a young age that lead to health risk behaviors and disease as children mature into adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). This is the case within American Indian communities where the environmental and hereditary factors influenced by historical trauma has led to Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma at an early age.

Historical/intergenerational trauma was originally introduced through clinical case study research during the 1960s regarding the children of Holocaust survivors. This research examined "survivor syndrome" which is the impaired parent effectiveness of Holocaust survivors from exposure to extreme adverse experiences leading to symptoms of denial, nightmares, anxiety, guilt, isolation, and a disconnectedness (Whitbeck et al., 2004). These symptoms infringed on the parent effectiveness not only of Holocaust survivors but also in first-generation offspring therefore damaging family cohesion and functioning (Whitbeck et al. 2004; Fossion et al., 2015).

This phenomenon of historical trauma is also evident in survivors and the descendants of Japanese Americans in U.S. internment camps during World War II and in various colonized groups including American Indians and Alaska Natives (Mohatt et al., 2014).

Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) examined the theoretical contributions of the literature regarding the generational transmission of trauma within the Jewish community and saw similarities of "historical unresolved grief" within the AI/AN communities (p. 56, 61). For example, both cultures and communities have difficulties with mourning mass graves and with the idea of collective grief but also recognize the importance of community memorialization (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 61). In addition, both groups exhibit the "survivor's-child complex" where sometimes the survivor and their descendants show "unresolved grief" through self-destructive behaviors such as drug abuse, alcoholism, suicide, domestic violence, child abuse, and homicide (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, pg. 62). These behaviors find themselves on the ACE Pyramid in the *Adoption of Health-Risk Behavior* tier which leads to health and social issues along with potential risk of an early death.

Although the loss and grief are similar between these two groups, there are also significant differences, and it is important to not compare suffering of different groups of people when studying Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma since each situation is unique. For example, the intergenerational effect of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) suffered by the first generation of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) is a different form of unresolved trauma from that of the Holocaust survivors because it involves "disenfranchised grief" (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, pg. 62). "Disenfranchised grief is grief that persons experience when a loss cannot be openly acknowledged or publicly mourned" (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 62). According to Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998), the

dominant culture viewed American Indians (AIs) as savages and incapable of having feelings and the capacity to grieve. This in turn led to the absence of rituals and funeral rights that are critical in allowing the bereaved to adjust to the death of a loved one, and consequently, leading to unresolved or disenfranchised grief (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998). It was assumed that just because the ways of the AI people were different than the beliefs of the dominant White culture, they were uncivilized. This led to federal policies based on Manifest Destiny, a doctrine coined by newspaper editor John O'Sullivan in 1845 to justify colonization, the expansion west, and the attempted civilization of AI people through boarding school education (Adams, 1995).

Since historical/intergenerational trauma is connected to the adverse experiences of a collective group, it is important to understand four elements of group identity or what Holm, Pearson, and Chavis (2003) identify as "the peoplehood matrix" – language, sacred history, place/territory/land, and the ceremonial cycle (p. 11). Each element of "peoplehood" was the target of assimilative practices of the Indian boarding schools leaving a legacy of historical/intergenerational trauma, numerous perceived losses, and various emotional responses by tribal communities (Holm, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003; O'Neil et al., 2018; Whitbeck et al., 2004).

Although historical trauma research originated with Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, there has been an increase in historical trauma research with the majority of research focusing on the trauma among American Indians (Sotero, 2006). Current research shows important differences between the historical trauma within the Jewish community and the trauma among the AI communities. A significant difference with AI communities is how trauma and loss are not confined to a single catastrophic event such as the Holocaust but extends over 400 years, across multiple catastrophic events, and numerous presidential administrations where policies

fostered trauma (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Another difference identified by Whitbeck et al. (2004) is the daily reminders of loss through reservation living, encroachment on reservation lands, and the loss of language, traditions, spiritual and healing practices, and the loss of traditional family systems leading to examples of parent ineffectiveness (Whitbeck et al., 2004). “Social amnesia” is another difference between the historical trauma among Jewish Holocaust survivors and the historical trauma among Native communities (O’Neil et al., 2018). Social amnesia refers to a worldwide acceptance and acknowledgement regarding the atrocities of the Holocaust due to its more global stage; however, there is not the global attention given to the trauma and legacy of the Indian boarding schools in Canada and the United States (O’Neil et al., 2018).

Historical trauma is significantly different than other forms of trauma because it is the public narrative for specific groups/communities which impacts present day physical and mental health (Mohatt et al., 2014). It is the synthesis of historical oppression and psychological trauma which leads to a shared vulnerability and is the fundamental difference between historical trauma and other forms of psychological trauma (Gone et al., 2019). This is the case among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities where collective trauma has a deeply rooted history with its origins in colonization and the assimilation of children primarily through forced relocation to Indian boarding schools. The historical trauma among the AI communities has led to pronounced disparities between AI students and students from other races/ethnicities. The collective trauma and the disparity created suggests “that cumulative disadvantage is predictive of cumulative dysfunction” which is evident among tribal nations (Kenney and Singh, 2016, p. 1).

According to Gone et al. (2019) and Sotero (2006), the historical trauma of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) differs from standard lifetime trauma. The first difference

is the colonial origins of AI/AN historical trauma. According to Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), colonization is an epidemic in society and that the dominant power structures of the past remain the dominant forces today for American Indians (Brayboy, 2005). Colonization established boundaries through conquest and jeopardized the Indigenous identities of tribal nations (Gone et al., 2019). This occurred over time and through numerous events which is different than other forms of trauma that is acute or associated with a single event. Another difference between historical trauma and standard trauma is its collective nature. Historical trauma is unresolved at the time of exposure to an adverse event and therefore accumulates over time and transfers to later generations making the trauma increasingly complex as it accumulates. Mohatt et al. (2014) explained further that historical trauma not only spans across generations, but it affects the contemporary members of a group without their having to be present during the traumatizing event. The transfer of trauma is often challenging for people to comprehend. O'Neil (2018) believed to understand the transmission of trauma from one generation to another one must identify and understand both the environmental and hereditary factors. Cayir et al. (2018) identified characteristics of a traumatic event that determine/shape someone's response to adverse conditions: the type of traumatic event, intensity, occurrence time, duration, and frequency (p. 744). Cayir et al. (2018) also explained that responses to trauma are influenced by social- and cultural-level factors. For example, in a 2019 report from the Division of Violence Prevention – National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, it was identified that ACEs are preventable if a safe, stable, and nurturing environment and relationships are created and sustained.

According to Gone et al. (2019), historical trauma among American Indians (AIs) is different than the racial trauma of other minority groups because of the value placed on the tribe

as an ethnic descriptor rather than race. This challenges the perspective of the U.S. Census Bureau which categories American Indians as a racial rather than an ethnic identity. This central focus on the tribe is one of the reasons why the assault on tribal nationhood as part of colonization and assimilation was so devastating to tribal communities. Tribal nations place a high value on the community as a whole; therefore, the segregation, displacement, physical/psychological violence, economic destruction, and cultural dispossession led to a complex historical trauma that has lasted over multiple generations and remains unresolved (Sotero, 2006).

Writer (2012) stated that the forced assimilation through Westernized schooling was a weapon used again American Indian people and was specifically designed to destroy the tribal nationhood and implement a curriculum of patriotism and allegiance to the United States. In other words, their citizenship in the tribal nationhood was destroyed creating not only a loss of sovereignty but a loss of identity, therefore creating a chronic, complex, and unresolved trauma that exists today. Whitbeck et al. (2004) acknowledged historical trauma as a misnomer because the loss is not historic and left in the past but is present and a contemporary issue.

Another factor that makes historical trauma complex is its relationship and proximity to the victim. The root cause of the historical trauma among American Indian (AI) youth is colonialism, governmental legislation and policies leading to genocidal actions, and the assimilation or effort to purse the assimilation of the AI peoples through an organized network of Indian boarding schools. Although the adverse experiences of the Indian boarding schools are generationally far removed from current AI students, the historical trauma it generated manifested across generations since it was left unresolved and has become a contemporary form of trauma for AI children and adolescents. What increases the severity of this historical trauma in

its contemporary form is adverse experience is created/perpetrated by caregivers or adults that children and adolescents trust resulting in high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance use and abuse, self-mutilation, and high-risk sexual behaviors (Paul et al., 2017). This partially explains why up to 22% of the American Indian population has PTSD (Morsette et al., 2009).

The high rates of depression, PTSD, substance abuse, and other unhealthy behaviors among American Indian (AI) youth has led to high rates of suicides among AI youth and adults. American Indians between the ages of 15 and 34 have a suicide rate 250% higher than the general population due to this unresolved trauma and the inability to cope with a trauma that is perpetrated by someone that is trusted and close (Paul et al., 2017). Trauma that may lead to acts of suicide are often thought of as stemming from a major event such as the Indian boarding schools or the Holocaust but as Paul et al. (2017) explained, trauma can occur through the accumulation of indirect and subtle forms of adverse experiences such as microaggressions. The use of derogatory terms to describe one's culture and signaling out certain students in class are examples of just a few microaggressions that if experienced frequently and consistently can accumulate into trauma.

According to Skewes and Blume (2019), there is a pervasive influence between racism and the health and well-being of American Indian (AI) people. A long history of racial discrimination, oppression, and attempted assimilation has led to a rise in substance abuse disorders (SUDs) and overall unhealthy behaviors (Skewes & Blume, 2019). There is extensive research explaining how poverty, trauma, exposure, and posttraumatic stress disorders are direct risk factors for SUDs and these risk factors are greatly higher among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities (Skewes & Blume, 2019). According to Skewes and Blume

(2019), SUDs create a vulnerability that retraumatizes AI/AN communities along with continued oppression which is a factor driving high poverty rates among AI/AN communities.

The high rates of substance abuse disorders (SUDs) are connected to poverty by affecting one's ability to become and stay employed. Sociologist Beth Redbird, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Institute for Policy Research Fellow at Northwestern University, stated that the employment rate and wage growth has declined among American Indian (AI) communities although a substantial investment and increase in education has been made (Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research, 2020). This is due partly from SUDs that prevent sustained employment. A decline in the employment rate and wage growth, as indicated by Redbird, is a significant reason for the high poverty rate of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities.

There is a disproportionality of adverse experiences and trauma regarding racial/ethnic minority students and students living in poverty (Crosby, Howell, & Thomas, 2018). Over 26% of AI/AN communities live in poverty — the highest poverty rate of any racial group in the United States and significantly higher than the national average of 14.6% (United States Census Bureau, 2017; National Congress of American Indians, 2020). The median household income of AI/AN communities is $40,315 compared to the national average of $57,652 (National Congress of American Indians, 2020). West et al. (2012) identified that American Indian (AI) youth are the most vulnerable due to these high rates of poverty, exposure to violence, mental health issues, and suicide. In addition, there is substantial historical trauma, poverty, social justice, and equity issues among AI/AN peoples, especially in rural and reservation areas.

The poverty gap between Native Americans in rural and urban areas is greater than the White rural and urban poverty gap (Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research,

2020). This gap is significant since 54% of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) live in rural areas and near tribal lands (Dewees & Marks, 2017). Dewees and Marks (2017) indicated that "Native Americans living in counties that include tribal lands tend to have lower educational attainment, higher poverty rates, lower household incomes, and lower occupational attainment compared to Native Americans who live in metropolitan areas" (Dewees & Marks, 2017, p. 6). These factors and the history driving factors that create poverty are important for educators to understand as they examine the various adverse experiences that may cause AI students trauma and determine how best to support students.

Events/experiences that create historical trauma are different than other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). According to Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2014), historical traumatic events have three distinguishing characteristics along with three common responses. Historical traumatic events are first widespread among a specific group and the events continue to be harmful to the well-being of the group (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). For example, the Indian boarding schools in the United States caused significant trauma and this trauma was left unresolved by those who experienced the boarding schools. The unresolved trauma therefore transferred from generation to generation undermining the physical, psychological, and social well-being of generations of American Indians.

The second characteristic of historical trauma involves the role of the perpetrator. The perpetrators of historical trauma are often outside groups that have destructive purpose/intent (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). For example, with the Indian boarding schools, one of the perpetrators was the United States government who passed policies and formed agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs with the intent to "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man" (Pratt, R.H., 1892, p. 1). The U.S. government along with numerous religious groups such as the

Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, and Episcopalians managed the boarding schools and targeted for destruction the four elements of "peoplehood": Language, sacred history, place/territory, and ceremonial cycle (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis, 2003).

The third unique characteristic of historical trauma is the collective distress it has on the victim group (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). Historical trauma continually undermines the well-being of current community members and the transfer of historical trauma across generations interacts with current stressors/adverse experiences (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). Due to the trauma being unresolved, it accumulates as it is transmitted across generations (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The trauma becomes a part of a community's DNA making it challenging for the whole community to heal.

The wounds of historical trauma are so deeply rooted in American Indian (AI) communities that healing must be approached at three levels: the individual, family, and community (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). This multiple level approach aligns with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) which focus on diversification of perspectives and experiences. According to Writer (2008), "CRT allows for the contestation, deconstruction, and reshaping of the master narrative by enlisting multiple perspectives and experiences as sources of valid knowledge which service as catalysts for transformation" (p. 3). Approaching healing from the individual, family, and community levels will provide the multiple perspectives and experiences needed for transforming AI communities away from disenfranchisement and disproportionality.

Collaboration at the individual, family, and community levels requires an understanding that multiple ecological systems interact with each other and influence the academic performance and social and emotional well-being of students. School, which is within the microsystem, has a

direct and significant impact on students. However, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that school has become an alienating setting in multiple ways including separating or isolating itself from the home with teachers and parents becoming less likely to know each other and the lack of communal life with the separation of students by classes and grades. This in addition to the mistrust of schools due to the association with the historical boarding schools further complicates the relationship between schools and the tribal communities. To address the disconnect between schools and the community, Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed not only direct guidance from persons with necessary knowledge and skills such as teachers but a focus on third party involvement such as grandparents, friends, neighbors, and leaders in the community to help support the development potential of children. Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlighted the importance of the interconnections between settings such as home and school which is critical for the development of a trauma-informed school.

West et al. (2012) addressed the importance of interconnectedness as one of the four themes that emerged from their research examining the American Indian (AI) community in Chicago, Illinois and how historical trauma and internalized oppression can lead to a divide within the community as people work against each other. Whitbeck et al. (2004) explained how the elders of an AI community in the upper Midwest identified the erosion of traditional AI family values, tradition, and community ties/connections as a major loss. The perceived losses led to emotional responses of anger, avoidance, anxiety, and depression (Whitbeck et al., 2004). West et al. (2012) recommended education and training as community mobilization efforts to open dialogue about the historical trauma among AI communities and trauma's effect on the physical, behavioral, and mental health of community members.

Variations to the outcome of historical trauma is due to specific circumstances of the

adverse event (Cayir et al., 2018). For example, Running Bear et al. (2018), examined one specific Adverse Childhood Experience, American Indian (AI) boarding school attendance and its relationship to the health status of attendees. The goal of Running Bear et al.'s (2008) research was to determine if five different experiences/circumstances, the "age of first attendance, limited family visits, forced church attendance, prohibition on practicing AI culture and traditions, and punishment for us of AI language" was associated with the health status of boarding school attendees as adults (Running Bear et al., 2018, p. 153). Data from the AI-Service Utilization, Psychiatric Epidemiology, Risk and Protective Factors Project of 771 boarding school attendees showed that each of the five experiences led to poorer physical health as adults compared to people who did not experience the boarding schools (Running Bear et al., 2018). A significant discovery was the connection between the age children were removed from their homes and punishment for the use of AI language. The lowest health status score came from former students at the boarding schools who were eight years or older and were punished for the use of AI languages in school (Running Bear et al., 2018).

Running Bear et al.'s (2018) study revealed the detrimental impact five specific experience factors associated with the Indian boarding schools had on the physical health of former students who are now adults. The age of their first attendance in the boarding schools, the limitations they had on family visits, forced church attendance, the forbidden use of their native language(s), and forbidding the practice of their culture and traditions each had a negative effect on their health as adults. However, the study did not provide an explanation regarding how age and punishment correlated to poorer health as an adult. The study also did not explore other potential factors for health problems as an adult including diet, access to health care, exposure to diseases, and the overcrowding of the boarding schools (Running Bear et al., 2018).

In a series of focus groups from two reservations in the upper Midwest of the United States, American Indian (AI) elders expressed how the loss of language, one of the five circumstances/experiences examined by Running Bear et al. (2018), had a devastating and traumatizing effect on their communities (Whitbeck et al., 2004). The loss of language was orchestrated through government policy and the organization of Indian boarding schools across the United States which created a curriculum specifically aimed at the social and cultural disintegration of the AI tribe, family, and identity and the elimination of Native languages, cultures, and traditions (Nuby & Smith, 2012). The loss of culture and language led to feelings of sadness, grief, anger, hopelessness, shame, helplessness, and guilt (Brave Heart, 1999). Brave Heart (1999) discovered, using various self-reporting instruments among 45 Lakota men and women, that a significantly higher percentage of men had these feelings than women due to the higher percentage of males attending the boarding schools and higher percentages of males being punished, experiencing racism, and sexually abused (p. 11). The feelings of guilt and shame come directly from the boarding schools who told students they should feel ashamed of their identities and communities (Shelton et al., 2019). In addition, the boarding schools prevented an environment to model fundamental parenting skills and familial roles; therefore, as these children became adults and had children, they had great difficulties with being a parent which in turn led to additional feelings of guilt, helplessness, and shame (Shelton et al., 2019).

O'Neil et al. (2018) examined further the loss of language and the feeling of guilt and shame discovering a breakdown in self-esteem. The historical trauma incurred by the American Indian (AI) communities due to colonization and assimilation through the boarding schools fractured the relationship between oneself and the world leaving a relationship of mistrust, isolation, and a lack of communication (O'Neil et al., 2018). There is a silence within Native

communities regarding the historical trauma of colonization and assimilation that spans generations; therefore, O'Neil et al. (2018) refers to this as the "intergenerational conspiracy of silence" (p. 179). This silence makes the trauma a secret and therefore unresolved which contributes to the transmission of historical trauma across generations (O'Neil et al., 2018).

The foundation of guilt and shame expressed by American Indian (AI) elders was the break from cultural traditions and storytelling as the primary form of communication (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Native peoples were silenced therefore preventing storytelling as the central form of communication (O'Neil et al., 2018). However, O'Neil et al. (2018) did see opportunities for breaking this silence among third generation Native peoples due to the willingness of boarding school survivors to speak to their grandchildren regarding their school experiences. The passage of time has helped to lessening the intensity of the traumatic experience and the ability of boarding school survivors to reframe their feelings into a story, the traditional type of preserving and communicating history among Native peoples (O'Neil et al., 2018).

Writer (2012) explained the importance of understanding the historical context of racism and negative attitudes towards American Indians (AIs) to understand how current educational legislation and procedures may also be oppressive. "Without this knowledge, eliminated from the master narrative by those in power, one cannot appreciate the lengths to which colonizing forces went to destroy Native Peoples occupying the content" (p. 57). This colonization created an "Othering" that painted a picture of AI communities as savages and their language as the "devil's tongue" which was fueled by public perceptions and in turn fueled public policy and practice "thus transforming Native people into objects of subjugation" (Writer, 2008, p. 8; Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011). Governmental policies and actions of assimilation through education was rooted in race, racism, and power (Writer, 2012). For

example, Estelle Reel, the first superintendent of the American Indian Board Schools appointed by President William McKinley, believed AIs were intellectually and physically inferior (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011).

This history of colonization, assimilation, and the policies, processes, and practices implemented is the primary tenet of Tribal Critical Race Theory (Writer, 2012). Although recent legislation was passed to provide and protect AI education rights through self-determination, schools with primarily AI students are slow to adapt and change because they have this legacy of historical trauma (Nuby & Smith, 2012). In addition, part of the slow path towards self-determination is continued to be hindered by public policy. For example, "Native languages and cultures have received little attention and even less funding in NCLB" (Writer, 2012, p. 62).

O'Neil et al. (2018) identified several challenges in the continued research in historical trauma. The first major challenge is the heterogeneity of participants in research studies that are of second and third generation survivors of historical trauma. It is very often that the participants in research are not homogenous therefore the heterogeneity needs to be recognized in any research (O'Neil et al, 2018). An example of this is the United States Census where people self-identify with a race and ethnicity. Some people may identify themselves as American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) while others may identify as the category "two or more races" and others may identify as neither. A second challenge is the distinction between direct or transposition and indirect or redirect transmission of intergenerational trauma in order to properly identify what interventions should be implemented (O'Neil et al, 2018). Direct or transposition is when children unconsciously think, behave, and live out the trauma similar to their parents or guardians (O'Neil, 2018). Therefore, depression, anxiety, PTSD, abuse, neglect, and other behaviors exhibited by the parents is also evident with the children. Indirect or redirect

transmission is when children unconsciously compensate for the lack of parental abilities (O'Neil, 2018). According to O'Neil et al. (2018), indirect or redirect transmission of trauma tends to be the type that manifests most often among the AI communities; however, there is evidence of both types of transmissions.

Trauma-Informed and Sensitive School Models/Frameworks

Researchers and educational professionals frequently use trauma-sensitive and trauma-informed interchangeably which falsely conveys the message that they are one and the same. For example, Gherardi, Flinn, and Jaure (2020) focused their research primarily on schools being trauma-sensitive and referenced the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative: Trauma-Sensitive Schools Descriptive Study by Jones, Berg, and Osher (2018) to justify their use of the term trauma-sensitive. Jones, Berg, and Osher (2018) defined a trauma-sensitive school as "one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported, and were addressing trauma's impact on learning on a schoolwide basis is at the center of the educational mission" (p. iii). However, trauma-sensitive schools only have an awareness of trauma and its impact. According to Trauma Informed Oregon (2020), a collaboration among the Oregon Health Authority, Portland State University, Oregon Health & Science University, and the Oregon Pediatric Society, it should be the goal of all schools to be trauma-informed not just trauma-sensitive. Trauma-informed schools take the awareness of trauma and act upon it by changing their policies, procedures, and practices to best support and provide care for students with trauma (Trauma Informed Oregon, 2020). According to Thomas, Crosby, and Vanderhaar (2019), a trauma-informed approach includes acknowledging trauma, understanding its impact on all individuals, implementing practices and policies, and avoiding practices and policies that may trigger trauma or re-traumatize (p. 425). Therefore, the development of a trauma-informed school must include three

core elements: training/professional development for teachers and staff, organizational changes, and changes to procedures and practices (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019, p. 425).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) call to action for the interconnections between settings and for schools to not be settings of alienation are fundamental characteristics of trauma-informed schools. "What is needed is a systematic appraisal of the environmental stresses and supports experienced by families in our society and the effects of this experience on the family as a child-rearing system" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 849). According to Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich (2016), there is no institution in the United States better equipped than the public-school system to address childhood and adolescent trauma. One reason for this claim is due to the number of students who attend public schools and the amount of time students spent in school. Ninety percent of students attend public school, and the structure of public education allows for long-term access to students during 13 critical developmental years (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016; Mendelson et al., 2015). In addition, many children have limited access to mental health clinics leaving schools and health care settings as the two primary entry points to mental health services (Ko et al., 2008; Crosby, 2015). There is also a stigma associated with the need for mental health services; therefore, people often do not access public health clinics for mental health services and instead look to schools for providing these services to students (Morsette et al., 2009). However, this poses a dilemma for schools that do not systematically screen/assess or provide services for traumatic stress (Ko et al., 2008). How do schools balance their mission and responsibility of educating students while also helping students who have traumatic stress (Ko et a., 2008)?

Pataky, Baez, and Renshaw (2019) discovered that nearly 62% of students reported experiencing at least one traumatic event by the age of 17. If children are exposed to multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the probability of adverse effects greatly increases

(Kenney & Singh, 2016). For example, the prevalence rates for depression, anxiety, and ADHD in children with two or fewer ACEs is 0.4%, 1.8%, and 5.5% (Kenney & Singh, 2016, p. 1). If children have three or more ACEs, the prevalence rates for depression, anxiety, and ADHD increase to 14.4%, 7.7%, and 12.5% (Kenney & Singh, 2016, p. 1). In addition, school-related problems, students failing assignments and courses, and the need for medication and counseling services is two to three times higher when children have three or more ACEs (Kenney & Singh, 2016). For low-income children who are disproportionally exposed to adverse experiences and trauma, this exposure has a significant effect on all major domains of their development, educational outcomes, physical and mental well-being, and has long-term effects across their life span (Felitti et al., 1998; Paccione-Dyszlewski, 2016; Tabone et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2008).

The past decade saw a new direction in school reform through increased interest in trauma-sensitive schools, discourse on social justice, and equity issues of urban students (Gherardi, Flinn, & Jaure, 2020). Although Gherardi, Flinn, and Jaure (2020) focused their research on the urban landscape, ACEs and trauma are associated with any environment that undermines a child's sense of safety, security, stability, and connections/bonding (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2019). According to Paccione-Dyszlewski (2016), "There is hardly a child who crosses the threshold of a school who does not carry with them a reservoir of trauma" (p. 8). However, what is critical to understand is that everyone is not exposed to the same type, intensity, and frequency of adverse experiences. For example, the colonization and attempted assimilation of American Indians and the enslavement and segregation of African Americans has led to a significant high level of historical/intergenerational trauma. It is often racial and ethnic minorities that experience disproportionately higher levels of ACEs and trauma in comparison to the White majority.

Paccione-Dyszlewski (2016) argued that anyone who interacts with students must assume that every child has a history of some form and level of trauma. Ko et al. (2008) added that any child-serving system must approach childhood trauma differently because each system has different responsibilities. Different responsibilities lead to different levels of trauma awareness/sensitivity, knowledge, skills, and abilities of each system to gather information about the children (Ko et al., 2008, p. 397). Although there are differences among the child-serving systems, they all share the goal of improving outcomes and providing excellent standards of care (Ko et al., 2008).

Paccione-Dyszlewski (2016) explained that trauma is personal and does not disappear by being ignored but instead will "corrode the very potential of learning" (p. 8). Therefore, school policies and practices must change for this to occur which requires the full support of administration (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019). There also needs to be collaboration between the school and the community. For trauma-informed schools to be successful, there needs to be strong cross-system collaboration between staff and mental health professionals either in the school/district or within the community (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019). It also requires teachers to change their classroom practices and responses to student trauma and requires school/district administration to revise policies and procedures for flexibility to address the diverse student needs and the culture of the community in which the school(s)/district serves (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019; Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016).

In a 2018 study for the American Institute for Research, Jones, Berg, and Osher (2018) collected information through perception surveys to determine what attributes staff believed are the most important in creating trauma-sensitive schools. The number one attribute identified was a shared understanding between leadership and staff regarding how trauma impacts learning and

the importance of a school-wide approach to addressing student trauma (Jones, Berg, & Osher, 2018). The second highest attribute was the need for a holistic approach where relationships are taken into consideration along with a focus on self-regulation strategies (Jones, Berg, & Osher, 2018). Also scoring high on the perception surveys was the need for teamwork, a shared responsibility for all students, and understanding that leadership and staff must adjust to the constantly changing needs of students (Jones, Berg, & Osher, 2018). Although the initial intent of the study was to identify and prioritize staff perceptions of attributes associated with trauma-sensitive schools, the attributes they identified go beyond just an awareness and are actual attributes of trauma-informed schools.

Specifically, Bath (2008) identified three attributes, or what he referred to as "pillars," for trauma-informed schools and care: Safety, connections between traumatized children and their caregiver(s), and self-regulation/management of emotions. Of the three attributes, safety is the fundamental component, especially for students with complex trauma such as the historical trauma among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and adolescents. Complex trauma is trauma from extended exposure to adverse experiences which creates a significant feeling of being unsafe and creates a mistrust of adults (Bath, 2008). The Indian boarding schools are an example of an adverse experience that fostered unsafe feelings and created a mistrust of adults and public education systems which has transferred from one generation to another within the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. This is evident in the research by Whitbeck et al. (2004). In meeting with elders, Whitbeck et al. (2004) discovered that a little over three-fifths of the elders feel uncomfortable around White people when they think of the historical losses of the AI people with slightly over half being fearful and distrusting of White people and their intentions.

Since this lack of trust and fear has transferred across generations, an important task of trauma-informed schools is to restructure the association of fear and mistrust American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students have regarding public education and help them to distinguish between adults and institutions that are threatening and those that are not (Bath, 2008). Understanding the difference is critical because AI/AN students and their families associate the current public-education system as one that was designed and structured by the White oppressors of their ancestors and created school environments that foster stereotypes of racial-ethnic groups and curriculum that is not culturally relevant (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013). The association of public education with oppression is magnified when many teachers in schools with higher percentages of AI/AN students are White. "It is often the case that teachers and administrators who teach in schools with a significant population of Native students are not Native themselves and frequently come from outside communities in which they are employed" (Writer, 2017, p. 171). Thus, according to Writer (2017), there is a mistrust of teachers and administrators who are from outside AI/AN communities. Writer (2017) explained how it is important for non-Native teachers and administrators to understand they are "guests" among the AI/AN communities and to be mindful of these feelings of mistrust.

Safety can take many forms in trauma-informed schools including "consistency, reliability, predictability, availability, honesty, and transparency" (Bath, 2008, p. 19). Safety can also take the form of "identity safety" which is important for racial and ethnic groups that historically are targets of racism, oppression, and assimilation such as American Indians and Alaska Natives (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013). Identity safety refers to a school environment where racial-ethnic minority students can identify with the school, feel they belong, and have the confidence that they can be successful (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013).

Fryberg, Covarrubias, and Burack (2013) contended that even subtle cues that threaten the safety of student identity and self-relevance can negatively affect academic achievement. Therefore, one way to close the achievement gap is to create a safe and supportive school environment that eliminates the negative stereotypes and low expectations of racial-ethnic minorities, improve teacher cultural awareness and understanding, and develop and implement a curriculum that is perceived by students as relevant (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013).

Schools may also create a feeling of safety by providing students an opportunity to have developmentally appropriate levels of power and control over their environment and circumstances (Bath, 2008, p. 19). Although empowerment is important to help children and adolescents grasp the feeling of control over their environment, it is ultimately the responsibility of instructional leaders and teachers to create school and classroom environments that are physically, socially, and emotionally safe (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018). This responsibility is not focused exclusively on the safety of students but on the safety of adults as well. Nealy-Oparah and Scruggs-Hussein (2018) explained how adults, in addition to students, bring traumas into the school setting; therefore, we are "working within a sphere of trauma that is reverberating" and cyclical which requires transformational leadership that embodies healing and social-emotional intelligence (p. 13-14).

Transformational school leaders create authenticity by embodying a trauma-sensitive and informed culture that helps everyone to recognize their own triggers so healing can occur (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018). "Often the way we behave is a result of our triggers and trying to avoid them" (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018, p. 14). Some of the common triggers for students are unpredictability, transitions, sensory overload, feeling disrespected/called-out, and verbal or proximal confrontation (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-

Hussein, 2018, p. 14). It is the role of a transformation leader in a trauma-informed school to understand these student triggers and trauma-informed responses and to provide training/professional development for teachers and staff. One of the goals of a trauma-informed school environment is to help students be less reactionary by helping them to understand what is triggering behaviors, where does it come from, where do they feel it in their body in order to create balance and a calm presence (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018). If leadership does not create and embody a trauma-sensitive and informed culture, schools will continue to be settings that trigger traumas and re-traumatize students therefore creating an unsafe learning environment.

Social emotional learning interventions often associated with trauma-sensitive and informed schools have increasingly focused on improving school culture and climate through integrating social emotional skills into the "fabric" of schools and establishing trusting and productive relationships (Pawlo et al., 2019, p. 38). However, according to Pawlo et al. (2019), positive school culture and climate has a more specific meaning for trauma-informed schools. For trauma-informed schools, routines are important because it provides safety through consistency and predictability therefore reducing fear of the unknown (Bath, 2008). Consistency and predictability are also important among the school staff which serves as the caregiver of students during the school day. "Many students affected by trauma will have had caregivers who were unavailable or unable to provide consistent caregiving, and for these students, supportive relationships with adults at school are especially salient" (Pawlo et al., 2019, p. 38). This relationship is what Bath (2008) identified as the second pillar of trauma-informed schools.

The connections between children/adolescents with trauma and caring adults can prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that may lead to trauma and can also help to heal

trauma (Bath, 2008; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2019). The Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency Framework (ARC) used to treat complex trauma in children and adolescents clarifies how important this relationship is and how a significant influence in a child's caregiving system is school personnel (Arvidson et al., 2011). Therefore, if school personnel and their relationship with students is critical in their healing from trauma, then school leaders must take great care in focusing on the mental well-being of their teachers and staff because they are unable to help the students if they are unable to help themselves and are not in the right mind to do so (Pawlo et al., 2019). This supports Nealy-Oparah and Scruggs-Hussein's (2018) argument that creating a school and classroom environment must be not only physically, socially, and emotionally safe for students but also for teachers and staff. Trauma-informed schools means school-wide policies, procedures, and practices that affect, protect, and support everyone. "If school takes great care to promote the well-being of teachers and staff, this will have a trickle-down effect on students' felt sense of safety and being cared for, minimizing their threat in the environment and allowing them to take in new information, be creative, and think before they act" (Pawlo et al., 2019, p. 38).

Schools are critical settings for establishing what Bath (2008) refers to as "life-giving connections" between students and their caregivers and mentors (p. 19). Bath (2008) explained that positive relationships is necessary for healthy human development and a pillar of trauma-informed schools; therefore, when school environments exist that allow stereotypes of racial-ethnic groups and the development and implementation of curriculum that is not representative of the student body, then schools become what Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified as "alienating settings." These "alienating settings" can traumatize or re-traumatize, especially among racial/ethnic groups with a history of trauma such as American Indians and Alaska Natives

(AIs/ANs). It is the role of trauma-informed programs to ensure the physical and psychological safety of people and to avoid any potential re-traumatization by understanding signs, symptoms, and triggers (Bulanda, & Johnson, 2016). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), schools not only alienate themselves from home and community but also lack common community and shared responsibility internally therefore creating an internal alienating/isolating environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is the role of trauma-informed schools to bridge the gap between schools, home, and community along with bridging the divide internally within the school.

An important component for the collaboration within trauma-informed schools is the role and engagement of special education educators and services provided to American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. For example, in Michigan, AI/AN students are the highest percentage of students receiving special education services in comparison to other racial ethnic groups (MI School Data, 2019). Therefore, it is important that special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers and others on Individual Learning Plan (IEP) teams to determine the specific needs and assistance of AI/AN students. According to Ko et al (2008) and Buxton (2018), special education teachers are critical partners in the screening, assessment, and implementation of trauma-informed interventions/services.

Buxton (2018) further elaborated the role of special education professionals in a trauma-informed school by examining the behavioral responses of emotionally disturbed (ED) students from a trauma lens because trauma affects a child's ability to function in school. Buxton (2018) explained that special education teachers need to design Individual Education Plans/Programs (IEPs) from a trauma-informed lens. In her research, Buxton (2018) compared the four Functional Core Trauma-Related Domains with the characteristics of ED students and identified close similarities in all four domains. These similarities included difficulties in learning, building

relationships, behaviors that were inappropriate or differed from the behavior expectations within a school or classroom, and an increase in physical impairments (Buxton, 2018).

The interconnections between school-home, school-community, and staff-student are important elements of trauma-informed schools because traumatized children associate adults with negative emotions which in turn leads to suspicion, avoidance, and anger (Bath, 2008). This anger of the education system is evident in the reactions to loss among American Indian (AI) elders. From a study by Whitbeck et al., (2004), close to 85% of elders participating in a focus group indicated they feel anger due to the historical losses of AI people with nearly a quarter of the elders always or often feeling angry (p. 125). This reaction to historical loss supports Bath's (2008) third recommendation for trauma-informed schools, the regulation of emotions and impulse management. The role of teachers and staff in a trauma-informed school is to "co-regulate" with students rather than using coercive techniques to get students to control their emotions (Bath, 2008). There are also trauma-informed interventions to help students manage their emotions and impulses such as the RAP Club which teaches students to identify stress, brings awareness to their emotional state, uses mindfulness strategies, teaches to think thoughtfully and not impulsively, using experiential practices such as breath control, and determining ways to tolerate distress. (Mendelson et al., 2015).

As children and youth are exposed to adverse experiences that lead to trauma, often the importance of school is diminished. Survival becomes the priority and school is secondary. "If subjected to prolonged, severe, unpredictable stress, a child in school may experience either hyperarousal or hypoarousal and may be in constant fight, flight, or freeze mode, causing other higher order functions to become secondary in importance" (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016, p. 39). If school is not a priority, then grades, attendance, and behavior deteriorate. Therefore,

educators must take a proactive approach to be trauma-informed and to develop an educational system that is flexible and supportive for students who experience trauma. Schools must assist students with making school a priority again while tending to their social and emotional needs. According to Bath (2008), this is best done by organizing trauma-informed schools with a focus on safety, connections, and managing emotions.

In 2015, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) published a report of their findings regarding a trauma-informed agency walkthrough process to determine if policies and practices could possibly trigger trauma among clients in welfare programs, treatment providers, and the court system. Although this study did not specifically examine school policies and practices to determine if they traumatized or re-traumatized students, the findings had implications for trauma-informed school research and addressed some of the recommendations for trauma-informed care by Bath (2008). SAMHSA (2015) identified six principles for a trauma-informed approach – safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration, empowerment/voice/control, and cultural, historical and gender issues (p. 3).

Physical and emotional safety is critical for any trauma-informed setting and an argument could be made that the other five principles identified by SAMHSA (2015) is related to safety. Safety can take many forms as indicated by Fryberg, Covarrubias, and Burack (2013), Bath (2008), and Nealy-Oparah and Scruggs-Hussein (2018). There are the traditional physical, social, and emotional definitions of safety, but there is also the safety one feels by having control over your environment, circumstances, and identity. This is especially important for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) who have a traumatic history of losing control of their environment, circumstances, and especially identity which was the central focus of boarding

school assimilation policies. For schools to be trauma-informed, they need to include cultural, historical, and gender issues in their policies, procedures, and practices. In other words, schools need to be culturally responsive and inclusive trauma-informed schools if they are to meet the mental health needs of their students.

Cultural Relevance, Responsiveness, and Humility

Brayboy and Castagno (2009) identified two prevailing Indian education models in the United States – assimilative and culturally responsive models. An assimilative model dominated American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education from the 1880s through the 1920s with the establishment of boarding schools in which children and adolescents were relocated to these schools to be taught the American ways of the White majority (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). Although, there are advocates for the assimilative model, there is no evidence this model improves the academic success of AI/AN students, with academic success defined as a child's ability to read and write and do mathematics and science (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). However, there is evidence that a culturally responsive model that integrates community culture into curriculum and instruction does improve academics (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). AI/AN families want their children to attend school and learn; however, they do insist that schooling is not an assimilative process but one that is culturally responsive and inclusive (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009).

Integrating culture into curriculum and instruction helps American Indian (AI) students have a sense of pride and sends a message of who they are and where they come from which can be argued is the definition of academic success (Hudiburg, Mascher, Sagehon, & Stidham, 2015). However, traditionally the educational environment underserves AI students and holds onto certain assimilative traits of the boarding schools (Hudiburg, Mascher, Sagehon, &

Stidham, 2015). “While such explicit assaults are no longer a sanctioned part of the national educational agenda, a number of practices remain that produce much the same effect: a devaluing of resident cultures in favor of the dominant American culture” (Sanchez & Stuckey, 1999, p. 84). Schooling that understands the important elements of a culture and how these elements can be used in education sends the message to students and their families that the school is committed to honoring, respecting, and preserving their language and culture. Culturally responsive schools use language and culture as capital and uses community traditions, knowledge, and language to develop new ideas and knowledge that will improve the school (Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013). Social resources from parents/families, teachers, and schools help protect students from the risks associated with adverse experiences and improves the resilience of children and adolescents (Nettles, Mucherah, & Jones, 2000). However, many schools work from the assumption that People of Color lack social and cultural capital that is needed for social upward mobility and that schools often work from this assumption when structuring programs (Yosso, 2005).

Being culturally responsive and having an increased awareness of teacher instructional techniques that are engaging for the various cultures represented in the classroom began in the late 1980s and early 1990s when U.S. classrooms became increasingly more diverse and educators expressed concern over gaps in ethnic/racial minority student academic achievement (Pewewardy, 2003). However, Lopez, Heilig, and Schram (2013) explained that the origins of culturally responsive schools date back further to the early twentieth century when tribal nations called for American Indian (AI) school reform. With the publication of the Meriam Report in 1928, awareness grew regarding the assimilative approach to AI education and the poor quality of such education. Awareness also grew in school curriculums which did not include AI culture,

traditions, and beliefs (Meriam et al., 1928). The report called for substantial Indian education reform including empowering tribal councils to make educational decisions (Meriam et al., 1928). Although the Meriam Report brought attention to the numerous issues with the boarding schools, assimilationist educational policies continued for another 50 plus years with boarding schools continuing existence in Michigan until the 1980s.

Pressure on the federal government for AI education reform heightened during the 1960s and 1970s with the publication of the Kennedy Report (1969). The report criticized the quality of American Indian (AI) education at the time and called for public education to accept cultures other than their own. The Havighurst Report (1970) followed, exposing and blaming school curriculums for contributing to the decline of tribal languages and cultures in school. The Kennedy Report (1969) and the Havighurst Report (1970) led to the passage of policy in response to this criticism. The Indian Education Act (1972), for instance, provided funding for culture and language programs and increased the number of Native educators, and the founding of the National Indian Education Association signaled further movement toward a more culturally sensitive outlook (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013). These series of events "promulgated the notion that culturally responsive schooling (CRS) was a necessary component of a school's culture" (Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013, p. 514). However, the focus on language and culture inclusion for AI education changed in the 1980s with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013).

A Nation at Risk redirected schools from a focus on American Indian (AI) education reform towards accountability, and with the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2001, its press "toward the politically malleable concept of educational excellence" (Fossum, 2020, p. 7). This redirection created a reconstruction of "student achievement" favoring measurement of students

via frequent testing particularly in priority subjects such as mathematics and reading (Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013). The change in emphasis redirected the focus away from the creation of a meaningful learning environment that valued the culture of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and their family's aspects which is fundamental to addressing historical trauma. "This cultural context is absolutely essential if one is to succeed academically and to build meaningful lives as adults" (Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013, p. 517). No Child Left Behind has negatively affected schools that have socially, culturally, and linguistically relevant (SCLR) curriculum and instruction for AI students by threatening self-determination and cultural sovereignty (Lee, 2015). An example of this is how No Child Left Behind allows for "accepted levels" of Indigenous student marginalization as evident through English-only high stakes standardized tests which has widened the academic achievement gap between AI/AN students and other racial ethnic groups (Lee, 2015). According to Lopez, Heilig, and Schram (2013), culturally responsive schooling (CRS) requires a language and cultural context that values the traditions, knowledge, and language of the community to improve the school and "requires a shift in teaching methods, curricular materials, teacher dispositions, and school-community relations" (p. 32). The shift towards CRS requires addressing a prevalent form of contemporary racism in schools – deficit thinking (Yosso, 2005).

Deficit thinking believes racial and ethnic minority groups have difficulties in school because they lack cultural knowledge and skills connected to the schools (Yosso, 2005). In addition, deficit thinking believes parents/families do not value education (Yosso, 2005). These beliefs are similar characteristics of the United States boarding schools which institutionalized practices for reinforcing a prevailing outlook that American Indian (AI) culture was inferior to the dominant White culture (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011).

Pewewardy (2003) explained there are potent myths about Native learners which persist and even are adopted by some Native peoples including having low academic abilities, lacking cultural capital, poverty causing learning problem, and that school treats all students equally (p. 75). This belief by some Native peoples is evidence of the historical trauma created by assimilation policies and actions across generations.

The belief that schools work and that students, parents/families, and the community need to change is a form of deficit thinking that places schools in a dominant/superior role (Yosso, 2005). This is the opposite view of culturally responsive schooling (CRS) which understands the value of student, parent/family, and community collaboration. According to Yosso (2005), schools that are not culturally responsive believe students should be filled with the cultural knowledge that the dominant society believes is valuable. This is similar to the assimilative approach of the Indian boarding schools which aimed to "civilize" the American Indian (AI) by instilling a cultural knowledge believed to be superior by the dominant society (Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, 2011). If deficit thinking continues in American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education, schools will remain the alienating institution indicated by Bronfenbrenner (1979); therefore, schools will be sources of trauma rather than environments of healing.

Viewing White, middle-class culture as the baseline/norm creates a belief "that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). In addition, this view believes that cultural, social, and economic capital can either be acquired by family or through formal schooling; therefore, if deficit thinking sees the family as capital poor then assimilation policies through formal education thrive (Yosso, 2005). However, Critical Race Theory and Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) shifted research away from examining

Communities of Color as capital poor (Yosso 2005). American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities are not capital poor and have specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that are of great importance in the establishment of trauma-informed schools and teaching. Freng, Freng, and Moore (2006) argued that the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of AIs/ANs need to be included in school planning because schools will tend to reflect the norms and expectations of the dominant group. However, Beaulieu (2006) expressed caution regarding culturally based school planning. Schools should not just develop and implement culturally relevant and social linguistic approaches but be deliberate in their planning (Beaulieu, 2006). "The school must make deliberate choices that are informed by the adult members of the community which translate these expectations into adult child teaching interactions and other social relationships which occur within the school directly planned and modeled as well as formally encouraged" (Beaulieu, 2006, p. 52). It is how teachers teach and the social activities within a school that are the most influential factors; therefore, these factors must be considered in any trauma-informed teaching and planning (Beaulieu, 2006).

Freng, Freng, and Moore (2006) suggested that the current deficit mindset schools have towards American Indian (AI) students is a continuation of assimilation policies, procedures, and practices. Some education professionals believe the lack of hard work and determination is the reason for AI student underperformance (Martinez, 2014). The difficulties regarding the educational outcomes of AI students are due to language and cultural differences between schools and the communities (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2006). "Educational policies founded on assimilation have followed a framework of deculturalization in which indigenous languages and cultures are stripped away and replaced in the educational process" (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2006, p. 56). Freng, Freng, and Moore (2006) argued that the deficit thinking of schools believe

Indigenous culture, language, and family/community is what is preventing students from being successful in school. However, the opposite is true. The interaction of the three is what will make students more successful; however, Beaulieu (2006) indicated that the essential ingredient for schools being more culturally responsive and relevant is not just an effort towards this goal but the continuity of effort.

Traditional education values the culture of the school over the home cultural of students (Martinez, 2014). School values and expectations are evident by placing importance on specific Western-centric measurables for academic success which include graduation rate, matriculation to college, first year college completion, and degree/program completion. According to Martinez (2014), valuing the culture of school more is a form of cultural imperialism leading to a disparity between American Indians (AIs) and other racial/ethnic groups (Martinez, 2014). These Westernized institutions offer a culture-free zone that masks inequality and lacks cultural relevance for AI students (Martinez, 2014). They ignore what is deemed as important and measures of success by American Indian communities.

Community cultural wealth and the different forms of capital used by American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities to survive and resist macro- and micro-oppressions will strengthen the trauma-informed environment of schools. According to Yosso (2005), Communities of Color have six forms of cultural wealth/capital which are dynamic and support each other – aspirational (hopes and dreams), linguistic (communication/language), familial (history and memory through kinship), social (network of people and community resources), navigational (maneuvering through institutions), and resistant capital (challenging inequality). This combination of capital makes up what Yosso (2005) referred to as “community cultural wealth” which shows educational institutions with a deficit mindset that minority communities

have cultural assets and wealth which schools can use to establish an educational environment that is trauma-sensitive and informed. Therefore, it is beneficial for schools to establish a closer connection with home and the community. However, Martinez (2014) argued that schools have made the culture of school more important than the culture of the home therefore creating a "culture blind" and "cultural-free zone" that has led to racial harmony (p. 199). Martinez (2014) believed that this has not created harmony but has masked entrenched inequality and is an example of cultural imperialism. Many schools do not attribute the educational disparities regarding AI students to a lack of cultural relevance in curriculum and instruction but instead to a lack of individual motivation and potential which has led to underachievement (Martinez, 2014).

Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that since 1980, anthropologists have attempted to determine how to closer connect the home culture and school and this activity has been given numerous labels such as culturally appropriate, culturally congruent, culturally responsive, culturally compatible, cultural synchronization, and her own term for it – culturally relevant. Ladson-Billings (1995) added that many sociolinguistics focus exclusively on the importance of incorporating the home language into the classroom as a means of improving academic success. However, a linguistic approach falls short in addressing the social context in which students fail (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although the research of Paul, Lusk, Becton, and Glade (2017) primarily focused on culturally identity in the treatment of substance abuse among American Indian (AI) adolescence, their approach to culturally specific interventions is important because they identify how interventions of any kind, academic or otherwise, should be multifaceted to address symptoms and behavior and that these intervention services be offered for parents as well as students.

Culturally responsive schools (CRS) attempt to improve academic knowledge and skills

of American Indian (AI) students by not only incorporating AI languages into instruction but also including other dimensions such as the characteristics of traditional tribal cultures, teaching methods that use traditional cultural instructional techniques as well as contemporary strategies, development of curriculum that incorporates traditional culture, community participation, and takes into consideration the social and political complexities of the community (Lopez, Heilig, & Schram, 2013). However, there is a conundrum regarding the capacity for culturally responsive instruction. Do teachers have the content knowledge and expertise to properly incorporate AI cultural values, beliefs, and norms in their instruction? This is a major issue since many teachers are non-native. "Non-native teachers teach the overwhelming majority of American Indian students, whether on reservations or urban areas, in both tribal colleges and mainstream institutions" (Martinez, 2014, p. 202). Education experts attributed the AI education disparity gap (lower standardized test scores, high truancy and school dropout rates, lower grade matriculation, and lower enrollment in college and completion of a degree or certification program in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups) to a lack of cultural relevance in curriculum and instruction and the lack of American Indian educators who could serve as role models for AI students (Martinez, 2014). This issue is complicated to resolve when the reason for the lack of AI educators is due to the educational disparity gap (Martinez, 2014). High AI dropout rates and low graduation rates at the secondary and post-secondary levels attribute to the lack of AI educators but as Martinez (2014) notes, the lack of AI educators is partially to blame for academic disparities therefore creating a complex conundrum. According to an Anishinaabe language/culture coordinator and instructor in Michigan, cultural responsiveness and relevance is an important component of trauma informed schools; however, cultural responsiveness and relevance is difficult when we use our assumptions regarding groups of people for whom we are

not community members. We can only speak from our own understanding and cultural perspective.

Another confusing and difficult problem is the ability to be culturally responsive to all students. References to schools being culturally responsive is often based on the assumption that schools and classrooms are culturally homogenous. Can culturally responsive instruction be truly responsive to all students, or will instruction be more responsive to some students than others, especially in schools with greater diversity in students or a substantial difference in the number of students in the majority group verses the number of students in the minority? “Developing cultural competence is not easy for many professionals due to the world’s continued evolution regarding race, ethnicity, and culture” (Paul, Lusk, Becton, & Glade, 2017, p. 35). It is also important for teachers to understand that culture does not equal race and that neither are homogenous (Paul, Lusk, Becton, & Glade, 2017). Therefore, a group of students may be identified statistically as American Indian (AI); however, it is critical that these statistics be translated into people and that teachers understand the diversity and uniqueness within a group of people. “American Indians are a perfect example of a diverse racial group comprised of a multiple of unique tribes, customs, and languages” (Paul, Lusk, Becton, & Glade, 2017, p. 35). To further complicate research regarding AI students, federal and state demographic data combines American Indians and Alaska Natives into one racial and ethnic category further deviating from acknowledging the uniqueness and individually not only between AIs and ANs but within each group. One partial reason for this consolidation by the United States Census Bureau and other government agencies is the small percentage AIs and ANs makeup of the total population of the United States. However, as Paul, Lusk, Becton, and Glade (2017) indicted, they are more likely to experience trauma leading to health issues, high unemployment, poverty, and a

lower life expectancy. Since AIs are a small percentage of the total United States population, this leads to their further marginalization. Policy makers tend to direct trauma-informed research and resources towards racial and ethnic groups that make up a larger percentage of the population although colonization and assimilation policies such as the Indian boarding schools created intergenerational/historical trauma among Native peoples that is higher than any racial and ethnic group (Running Bear et al., 2018; Whitbeck et al., 2004; Nuby & Smith, 2012; Brave Heart, 1999). School districts tend to define trauma-informed policies and procedures for the general population of students and larger minority groups. Therefore, resources are strategically redirected to students with larger numbers in school and small minority student groups who are often the most marginalized such as American Indian (AI) students are left out which further marginalizes AI students and creates greater disparity.

A third complexity regarding culturally responsive and relevant schools is the availability of time. How do teachers find time to provide culturally responsive teaching in an educational environment of state and federal standards, strict scope, and sequencing of content, and standardized testing as the measurable for effective teaching? The increased emphasis on standardized testing and teacher accountability has led to less rather than more culturally responsive education (Reyhner, 2012). Morgan (2009) defined culturally responsive teaching as "instruction that affirms the backgrounds of the students, considers their cultures as strengths, and reflects and utilizes students' learning styles" (p. 12). Morgan (2009) explained further that a culturally responsive educational approach does not only include instruction but an examination and necessary revision of curriculum. For example, the traditional curriculum of American schools does not accurately represent Native Peoples, does not often include their cultural contributions, and does not respect their culture (Morgan, 2009). To correct this, Gilliard and

Moore (2007) and Beaulieu (2006) recommend instruction and curriculum be informed by the home and culture of the community. The problem with this recommendation, however, is the assumption that there is a single "home culture." As Paul, Lusk, Becton, and Glade (2017) identified, there is substantial diversity among American Indian (AI) communities and there is no one "home culture."

According to Hudiburg et al. (2015), the goal of culturally responsive teaching is curriculum "transformation" not curriculum "infusion." Assimilationist school models focus exclusively on curriculum infusion where isolated units or lessons are added to the curriculum (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2006; Hudiburg et al., 2015). For example, curriculum infusion regarding American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) education would include a stand-alone unit or lesson on AI/AN history. Collaborative school models focus on curriculum transformation which weaves culture throughout the curriculum and fosters collaboration among schools, families, and the community (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2006; Hudiburg et al., 2015). Collaborative schools understand that community values and knowledge help to sustain the future; therefore, it is important that curriculum and instruction is culturally relevant (Writer, 2017). Martinez (2014) identified the importance of this relevance and argued that the educational achievement gap of American Indians (AI) compared to other racial and ethnic groups is due to the lack of cultural relevance in curriculum and instruction. Pewewardy (2003) argued that the discontinuity between the home culture and the culture of the school adversely effects student performance.

Writer (2017) explained that the role of schools is to serve the students and their families and to do so requires embracing community culture and collaboration. However, Westernized schools are based on White values which is a threat to the cultural imperatives of Indigenous

Peoples (Writer, 2017). In addition, legislation such as No Child Left Behind fosters increased accountability through high stakes testing and state standards which does not account for Indigenous values therefore creating a learning environment that continues to be oppressive (Writer, 2017).

Not only do schools need to understand their obligation for serving the community, but also need to understand their identity within the community. Schools may have a different identify if they are on reservation land verses located on non-reservation land which may influence their perceived obligation to the community they serve. Schools with significant populations of Native students often have teachers, administrators, and staff that are non-Native and therefore are considered guests on Native land (Writer, 2017). As guests, it is critical that educators become bicultural to understand the wants and needs of Native students which is best done by establishing trusting relationships with students, families, and members of the community (Writer, 2017). A cultural approach will help to address tensions between American Indian (AI) students and schools steeped in European American educational practices and beliefs (Fryberg & Markus, 2007). There are significant cultural differences in meaning and practices of education between the Native communities and the education system of the United States that is based on the majority European American culture, and it is important for education professionals to recognize cultural models of education, past experiences of education, and how culture and past experiences mediate and regulate behavior in an educational environment (Fryberg & Markus, 2007).

Through a combination of interviews, classroom observations, and journaling of preservice teachers, Gilliard and Moore (2007) emphasized three different ways to understand and define culture. Respect, building a sense of belonginess and community, and the importance

of family values and beliefs were the central themes according to early educators that were interviewed (Gilliard & Moore, 2007). These educators believed the interaction with students was not defined only by culture but by respect and mutual understanding (Gilliard & Moore, 2007). Respect was central to early learning curriculum and instruction on the reservation and included examples of following tribal traditions such as the honoring of life in death and storytelling (Gilliard & Moore, 2007). However, when working to include traditions in curricular activities, the success of such action was due to asking parents/families before conducting certain curricular activities so as not to offend families and violate their cultural beliefs (Gilliard & Moore, 2007).

Rituals that brought children, teachers, and parents/families together created a sense of belonging and community in the early education programs (Gilliard & Moore, 2007). The findings from the study by Gilliard and Moore (2007) showed how the feeling of belonging led to a feeling of safety. When school environments are free of negative stereotypes and "the curriculum is perceived as self-reliant," students view the school environment as a safe place because there is a feeling that they belong and are wanted in that space (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013, p. 440). When students do not perceive school as a safe place for their identity, the lack of feeling safe undermines any attempt for improving academic performance (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013). According to Fryberg, Covarrubias, and Burack (2013), interventions that focus on improving students' sense of self and working to address and resolve negative stereotypes decreased the achievement gap for Native Peoples by 40%.

Another finding from Gilliard and Moore's (2007) study was the importance of taking a transformative approach by taking into consideration family values and beliefs when developing curriculum and delivering instruction. Including the voice of the families in the development of

educational programs is important in the effort to improve the chances that trauma-informed schools are culturally responsive and inclusive (Gilliard & Moore, 2007). The opportunity to provide American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) families a voice in curriculum and instruction decisions supports Bath's (2008) second pillar of trauma-informed schools regarding fostering the connections between school and children. Empowering families in this way provides self-determination and will help to build trust in their partnership with the public-schools system. In addition, it will provide the community with a sense of belonging and acceptance within the school which provides students the confidence to be successful (Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Burack, 2013). For this transformational approach to occur, it requires transformational leaders who are visionaries and can see the importance of cultural responsiveness in the development of trauma-informed school frameworks (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018; Gilliard & Moore, 2007).

What is best for American Indian (AI) student education is to coordinate parent and school resources and to include in the education process the AI communities, families, and culture (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2006). This community/family/school connection should be a critical component of any trauma-informed school or educational program because it creates safety, established connections between students and caregivers, and assists students with the management of their emotions which in turn effects behavior and their focus on academics. Freng, Freng, and Moore (2006) refer to this approach as "True Native Education." True Native Education is what all trauma-informed schools with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students should strive for.

Research indicates the importance of educator collaboration with students, parents/families, and the community for trauma-informed schools to be culturally responsive and

relevant; however, how can these school's foster collaboration? Freng, Freng, and Moore (2006) identified six types of involvement that foster such collaboration: basic obligations of families, school obligations, community, and family member involvement at school, involving children in learning opportunities at home, involving the community and family in decision making for the school, and collaborating with community organizations (p. 62). According to Freng, Freng, and Moore (2006), the community organizations and the families are helpful to schools for transmitting and understanding the cultures of the communities where students reside and for including culture in the decision making and educational planning of the school. For the development of trauma-informed schools, this is especially important when there is historical trauma within the community in which the school resides such as the case with schools on or near Native reservations. According to Lee (2015), community control is an essential part of self-determination and sovereignty which need to be attended to first for there to be socially, culturally, and linguistically responsive (SCLR) education (p. 10).

One recommendation made by Aschenbrener, Johnson, and Schulz (2017) to address the social problems within reservation communities is to implement a nontraditional-style mentorship program for American Indian (AI) students. Aschenbrener, Johnson, and Schulz (2017) identified not only the collective community trauma of the Indian boarding schools but the trauma connected to AI youth in the foster care system and the experiences of adoption. They identified that the historical trauma associated with the boarding schools is for some only one or two generations deep which is the case in Michigan with the final boarding school closing in Harbor Springs during the 1980s (Aschenbrener, Johnson, & Schulz, 2017). This unresolved trauma caused intersecting social problems among the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities which led to various hardships. Therefore, for mentorship programs to be

included as part of a trauma-informed school framework, networking and collaborative partnerships are required (Aschenbrener, Johnson, & Schulz, 2017). Also required is an understanding by mentors of these hardships and how they are associated with a historical trauma within the community. Mentors must also understand the importance of leveraging the strengths of AI culture, traditions, and spirituality to uplift and provide students confidence of success and a sense of belonging (Aschenbrener, Johnson, & Schulz, 2017; Morgan, 2009).

Freng, Freng, and Moore (2007) explained that there are three models for Native education in the United States: pseudo, quasi, and true Native education. Pseudo education is the implementation of a standard curriculum decided upon by the dominant English and European American culture and through the assimilation of Native people (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2007). Quasi education is a reformist approach that attempts to make Native education more culturally relevant and supportive by attempting to include elements of Native culture and history into the curriculum; however, there is little involvement of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people in leadership and the planning of this curriculum (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2007). "While previous research has examined the importance of cultural inclusion in the classroom for American Indians/Alaska Natives, there is a surprising lack of research examining students' perceptions of cultural and language inclusion in the educational arena" (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2007, p. 45). True Native education is more applicable in certain settings such as schools on reservations; however, there are specific aspects of true Native education that should be incorporated in any school setting such as including the community, elders, and parents (which are considered cultural resources) in the education process of planning, implementation, monitoring, and informing (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2007, p. 45).

In a phenomenological study, Freng, Freng, and Moore (2007) interviewed 16 people

between the ages of 18 to 25 who attended Nebraska public schools to examine their perception of cultural and language inclusion from their experience attending Nebraska public schools. Most respondents could not recall cultural or language inclusion in the classroom when they were a student in Nebraska public schools and that American history had forgotten about the history of Native peoples. Language inclusion could not even be recalled on the reservation, and it was Spanish and French that were the primary second languages taught in school. Although Freng, Freng, and Moore (2007) discovered there was overall little to no cultural inclusion through elementary and high school, when it did occur there were five types: "Indian" pride, mismatching details to specific tribal identity, stereotypes, students taking personal initiative to learn more about their culture, and through parental, family. and/or community involvement. The data collected from these interviews showed that their education experience in public school involved pseudo- and quasi-Native American education. According to the interviews, the major factor that influenced the level of cultural inclusion in classrooms was the teacher (Freng, Freng, & Moore, 2007). Freng, Feng, and Moore (2007) identified that having more American Indian (AI) teachers was extremely important and if their teachers were not AI, they were still viewed as role models if teachers respected Native beliefs, took effort to understand their culture, had pride in their AI students, and were open-minded to incorporating Native culture into their classrooms.

Those working to improve practice within trauma-informed schools must be careful when examining how to incorporate culture into practice because "we can never assume to be competent in another's culture" (Maegan Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019, p. 369). Each lived experience and culture is unique; therefore, it is important that educators understand their limitations of knowledge and how experiences and culture may differ from their own (Maegan

Rides At The Door & Trautman, 2019). This acknowledgement of differences in lived experiences and culture is key to effective educator success. Maegan Rides At The Door and Trautman (2019) argued that an organization should not assume that cultural knowledge and competency is achievable rather should constantly evaluate responses to unique cultural needs which includes the context in which trauma occurs among marginalized populations such as American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs). Maegan Rides At The Door and Trautman (2019) believed that trauma-informed practice must focus on cultural humility instead of striving for cultural competence. Foronda, Reinholdt, and Ousman (2016) defined cultural humility as "a process of openness, self-awareness, being egoless, and incorporating self-reflection and critique after willingly interacting with diverse individuals" (p. 213). These are the traits a trauma-informed school needs to be highly effective. According to Foronda, Reinholdt, and Ousman (2016), if cultural humility is achieved, the result is an environment of "mutual empowerment, respect, partnerships, optimal care, and lifelong learning" (p. 213).

Trauma-Informed Professional Development

Trauma-informed approaches requires a framework for systems change that includes increasing staff knowledge of trauma, changing school culture, and improving student support systems (McIntyre, Baker, & Overstreet, 2019). Therefore, "foundational professional development (FPD) training is one common method for introducing a new system-wide initiative in schools" (McIntyre, Baker, & Overstreet, 2019, p. 96). Schools are the entry point of mental health services for many students and teachers play a significant role in the monitoring and supporting of students as they try to heal from a traumatic event(s) (Alisic et al., 2012). Teachers are role models, regulators of behavior, frequent sources of emotional support, and often the intermediary between families and clinical services at school (Alisic et al., 2012). According to

Alisic et al. (2012), teachers are instrumental in monitoring for trauma and supporting healing, especially since teachers spend a significant number of hours each week with students and can better monitor behavior changes in students that may result post trauma. Therefore, it is critical that teachers receive professional development in trauma-informed instructional practices and care.

The landmark Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study by Felitti et al. (1998) increased awareness of the mental health needs of students and challenged schools to determine who was responsible for the mental health needs of students. Was it the responsibility of mental health professionals such as school psychologists and counselors or is it the responsibility of teachers? Walkley and Cox (2013) explained that the current organizational structure of schools and the lack of staff training and expertise in trauma makes staff members unsure of their ability to help students, in turn, leaving it to school social workers to take the lead in developing a school community that is trauma-informed/sensitive. Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich (2016) believed in training school mental health professionals in evidence-based practices and not so much cognitive behavior therapy therefore supporting the belief that it is the responsibility of school mental health professionals to address students with ACEs and trauma. However, the views of Walkley and Cox (2013) along with Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich (2016) are limited in several ways. They do not include teachers as key influencers in trauma-informed care and secondly, they do not acknowledge that trauma can be a cluster of symptoms and behaviors and that school interventions including training must be multi-faceted (Paul et al., 2017).

For trauma-informed schools, multi-faceted teacher training should include knowledge of historical trauma, cultural responsiveness, and cultural relevance which would be valuable for schools with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. Williams (2013) stated there

is a cultural disconnect between Native students and school districts. Cultural disconnect refers to educational settings with a stark contrast between the culture of teachers and the school when compared to the culture of the students, their home, and their communities leading to issues of trust (Williams, 2013). According to Williams (2013), school districts tend to provide inadequate training and professional development for teachers regarding cultural competency and addressing the needs of Native students. Since the majority of AI/AN students are taught by non-Native teachers, cultural responsiveness and competency are needed to understand the historical trauma among the Native communities. Foundational professional development (FPD) is needed to help teachers build their confidence and competence because FPD provides the knowledge of the prevalence of trauma, its implications, and the various supports students need (McIntyre, Baker, & Overstreet, 2019). A study by McIntyre, Baker and Overstreet (2019) identified the importance and impact FPD had on teachers. The study showed 20% of teachers exhibiting mastery in trauma-informed approaches pre-training and 70% post-training (McIntyre, Baker, & Overstreet, 2019, p. 100).

Alisic (2012) conducted a study of teacher confidence among 21 elementary teachers from 13 schools in the Netherlands to determine their level of confidence working with children exposed to traumatic events. Although some teachers expressed confidence working with students who have trauma, most teachers had uncertainty and were unsure if they were providing the optimal level of support for their students (Alisic, 2012). Therefore, the majority lacked the confidence that they were competent in their supportive role. Teachers indicated they had difficulty with balancing the responsibility of supporting a child with trauma and providing instruction and support for other students (Alisic, 2012). The fundamental question teachers expressed involved their role as teacher and the responsibility of the mental health professional.

"Where do we need to put the boundary between tasks of a teacher and those of a mental health care provider" (Alisic, 2012, p. 57)? Many of the teachers in the study by Alisic (2012) indicated that their knowledge and skills in trauma-informed instructional and support practices was insufficient and is from a lack of trauma-informed training in higher education teacher preparation programs and in the field as in-service teachers.

Teachers questioning the boundaries between their responsibilities as teachers and the transfer of responsibility for mental health supports of students relates to Reitman's (1992) Educational Messiah Complex. The Educational Messiah Complex is the belief that school has become the institution that is viewed as having the responsibility, capacity, and capability of solving a variety of problems in society and has the power for "collective salvation and cultural redemption" (Reitman, 1992, p. 47). However, a question that needs to be addressed is it the responsibility of teachers to serve as mental health professionals when they are not trained in the first place to service the mental health needs of students. Should that not be the responsibility of mental health professionals within a community? Current research surrounding trauma mental health services involves cognitive-behavior therapy which falls within the expertise of mental health professionals and not of teachers (Plumb, Bush, & Kersevich, 2016). Therefore, Reitman (1992) referred to schools as a "false messiah" when it comes to solving the problems of society and how change will occur is from social self-reliance. "Although schools are not mental health facilities and teachers are not therapists, teaching today's students requires alternative strategies and skills compared to what worked a generation ago" and the responsibility for addressing student traumatic stress has fallen on teachers "to meet the expectations of parents, community, and the nation" (Oehlberg, 2008, p. 1). These expectations are for students to show academic improvement/success and if traumatic stress is a threat to improvement/success then it is often

viewed that the responsibility leans towards teachers.

Loomis and Felt (2020) explained that trauma-informed school interventions warrant professional development for teachers and staff if a trauma-informed school is to properly support the mental well-being of students with trauma. Professional development is even more important for teachers so they may be able to identify students in their classrooms who experienced trauma or show behaviors that may be an indication of trauma (Loomis & Felt, 2020). “Creating and sustaining trauma-informed child-service systems require a knowledgeable workforce, committed organization, and skilled professionals” (Ko et al., 2008, p. 397). Developing a trauma-informed workforce of skilled professionals is not easy and Loomis and Felt (2020) made the argument that trauma-informed training is often not equal. “No new program or innovation will be implemented uniformly” (Guskey, 2002, p. 387).

Trauma training for school personnel has traditionally focused on two components – knowledge and skills (Loomis & Felt, 2020). However, Loomis and Felt (2020) identified the additional value of self-reflection which examines how student trauma has an impact on teachers, something Loomis and Felt (2020) referred to as “secondary trauma” and The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2008) referred to as “compassion fatigue.” This secondary trauma or compassion fatigue was acknowledged in the study by Alisic et al. (2012) when teachers indicated it was difficult for them to not get emotionally involved when working with students with trauma and Alisic (2012) stated that teachers were emotional when telling the stories of their students and admitted it was difficult for them not to take the problems of their students’ home.

Knowledge, according to Loomis and Felt (2020), is learning the terminology of trauma and the impact trauma has on child and brain development, behavior, mental health, and culture.

Skills are the ability to recognize students with trauma, helping students and families to manage trauma, and responding to trauma-related behaviors in the classroom (Loomis & Felt, 2020). A goal of trauma-informed training is to instill a belief in trauma-informed care and to improve teacher and staff confidence in helping students to manage their behaviors because of adverse exposures to traumatic events. This combination of the belief in care and increased confidence is referred to as trauma-informed attitudes (Loomis & Felt, 2020).

Teacher attitudes and beliefs influenced by their training and professional development impact teacher practices, the classroom environment, and the quality of learning (Sumantri & Wardhani, 2018). According to Sumantri and Wardhani (2018), competence and confidence are qualities that define "a professional" (p. 309). Sumantri and Wardhani (2018) defined confidence as "an individual's expectations of performance and self-evaluations of abilities and prior performance" (p. 310). The level of confidence a teacher has is often influenced by their perceived level of competence which is "a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude" (Sumantri & Wardhani, 2018, p. 310). For the desired results of a school to be achieved, there must be the required levels of competence because competence is a prerequisite for teachers to perform well (Sumantri & Wardhani, 2018, p. 310).

Sumantri and Wardhani (2018) indicated that one of the three components of competence is attitude. Teacher attitudes are important and their importance refers back to the core themes Alisic (2012) discovered in her trauma research among elementary school teachers: (a) Teachers want clarity regarding their role as a teacher working with students exposed to trauma; (b) They want to know how to find a balance between the needs of students with trauma and those without; (c) They have a need for more training and professional development; and (d) There needs to be a focus on the mental health of teachers as they may feel burdened by the trauma of

their students. Loomis and Felt (2020) "hypothesized that the trauma-informed attitudes would mediate the relationship between training content and teacher stress, and that teachers with more training (skill + self) would have higher trauma-informed attitudes and, relatedly, lower general and child-related stress" (p. 9). In a study of 111 preschool teachers and staff in a Mountain West state, Loomis and Felt (2020) examined the relationship between trauma-informed training, attitudes, and stress discovering that their hypothesis was true. Self-reflection training showed a 17-point gain in trauma-informed attitudes and self plus skills training showed a 24-point gain indicating that more training is better (Loomis & Felt, 2020, p. 9).

Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, and Vesely (2014) argued it is challenging for schools to address the sociocultural needs of everyone since there are numerous groups and subgroups; therefore, to properly implement programs, people need to learn more about their own cultures as part of cultural sensitivity training. Altering teacher practices, beliefs, and understanding to influence student learning is often the common purpose of training and professional development (Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002) believed that teacher professional development must take into consideration teacher motives for participating in professional development and the process in which intended change is to occur. Teachers are motivated to participate in professional development when they see it will expand their knowledge and skills to make them more effective as teachers and by improving their effectiveness it will alter the operations of their classroom and impact students (Guskey, 2002). According to Loomis and Felt (2020), professional development that focuses specifically on the teachers needs will allow teachers to pause and reflect on their practices and how they respond to students with trauma in the classroom.

Guskey (2002) identified an issue with the assumed impact professional development has

on teachers. It is assumed that professional development will change their attitudes and beliefs and that these changes will be implemented in the classroom resulting in improved student outcomes (Guskey, 2002). This is not always the case. Therefore, Guskey (2002) proposed an alternative model/approach to professional development for teachers which begins with the professional development which will change teacher classroom practices leading to a change in student learning outcomes that will in turn change the beliefs and attitudes of teachers (p. 383). Assuming that there will be a change in teacher attitudes before implementation of new practices and strategies is a model designed to gain acceptance and conformity (Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002) argued that this acceptance and conformity model seldom works. What profoundly changes teacher attitudes is implementing changes in the classroom based on the knowledge gained through professional development and seeing its impact on student learning (Guskey, 2002). The change in student learning provides evidence to teachers that the knowledge and skills gained from professional development worked; therefore, they gain confidence not only in themselves but in the professional development.

The overall purpose of trauma-informed training is to improve teacher practices and to create a common language and standard of care (Loomis & Felt, 2020). “Examining the influence of this commonly recommended practice can inform existing practices, the development of new trauma-informed interventions, and policy recommendations” (Loomis & Felt, 2020, p. 3). One complication with researching and implementing trauma-informed training is the lack of a common framework and curriculum for trauma-informed schools (Loomis & Felt, 2020). There are many trauma-informed frameworks and curriculum which leads to a lack of commonality and consistency in trauma-informed training for teachers and staff. However, Plumb, Bush, and Kersevich (2016) explained that each school district is unique and there cannot

be one uniform staff training.

Pewewardy (2002) explained that a stereotype of American Indian (AI) students is that there is a preferred learning style. This is untrue. There is no generic Indian learning style and what is important to understand regarding AI education and teacher professional development is the significant diversity and variations there are among and within tribal nations (Pewewardy, 2002). There are variations in government, social systems, traditions, language, values, spiritual beliefs and even levels of acculturation (Pewewardy, 2002). Therefore, teachers and future teachers need to be mindful and reflective practitioners with a cultural knowledge base and monitor, evaluate, and revise their teaching to support the diversity of AI students (Pewewardy, 2002). Teachers must understand and take into consideration the uniqueness of and diversity among AI/AN students, their homes, and their communities. Therefore, a common standard framework for trauma-informed schools will not work for Native Peoples.

The relational environments of a school have a significant influence on the conditions for teacher professional learning (Daly, Milton, & Langdon, 2020). These environments are not static but dynamic and various ecological systems interact with each other to influence what professional learning will be conducted for teachers and how it will be conducted. Daly, Milton, and Langdon (2020) argued that examining professional learning for teachers from an ecological systems approach deepens the understand that schools are sites of professional formation, and the potential of schools as professional learning communities requires a reconfiguration of relationships among the stakeholders. For example, challenging long-standing traditions and norms through professional development can unsettle certain school stakeholders. This is important as schools examine ways to provide professional development for teachers in trauma-informed practices that focus on historical trauma and cultural responsiveness and relevance

among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students.

For professional learning to be impactful, trauma-informed schools must understand the contexts of professional growth such as leadership, capacity for implementation, ethos, policies, cultures, society, traditions, and values (Daly, Milton, & Langdon, 2020, p. 654). Understanding the context of institutional change then integrating professional development into existing school improvement efforts provides program sustainability (Han & Weiss, 2005). In addition, if teacher professional development is going to be sustainable, it must align to the mission and priorities of the school and district, have support among stakeholders at multiple levels (teacher, school, district, home, community, and policy), and there needs to be institutional readiness for change (Han & Weiss, 2005).

Han and Weiss (2005) explained that it is essential to identify and implement mechanisms that increase the fidelity of school mental-health programs implemented by teachers. One mechanism is feedback. Studies show that feedback increases the chance teachers will continue with a program; however, degradation of implementation is a common problem (Han & Weiss, 2005). Multiple contextual factors are attributed to this degradation. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act shifted the priorities, policies, and resources of schools and districts which further marginalized American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students (Lee, 2015; Han & Weiss, 2005). Other factors include administrator assignments, the allocation of resources, curriculum selection, increased accountability, and the type of teacher in-service training (Han & Weiss, 2005). To prevent this degradation and to improve the sustainability of trauma-informed practices, there must be "systemic changes in attitudes, expectations, support mechanisms, and infrastructure" and for this to occur trauma-informed school policies and practices must be integrated into school improvement efforts (Han & Weiss, 2005, p. 667). For

trauma-informed schools, a key component of school improvement efforts is the continuous and consistent training of teachers and staff. Without adequate training and support, teachers are reduced to a subordinate role which hinders any effort for schools to be trauma-informed and a supportive environment for students to learn (Anderson, Blitz, & Saastamoinen, 2015).

Conclusion

There is a substantial and growing amount of research regarding trauma-informed and sensitive schools. However, there is significantly less research on trauma-informed and sensitive schools in the United States related to the historical trauma associated with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students and even less research that synthesizes historical trauma informed care with cultural relevance, responsiveness, and humility. The conceptual frameworks of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 1994) Ecological Systems Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory were used as foundational theories to examine literature regarding trauma-informed schools as they relate to AI/AN students.

Examination of the literature followed a progression of first reviewing research on historical/intergenerational trauma and its sustained presence within AI/AN communities. The literature review then examined research on trauma-informed and sensitive school models/frameworks and the importance of these models incorporating cultural relevance, responsiveness, and humility to specifically address how the historical trauma endured by AI/AN communities directly threatened AI/AN peoplehood – language, sacred history, place/territory, and ceremonial cycle. Lastly, literature was reviewed about the importance of well-designed and continuous professional development regarding trauma-informed practices to help build teacher confidence and competence when working with AI/AN students exposed to adverse experiences and living with trauma.

Research showed how colonization, discrimination, racism, assimilation, and oppression negatively affected American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities physically, socially, emotionally, economically, and academically. This complex trauma over time led to the importance and necessity for creating schools that not only acknowledge this trauma (trauma-sensitive) but are trauma-informed by developing and implementing policies, procedures, and practices that provide care that is specifically relevant for AI/AN students. To be relevant, examining and including culture and community into the educational environment is critical and must be included in any historical trauma-informed school development.

Research showed that teachers are the most important influencer of students in schools due to their knowledge of students, established teacher-student relationships, and the extended length of time spent working directly with students. Therefore, it is critical that teachers feel confident and competent when working with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students who come from a community of widespread and extensive historical trauma. Confidence and competence are best established through well-designed and implemented professional development that is fully supported by trauma-informed transformational leadership.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

This chapter introduces a qualitative methods research study examining teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma as it relates to American Indian (AI) students and their communities. The chapter explains the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the rationale for selecting qualitative research, the research design, and how data collected was analyzed.

Statement of the Problem

Michigan schools are increasingly focusing on the social and emotional well-being of students and often use the terms *trauma-sensitive* and *trauma-informed* interchangeably to describe their commitment to students exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and living with trauma. According to Trauma Informed Oregon (2020), trauma-sensitive organizations are aware of trauma's impact while trauma-informed institutions show greater commitment by taking this awareness and implementing actionable policies, procedures, and practices. Although *trauma-sensitive* and *trauma-informed* are used interchangeably, many schools are trauma-sensitive and fall short of trauma-informed. Although a school may be trauma-informed, it does not guarantee that the school is trauma-informed for all students. Trauma-informed schools often do not include policies, procedures, and practices specific to historical/intergenerational trauma among American Indian (AI) communities and students. Schools/districts with a higher AI student population often lack specific training for teachers in historical trauma-informed strategies and practices specific to AI students.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the phenomenon of teacher perceived confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instructional practices relevant to American Indian (AI) students. The purpose of the study was to determine how teacher confidence and competence is affected by the professional development/training provided to teachers through the district- and building-level continuous improvement process. The study identified what trauma-informed systems are currently in place, what trauma-informed training has been conducted for teachers and if that training included historical trauma among American Indian communities, and what teachers need and want to increase their perceived level of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices for AI students. The intent of this study is to inform two school districts in Michigan with a high population of AI students about the current state of teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices and how to develop and implement historical trauma-informed training/professional development that teachers need and want to increase their perceived confidence and competence level.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this qualitative study:

1. How have schools in Michigan established a commitment to trauma-informed policies, procedures, and instructional practices?
2. In what ways does the historical trauma of American Indian communities influence the school continuous improvement processes?
3. How confident and competent do teachers feel in their knowledge of trauma-informed instructional practices for American Indian students?
4. What training do teachers need and want to build their confidence and competence in

trauma-informed instructional practices related to American Indian students?

Rationale for Qualitative Research

A qualitative approach is well suited for a study focusing on current teacher perceived levels of confidence and competence when teaching American Indian (AI) students because qualitative research is a social inquiry of a phenomenon (Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018) that typically takes place in a natural setting, collects a variety of empirical materials using multiple methods, respects participants in the study, focuses on context, is constantly emerging and evolving, and is interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). "Qualitative inquiry (QI) is particularly useful in exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of marginalized populations and communities as these methods are well-suited for capturing context and culturally relevant information" (Walden & West, 2019, p. 83). One of the most marginalized populations are AI students. These students come from tribal communities with a long history of trauma passed down from one generation to the next. This type of trauma is referred to as historical or intergenerational trauma and is a trauma that is unresolved which is the central reason it transfers from one generation to the next.

Qualitative inquiry (QI) emphasizes researcher-participant relationships, reflexivity, multiple perspectives, and provides a voice to traditionally marginalized populations (Walden & West, 2019). Native communities tend to be more receptive to QI due to its similarity to traditional Indigenous methods of learning and knowledge transmission. Since this study examined the effects of teacher preparation in historical trauma connected to American Indian (AI) students, a qualitative approach is needed to examine the phenomenon of teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instructional practices and supports.

The effect of professional development and training on teacher perceived levels of confidence and competence regarding historical trauma-informed instructional practices of American Indian (AI) students is a little-understood phenomenon. Therefore, this study took an exploratory case study approach to determine connections between training/professional development in trauma and teacher confidence and competence. The case study structure provided opportunity for a strong examination and analysis of two different educational environments through a community-based approach. This community approach allowed interaction with participants which is important when conducting research among AI communities (Lavallee, 2009). "Community-based research begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change" (Lavallee, 2009, p. 24). The issue of historical trauma among AI students is of great importance to Native communities in Michigan; however, this history is rarely taught in public schools, is rarely taught in teacher preparation programs, and is a challenging, complex, and a sensitive topic of discussion among Michigan's AI communities. The unresolved status of this trauma has led to significant academic, social/emotional, and physical health concerns for AI students. This concern has been expressed elders and the AI communities as a whole; however, there is no consensus as to how to address the concerns.

A collective case study approach was selected due to its flexibility and ability to capture the complexity of this phenomenon of teacher perceived confidence and competence. "Case study research is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study" and uses a variety of research methods including "naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic" (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014, p. 2). Each district who participated in the study was considered an

individual case study. The districts were studied individually at first then collectively to determine categories of meaning, themes, and patterns. “This involves careful and in-depth consideration of the nature of the case, historical background, physical setting, and other institutional and political contextual factors” (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014, p. 2). The case study approach seeks what is common and what is unique about each case and this study used a transactional method of inquiry (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014) through personal interaction with each of the participating districts. The personal interactions, connections, and focus on establishing trusting relationships with participants is in alignment with Indigenous educational practices.

Demographic Context

Two school districts in Michigan within the same intermediate school district (ISD) participated in the study – one charter school and one state public school district. The charter school is a K-12 institution located on a tribal reservation and chartered by the local community college which is also located on the reservation. Due to its physical location on a tribal reservation, American Indian and Alaska Native student population is high – 80.33% of the overall student population in the school (MI School Data, 2020). For this study, the charter school is referred to as *School Alpha*.

The second participating district is a K-12 Michigan public school district located approximately three miles from School Alpha but is not physically located on the reservation. The public school district is referred to as *School Beta* in the study. The AI/AN student population for School Beta is 51.92% (MI School Data, 2020). It is important to note that when examining the demographic distribution of students in specific schools, the state of Michigan school count does not report American Indian and Alaska Native students separately but together

in one category.

The AI students are mostly from two federally recognized tribal nations in Michigan; however, there is a small number of students from other tribal nations that have attend these districts in the past. The total AI/AN student population of School Alpha and School Beta combined is 16% of the total AI/AN student population among the 19 districts and academies within the intermediate school district (MI School Data, 2020). AI/AN enrollment for the entire state of Michigan is 0.6% of the overall student population as of the 2020-2021 school year and the ISD where the two participant districts reside represent 26.8% of the total AI/AN student population in Michigan (MI School Data, 2020). The ISD has 6,434 students Kindergarten through 12th grade among 19 school districts and academies (MI School Data, 2020). Of the 6,434 students, 35.67% are AI/AN (MI School Data, 2020).

Participants

The participants in this study were teachers from two districts in the norther region of Michigan along with the members of their Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) team. The MICIP teams included teachers, the superintendents from each district, and school level administration. The MICIP teams served as focus groups in the study and participation in the focus groups depended on the availability of the MICIP team members. Three focus groups were conducted – one from School Alpha and two from School Beta. The School Alpha focus group included six participants – five teachers and the superintendent of School Alpha. The first focus group for School Beta consisted of three people – two teachers and the superintendent. The second focus group consisted of five people – three teachers, one school principal, and the superintendent.

Following the focus groups was a teacher survey. An email was sent to all 16 teachers at

School Alpha and all 37 teachers at School Beta (a total of 53 teachers). The email included a link to a Qualtrics electronic survey. For School Alpha, the 16 teachers included two paraprofessionals identified for a possible teaching assignment in the 2021-2022 school year. Thirty-three teachers (62%) completed the survey – 11 teachers from School Alpha and 22 teachers from School Beta.

Upon completion of the survey, an invitation was sent to all 53 teachers to participate in an individual interview. Fourteen teachers responded to the invitation with 11 accepting (20.75%) and three declining. All 11 teachers accepting the invitation completed the interview process. Eight of the interviews were conducted using Zoom, and three were conducted over the telephone. The teachers were asked during the interviews if they could provide copies of any presentations, agendas, handouts, and other resources distributed to them at past professional development/training that focused on trauma and trauma-informed practices. In addition, these documents were requested from the superintendents as step one of data collection. Emails were sent to the 42 teachers not interviewed requesting such artifacts as well.

The study was designed to address the research questions carefully and with respect to participant sensitivities regarding their perception of confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices related to American Indian (AI) students. Historical trauma among AI students and communities is complex; therefore, the study was carefully designed and conducted in a way that protected the identity of participants and gained their trust. According to Brayboy and Deyhle (2000), researchers are sometimes blocked by participants who are not trusted with "insider" information; therefore, it is important to understand while conducting research how researchers are perceived by participants. Researchers are sometimes blocked because participants may believe the study will contribute little to the betterment of the community and is

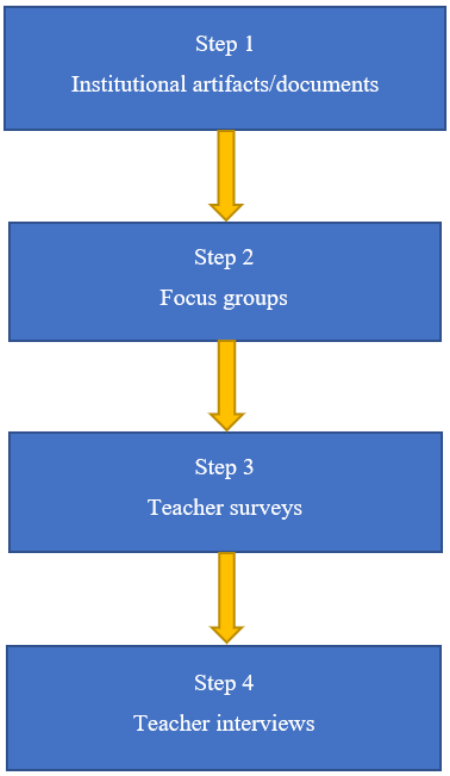
for the primary benefit of the researcher (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Therefore, traditional research methods, analysis tools, and how data is reported need to be questioned. To gain the trust of the participants for this study, a communal and cooperative approach was taken which supports how work is traditionally accomplished among Indigenous communities (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000).

Research Design and Instrumentation

The research design for this study is an exploratory qualitative case study. Data was collected from four data sources in each district using a four-step process: institutional artifacts, focus groups, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Data Collection Steps



Note: The figure is a visual representation of triangulation and the order in which data was collected during the study.

The order of data collection was important. Data collected from each step assisted with planning data collection in the succeeding step. For example, the collection of institutional artifacts in Step 1 helped with the writing of focus group questions and provided the focus group facilitator background knowledge on each district. Responses to the focus group questions assisted with the development of the teacher survey, and the results of the teacher survey led to developing questions for teacher interviews.

It was expected that data collection between School Alpha and School Beta would not run synchronously and there would be a possibility that the districts would be at different steps in the data collection process, especially with School Alpha being substantially smaller in staffing than School Beta. This difference was considered acceptable since the first stage of data analysis focused on in-case analysis and not across-case analysis which would come later in the research. Although there were slight variations in the length of time data collection took for each step between the two districts, overall, the data collection process ran synchronously.

Methodological Triangulation

Methodological triangulation is using multiple qualitative methods of data collection to study a phenomenon which strengthens the ability of interpreting findings from a study, increases validity of the study, and decreases researcher bias by providing multiple perspectives (Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018; Guion, 2002). Although testing for validity is controversial, researchers agree that triangulation increases confidence in the data collected, provides a clearer understanding of the research problem and phenomenon being studied, and provides findings that would be undetected if a single method of data collection is used (Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018). Using multiple-data sources also strengthens the ability of researchers to interpret

findings. According to Bowen (2009), qualitative researchers are expected to gather data from at least two sources for convergence and corroboration that will lead to credibility. This study gathered data from four sources from two participating districts.

Collecting data/information from multiple sources allows for what Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) referred to as *representation* and *legitimation*. Although Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) use these terms in the context of using multiple source types for conducting a literature review, these terms also apply to data collected in this study. *Representation* is extracting information from multiple sources to better understand a phenomenon while *legitimation* is using multiple sources for credibility, confirmability, and/or transferability during the synthesis of information (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). *Representation* is enhanced in this study by focusing on between-source triangulation which seeks convergence of information from different information sources and between-source development which uses the data/information from one source to inform the data from another source (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). Conducting three focus groups (one with School Alpha and two with School Beta) to inform the development of the teacher survey is an example of between-source development. *Legitimation* is enhanced through between-source triangulation which helps to examine the convergence and corroboration of information collected between the two districts.

Institutional Artifacts/Documents

Collecting institutional artifacts was the first step in the data collection process and the primary focus was collecting school and district documents. Documents are "social facts which are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways" which helps researchers to gain an understanding and develop empirical meaning of an organization (Bowen, 2009, p. 27).

Collecting documents in this study from the two participating districts provided information on each educational institution without researcher intervention; therefore, establishing a snapshot of where the two districts are currently, where they have been, and their vision for the future regarding being trauma-informed educational institutions. The data collected from documents provided context for the research, information regarding questions that needs to be asked during focus groups and through a teacher survey, supplementary research data to add to the knowledge base, a means for tracking changes and development, and served as a foundation for verifying findings or corroborate data from various sources (Bowen, 2009).

Documents searched for in this research included policies and procedures regarding AI student education, professional development agendas, presentations, meeting minutes, teacher notes, handouts, teacher work, recordings and photographs from training sessions, professional development surveys, implementation guides, attendance sheets, professional development calendar, session descriptions, and emails from facilitators. External documents were the first focus which were available to the public and easily accessible through each district website. The superintendents from each district were then contacted via email with a request for documents connected to trauma-informed practices, planning, and professional development. Teachers were contacted by email requesting any documentation from past trauma-informed professional development/training through the school district and/or the intermediate school district.

Focus Groups

The research framework for this study brought together elements of an Indigenous research framework with Western methods for research. Among Indigenous peoples, sharing circles are valued as an opportunity for people to equally meet as a group and verbally share their thoughts and feelings in an environment that promotes equality, trust, respect, honesty, dialog, decision

making and a sense of community (Pass the Feather, 2021). Focus groups are comparable to sharing circles because they both aim to capture people's experiences regarding a specific topic through group discussion (Lavallee, 2009). However, sharing circles are different from focus groups because they have a sacred meaning and place emphasis on the growth and transformation of participants (Lavallee, 2009) while the intent of focus groups is to collect qualitative data from multiple individuals simultaneously for research and does not emphasize the growth and transformation of the participants (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009).

Prior to this study, School Alpha and School Beta identified teachers, staff, and administrators to be members of their Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) team, a framework for continuously improving student outcomes which is overseen by the school improvement facilitator and curriculum consultant for the local intermediate school district. These teams meet on Fridays to examine the needs of the whole child and to follow a specific process of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluating initiatives for continuous school improvement which is anchored in the mission, vision, and beliefs of each school (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP)



Note: The Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) is an approach to improving student outcomes by examining the needs of the whole child, the school, and the community. Statewide professional learning in this process began in the 2019-2020 school year with limited rollout in October 2020 and full rollout of the MICIP platform in January 2021 across Michigan school districts (Michigan Department of Education, 2020).

The MICIP teams for School Alpha and School Beta were the focus groups for the study. These groups differed from traditional focus groups because their members are familiar with each other and were formed by the schools as part of their continuous improvement process prior to the start of this study. Traditional focus group members are often unfamiliar with each other but share certain characteristics that are related to the phenomenon being studied and typically consist of seven to ten people (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, according to Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009), "Focus groups can be formed by using preexisting groups" (p. 4).

Three focus groups were organized, one for School Alpha and two for School Beta. The three focus groups meet the recommendation set by Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009) for three to six focus groups to reach data or theoretical saturation for one or multiple group meetings. The focus groups met on Zoom for a minimum one hour and the meetings were recorded for transcription and coding purposes. Recording the sessions allowed for concentration on questioning, facilitating discussions, and pursuing follow-up to participant responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Recording the sessions also created capacity to focus on balancing participant engagement. According to Marshall & Rossman (2016), an important role of the facilitator is to promote participation of all focus group members through the creation of a supportive learning

environment. This requires additional concentration and attention of the facilitator; therefore, recording the sessions allowed the facilitator for this research to focus on participant engagement, questioning, follow-up questioning, and observation note-taking.

The focus group for School Alpha consisted of eight people which included five teachers, one paraprofessional, the superintendent, and the school improvement facilitator/curriculum consultant for the local intermediate school district (ISD). School Alpha's focus group met for one hour and twenty-seven minutes. Two focus group sessions were conducted for School Beta. Due to scheduling conflicts, all the MICIP team members for School Beta were unable to attend a focus group session at the same time; therefore, two focus group sessions were conducted with the first session consisting of four participants and the second session six. The first School Beta focus group met for one hour and three minutes and consisted of two teachers, the superintendent, and the ISD school improvement facilitator/curriculum consultant. The second focus group met for one hour and fourteen minutes and consisted of three teachers, one school principal, the superintendent, and the ISD school improvement facilitator/curriculum consultant.

Eight questions were asked of each focus group (Appendix A). The research questions and the information collected from the literature review on trauma and historical trauma-informed instructional practices related to American Indian students were the sources used to write the focus group questions. Follow-up questions were asked of the focus group participants if there was a need for clarification and/or elaboration.

Teacher Surveys

According to Bartram (2019), surveys can be used "to capture a surface impression of the extent to which groups of people agree or disagree on an issue, or to establish the range of thoughts and views in relation to certain topics" (p. 1). This study captured teacher "impressions" of their

preparedness to teach students with trauma and/or historical trauma by using an online survey developed using Qualtrics (Appendix B). All K through 12th grade teachers in School Alpha and School Beta were contacted three times through email with an anonymous link to a nine-question survey in Qualtrics. The purpose of the survey was to provide all teachers an opportunity to express what they believe is their level of confidence and competence in trauma-informed instructional practices for American Indian students and provide teachers an opportunity to express the extent to which training/professional development in trauma practices influenced their perceived level of confidence and competence. The focus groups provided critical information for the development of the survey including what specifically to ask teachers about their confidence and competence, what factor(s) contribute to their confidence and competence, and the style of questioning to use for the survey.

Although, the focus groups provided guidance on what to ask and how to ask it, the role of the researcher is to make the final decision on the questions to ask and their format. Word choice, phrasing, the order of questions, and the types of questions was carefully taken into consideration in an effort to provide the best possible qualitative survey that would yield a high response rate and would not lead teachers into specific answers. According to Bartram (2019) word choice and phrasing is important to avoid questions that may be leading (Bartram, 2019).

To improve the completion rate for the survey, the survey was designed to be a manageable length of nine questions and no questions were asked that may lead to the identity of the teachers. According to Bartram (2019), well-designed surveys are anonymous and confidential. Anonymity and confidentiality are important for obtaining a high number of returns and protecting the identity of the people involved in the study (Bartram, 2019). The survey did ask about where they teach to allow for the organizing of data for within-case and across-case coding.

Teacher Interviews

The interview is a staple of qualitative research and is a widely used data generating source across many disciplines (Edwards & Holland, 2020). Qualitative interviewing provides more depth and detail than quantitative data and provides researchers with an "authentic insight into the meanings that individuals and groups attach to experiences, social processes, practices, and events" (Edwards & Holland, 2020, p, 583). The teacher interviews for this study provided additional details into the teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in trauma and historical trauma-informed practices and how training/professional development may increase the feeling of confidence and competence.

Upon the closure of the Qualtrics survey period, 53 teachers from School Alpha and School Beta were individually emailed invitations for an interview. Since the research was conducted during the summer, there was a possibility that teachers would not check their school email account; therefore, teachers were also contacted through LinkedIn and Facebook if they had accounts. The goal of the interviews was to provide teachers an opportunity to elaborate on their answers from the survey and provide additional information not captured from the survey. The interviews also provided an opportunity to explore the topic in a more personal and private manner which fostered elaboration on the research topic. Of the 53 teachers contacted, 14 teachers responded to the invitation. Eleven agreed to an interview and three declined. One teacher who declined stated they had a difficult past school year and wanted to enjoy the summer. A second teacher stated they wanted to participate in the interview; however, they were on medical leave and have been informed not to participate in school related activities. The third teacher who declined believed their lack of experience as a new teacher would not be helpful in the research. A follow-up email was sent to the new teacher explaining how their contributions would be

valuable but there was no return response.

Of the 11 teachers who agreed to an interview, five were from School Alpha and six were from School Beta. Eight of the eleven teacher interviews were conducted on Zoom and three interviews were conducted by telephone. All teachers interviewed over Zoom agreed to have the sessions recorded and the duration of each interview was an average 60 minutes. The telephone interviews were not recorded, but the responses to questions were typed verbatim.

Although there are variations in qualitative interviewing styles, all interviews have a core set of features such as an exchange of dialogue, a thematic or topic centered approach, and an understanding of knowledge within a certain context (Edwards & Holland, 2020). The 11 teacher interviews were synchronous dialogical interviews since the interviewer and interviewee spoke together during the same time without a delay (Edwards & Holland, 2020). They were dialogical because "both the interviewer and the interview partner generate new meaning together" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Thirteen questions were asked of each teacher based on information collected and analyzed from teacher surveys. Teachers were asked follow-up questions when responses needed clarification and/or elaboration and the rephrasing of questions was used when the initial response to a question did not fully answer the question. Although questions were created in advance, the interviews were not scripted by "asking specific questions in a specific sequence" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 150). The interviews were dialogical by first asking a question, providing the teachers an opportunity to respond to the question with no time limit, followed by a discussion between the interviewee and the interviewer. The teacher response determined which of the 13 questions would be asked next therefore making the interviews less structured and standardized and more dialogical. As Marshall & Rossman (2016) stated, "The participant's perspective on the

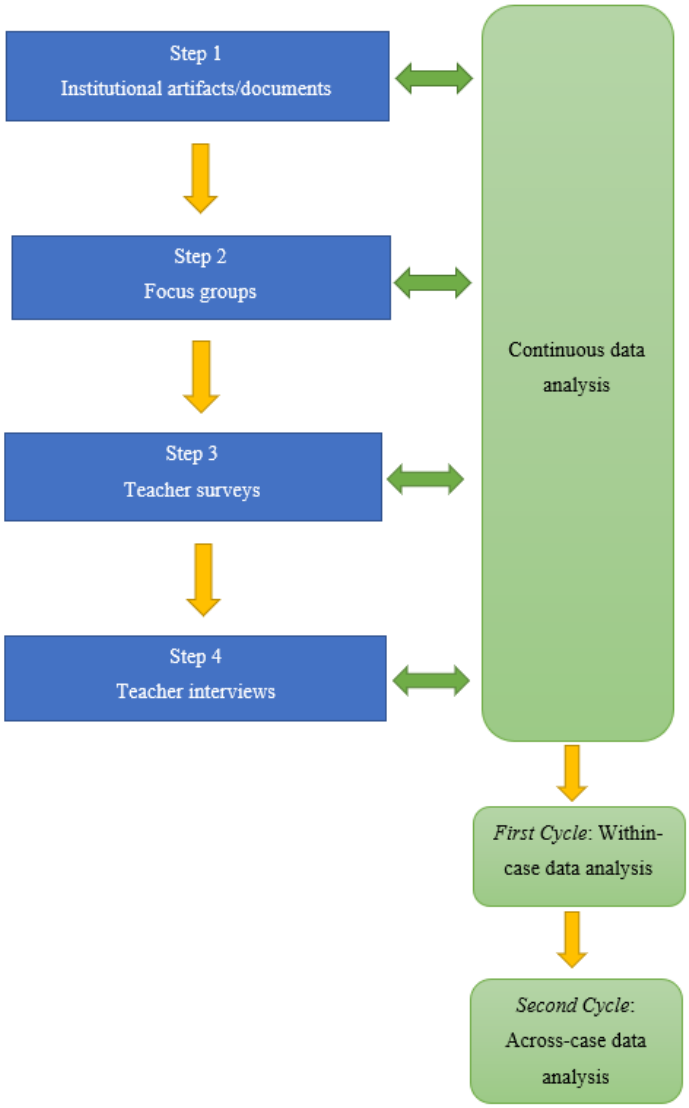
phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it not as the researcher views it" (p. 150). This approach honored the Indigenous conversational methods of research and provided teachers with an interview format that is biographical, revelatory, and therapeutic (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019).

Framework for Coding and Data Analysis

Traditional data analysis follows the steps of organizing the data, immersing oneself in the data, generating case summaries/categories/themes, coding, interpreting, alternative interpretations/understandings, and writing the report (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Although Marshall and Rossman (2016) identify data analysis as a sequential process after data is collected, data analysis also occurs as a continuous process throughout data collection. At each of the four steps of data collection (institutional artifacts, focus groups, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews), there was continuous data analysis. The accumulation of data through the four steps led to within-case data analysis during first-cycle coding and across-case data analysis during second-cycle coding (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Data Analysis Framework



Note: As data was collected and organized at each step, a natural level of data analysis occurred. The green arrows in the framework represents the reciprocal nature of data analysis. Data was just not analyzed but was analyzed and reanalyzed as more data was collected. The orange arrows represent how the analysis from one step contributed to the analysis of the next step. The accumulation of data led to within-case data analysis for each district then across-case data analysis as a collective.

The data collection process has a foundation in critical narrative analysis. The data gathered from focus groups, surveys, and interviews gave participating teachers an opportunity to tell their story and provide their perceptions as a traditionally marginalized voice in the school improvement process. In addition, this approach is rooted in critical narrative analysis because the focus of teacher perceived level of preparation in trauma-informed practices is on American Indian students, a significantly and traditionally marginalized group of students.

Organizing the data and data immersion

A qualitative approach allows researchers to examine the nature of a specific phenomenon in more detail (Watkins, 2017). Due to the amount of data that can be collected from qualitative research, immersion in the data and having a defined method for organizing the data is important. Immersion within the data includes the necessary step of examining how data can be reduced and made more concise as additional data is collected. Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended the direct transfer of data into recording charts as it is collected. Therefore, a data gathering log (Appendix D) was used to track the date of collection, place, activity from which data was gathered, who the data was collected from, and what was being explored in connection to the phenomenon of teacher perceived confidence and competence in trauma and historical trauma-informed practices. The data collected was regularly reviewed and logged as part of the immersion in the data. As new data was collected, it was reviewed for preliminary trends, categories, and themes in preparation for coding. Data collected from institutional artifacts, focus groups, surveys, and teacher interviews was stored in a University of Michigan-Dearborn Dropbox account which was secured with two-factor authenticity.

Data was collected, documented, and organized both manually and using video

conferencing, speech to text, and artificial intelligence translation applications. District artifacts in the form of policies, procedures, meeting minutes, agendas, and email communication was collected manually by first examining each participating district's website and contacting staff members to gather such information. The teacher survey was developed and distributed using Qualtrics. Upon completion of the survey, the results were exported into Microsoft Excel for precoding and coding. The three focus groups and eight of the eleven teacher interviews were completed using Zoom and the sessions were recorded. The Zoom recordings were imported into Otter.ai, a speech-to-text transcription application. Otter.ai created a written transcript for each recording which was reviewed for accuracy and completeness. Errors were corrected manually in Otter.ai. Common errors included inaccurate word recognition, errors in the identification of people speaking, and errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and conventions of writing. Corrected transcripts were then exported into Microsoft Word.

Three teacher interviews were conducted over the telephone. The interviewer used a headset to remain hands-free and available to transcribe teacher answers to questions in Microsoft Word. The corrected focus group and teacher interview transcripts from Otter.ai, as well as the notes from telephone interviews, were transferred into a Microsoft Excel recording chart. The chart was used to organize the raw data into reasonable length stanzas for analysis, preliminary coding, and final coding.

Coding to generate case summaries, categories, and themes

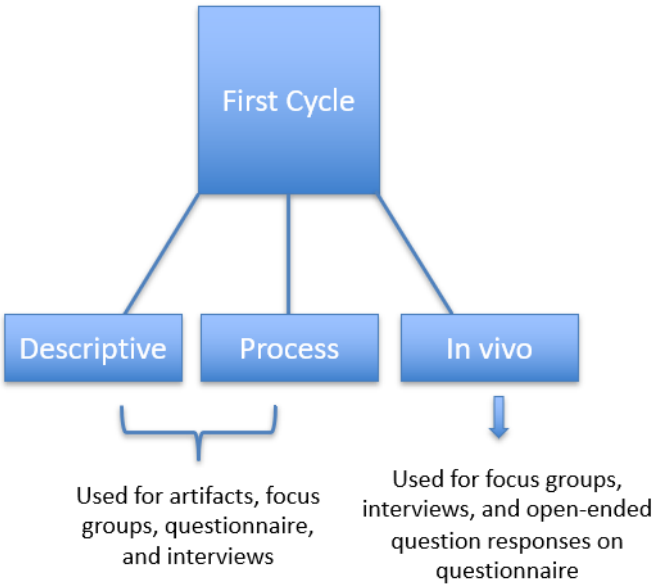
Coding is a significant step of data analysis that is often found to be difficult in qualitative research due to its lack of mechanical exercise (Basit, 2003). Coding in qualitative research "is a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of indictive reasoning, thinking and theorizing" (Basit, 2003, p. 143). It is applying labels to units of meaning from the data that is

collected from research. According to Ayres, Kavanaugh and Knafl (2003), "Qualitative researchers must distinguish between information relevant to all participants and those aspects of the experience that are exclusive to particular informants" (p. 871). These distinctions are critically important to identify because aspects of individual experiences may be of limited importance or relevance to others. However, interpretation of a data set, as a whole, cannot occur without first understanding the importance of the individual experience. Therefore, data was collected, interpreted, and analyzed starting with *First Cycle* coding for each of the participating districts which assisted with developing categories and themes across the individual data sets during *Second Cycle* coding.

First Cycle coding is the initial coding of data (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). *First Cycle* coding for this study used three coding methods – *descriptive*, *process*, and *in vivo elemental* (Figure 7).

Figure 7

First Cycle Coding Process



First Cycle coding focused on within-case qualitative data analysis of each district. This level of

analysis examined the phenomenon within the context of each district which "reflects each individual's experience and applies equally well across all of the accounts that constitute the data set" (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003, p. 871).

Descriptive coding was used to describe and summarize the data collected from each district and *process* coding was used to indicate their actions. *Descriptive* and *process* coding was used for all four sources of data – artifacts, focus groups, surveys, and interviews. *In vivo* coding is using words verbatim from the data collected (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). *In vivo* coding was applied to focus groups, teacher interviews, and open-ended question responses from the teacher surveys. *In vivo* coding was an important component of the data analysis because it aligned with Indigenous research methods and honored the voice of participants by using their language and terminology verbatim.

First Cycle coding began with what Saldaña (2016) described as "preliminary jottings" (p. 21). As focus group, teacher interview, and survey data was collected, it was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet where raw data was organized into smaller passages for better analysis with notes and preliminary codes identified for each section. The type of preliminary code (*descriptive*, *process*, or *in vivo*) was identified for each preliminary code documented in the spreadsheet. From the preliminary code, a final code was identified. This methodology for organizing the raw data and determining preliminary and final codes is what Saldaña (2016) refers to as *code charting*. Table 3 shows an example of this process.

Table 3

Example of Code Charting

Raw Data	Person	Preliminary Codes & Jottings	Final Code
"I can tell you with great certainty that when I deal with students each day, this is all they've ever known. They don't recognize trauma. This is their life. This is all they know."	Teacher A	trauma is a norm (Descriptive)	history, language, culture

Note: This process was used for focus groups, teacher interviews, and surveys. The information is an actual example of how a portion of raw data from the School Alpha focus group was coded.

Second Cycle coding is using specific strategies such as classifying, prioritizing, and synthesizing the data (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016) to reorganize and condense data to identify themes, categories, and concepts (Saldaña, 2016). *Second Cycle* coding was used to consolidate similar first-cycle codes and create categories using the *pattern* coding method. The consolidation of codes into categories involved across-case data analysis. *Pattern* coding assisted with reducing the number of codes identified during the first cycle by grouping/clustering similar or related codes to create "more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236). *Focused* coding was originally intended to be used as a method during *Second Cycle* coding in addition to *pattern* coding; however, after collecting and analyzing the data, it was determined that some codes with lower frequencies had just as much significant, and even more in some cases, as many codes with a higher frequency. A code may have a lower frequency, but the data collected on the lower frequency code provided specific details that were relevant, informative, and added knew knowledge to the topic of the research. The code may have

provided quality information and using *focused* coding would lend more value to quantity rather than quality of data.

Interpretations and alternative understandings

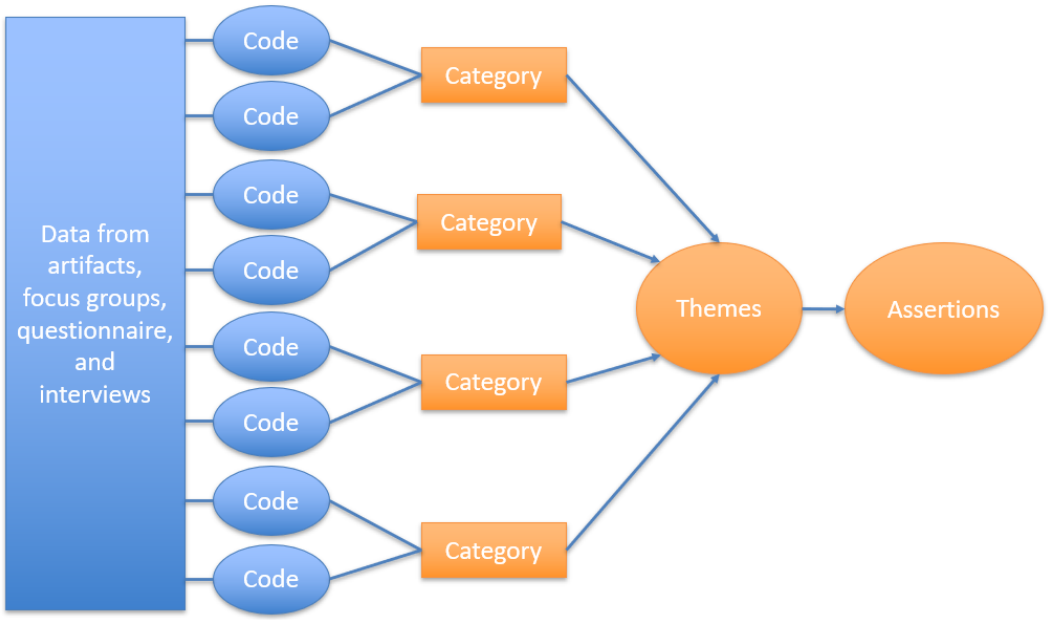
As data was collected, organized, and coded, interpretations were made of the data. The Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) refers to this as a *Data Story* which is the combination of many data objects or sources of data. The *Data Story* in any research captures the essence of a study and is used in MICIP for the next step of the MICIP process which is the planning phase. "Interpretation brings meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, and categories, developing linkages and a story line that makes sense and is engaging to read" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 228). Interpretation makes meaning of the data to determine the significance of the phenomenon and implications for generalizing the findings to other populations.

As important as interpretation is the challenging of one's own interpretations. As data was collected and interpreted, interpretations were reexamined to determine plausibility. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that qualitative researchers need to constantly reexamine data, challenge explanations and interpretations, examining if more data should be collected, and comparing themes that are identified to information in the literature review to possibly discover variations or new insights into the phenomenon.

After data was collected from School Alpha and School Beta, within-case data analysis was conducted to interpret the data for each district. After within-case data analysis, across-case data analysis was conducted to examine the similarities and difference in the data between School Alpha and School Beta. Saldaña's (2016) *codes and categories to theory framework* was used to guide the process of coding.

Figure 8

Codes and Categories to Theory Framework



Note: The codifying process of Saldaña (2016) aims to move the particular and real (data from various sources) to the general and abstract (assertions).

Delimitations

A difficult decision that every researcher must make is the scope and scale of the research. To what extent (scope) should a phenomenon be investigated and what should be the size (scale) of this investigation? This study examined teacher perceptions regarding their confidence and competence in trauma-informed instructional practices for American Indian (AI) students and how their perceived levels of confidence and competence was influenced by training/professional development. There were 8,570 American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in districts across Michigan according to the 2020-2021 state student count report from MI School Data (2020). It was not possible to examine this phenomenon of teacher

confidence and competence in every school district in Michigan who have AI students. Therefore, the decision was initially made to limit the scope and scale of the study to four districts within the same intermediate school district (ISD). The ISD was selected because it had the highest AI student population of any regional educational authority in Michigan. The four districts were selected due to their diversity in governance with two districts being Michigan public school districts and two public charter schools of which one was a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school.

Administration from each district were contacted, and two of the four districts invited to participate in the study accepted the invitation. The BIE school denied the request to participate for two reasons. They have rejected requests in the past to participate in research studies and decided to remain consistent with this policy. In addition, the study would require a complex tribal IRB approval process which would take an extended amount of time to complete. The other district who did not participate in the study was the largest district within the ISD with AI students making up 31.46% of their student population (MI School Data, 2020). The superintendent of this district was contacted twice with an invitation to participate in the study with no return communication.

Both Western and Indigenous research methods were used in this study. This hybrid approach was beneficial for both the researcher and the participants in the study. To establish a reciprocal benefit, an Indigenous research approach must understand the interrelationships of language, sacred history, place/territory, and ceremonial cycle or what Holm, Pearson, and Chavis (2003) refer to as “peoplehood.” The research must fit with the beliefs and values of the community and must compliment the educational systems and structure currently in place while also maintaining the integrity of qualitative research design. Therefore, the study was carefully

designed to work within the framework, timeframe, and structure of the two participating districts. For example, the existing Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) teams from each district were used as focus groups and the focus group meetings were held on regularly scheduled days for the MICIP teams. The MICIP team met only on Fridays; therefore, focus group meetings were limited to Fridays. In addition, the time frame of data collection was condensed to fit within the school year and to not extend into the summer break when most teachers and staff would be on vacation. Due to the research study starting towards the end of the school year, it was challenging to get all members of the MICIP team to attend the focus groups due to the many tasks and responsibilities associated with finishing the school year. Therefore, focus groups were conducted with MICIP members who were available at the time with the understanding that some MICIP members would not be able to attend. Teacher surveys and interviews had to be conducted in a condensed timeframe so as to collect information from teachers before the end of the school year in June, knowing that teachers would want to start their summer vacation and less willing to participate in a research study during the summer months.

A case study approach was decided with each participating district representing a case study. Although case study research is pliable, Hyett, Kenny, and Dickson-Swift (2014) believed the flexibility causes limitations in qualitative research and generalizations of research outcomes to all populations may be "fuzzy." This was addressed by aligning the structure of the research with the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) adopted by the Intermediate School District (ISD) and their affiliate school districts. MICIP follows a process of assessing needs first followed by planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. This study focused only on assessing needs and the beginnings of the planning phase of MICIP.

Assessing needs and planning are organized using a specific framework that allows for the proposed data collection and data analysis methods to create a data object which is aggregated to create a Data Story in MICIP which can be generalized for all populations with less “fuzziness.”

CHAPTER 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings of a qualitative study on teacher perceived confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices associated with American Indian students. The chapter begins with a restatement of the study's purpose and a restatement of the research questions. The chapter then proceeds to explain each phase of data collection and the results from each phase. *First cycle within-case* and *second cycle across-case* codes, as identified and explained, led to the emergence of categories and themes further discussed in the chapter.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of teacher perceived confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instructional practices relevant to American Indian (AI) students and how teacher training/professional development influences confidence and feelings of competence. It was intended that the results of this study will provide the participating school districts and their Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) teams with a *data story* which is a significant component of the MICIP process – a framework for continuous school improvement adopted by both districts. This *data story* can then be used in the development and implementation of future teacher training/professional development opportunities that will improve teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed educational practices for American Indian students.

Restatement of the Research Questions

The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. How have schools in Michigan established a commitment to trauma-informed policies, procedures, and instructional practices?
2. In what ways does the historical trauma of American Indian communities influence the

school continuous improvement processes?

3. How confident and competent do teachers feel in their knowledge of trauma-informed instructional practices for American Indian students?
4. What training do teachers need and want to build their confidence and competence in trauma-informed instructional practices related to American Indian students?

Introduction to Results

Data was collected from school district institutional artifacts, focus groups, a teacher survey, and teacher interviews. These four sources of data collection were chosen to provide triangulation and data through these sources was collected from May 7th, 2021 through August 14th, 2021. As data was collected, preliminary codes began to emerge which led to final *first cycle* codes. A total of 31 codes were identified using *descriptive*, *process*, and *in vivo* coding techniques and these codes were described in a code book along with their inclusion and exclusion criteria. Typical and atypical exemplars were also included in the code book. Saldaña (2016) recommended these code book components for studies with "more compact number of codes" (p. 28). Table 4 is a list of *first cycle* codes identified from the data collected including the frequency per school district and the across-case totals.

Table 4

First Cycle Codes and Frequencies

Code title	School Alpha frequency	School Beta frequency	Total frequency
ACEs	17	24	41
Application	14	19	33
Capacity and capability	25	75	100
Community engagement	43	156	199
Coursework and research	9	13	22
District representative	5	7	12
Experience	27	36	63
History, language, culture	65	94	159
Historical trauma trained	9	21	30
Infrequent	18	14	32
Lack training or experience	60	69	129
Mental health services	15	29	44
Overview	21	19	40
Priorities	10	7	17
Qualified	2	12	14
Redundant	4	2	6
Relevance	19	20	39
Reputable and knowledgeable	3	6	9
Resources	3	7	10
Safety	28	17	45
Self-assured	4	14	18
Stigma	7	7	14
Student confidence	8	11	19
Sustainable	6	7	13
Teacher collaboration	17	29	46
Teachers as therapists	7	26	33
Training wanted	33	37	70
Trauma-informed planning	10	13	23
Trusting relationships	30	26	56
Uncertain	20	26	46
Unqualified	16	21	37

Note: The frequency numbers represent the number of times each code was identified as data was analyzed and includes data from six institutional artifacts, three focus groups, 33 responses from a teacher survey and 11 teacher interviews.

Data was collected in four steps: artifact collection, focus groups, a teacher survey, and teacher interviews. As data was collected, information surfaced about possible additional artifacts. Therefore, as this information was gathered, an inquiry into additional artifacts were made by asking teachers and administration. The following sections describe the data collection approach for each of the four steps and the data findings at each step.

First-Cycle Coding Findings

As data was collected, it was organized and analyzed for preliminary codes. Preliminary codes were further analyzed and in conjunction with the use of a codebook, first-cycle codes were identified. First-cycle coding used descriptive, process, and in vivo coding methods as described by Saldaña (2016). Descriptive coding uses a word or phrase to summarize the basic point or idea from a passage. Process coding focuses on implied actions within the data and in vivo coding uses words and phrases from participants own language to develop preliminary and final codes. In vivo coding was used with focus groups, teacher survey short answer responses, and teacher interviews. The findings are presented and explained by each step/phase of the research process – artifact collection, focus groups, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews.

Step 1—Artifact collection results

Artifact collection began with a review of School Alpha and School Beta's websites. The websites were reviewed to find information available to the public regarding policies and procedures for American Indian (AI) student education and any planning documents regarding trauma and trauma-informed instructional practices and training for teachers. An email was sent to the School Alpha and School Beta superintendents requesting copies of any documents associated with trauma-informed instructional practices and training/professional development. Artifacts were also requested from teachers via email and as part of the individual teacher

interviews. Documents requested included training/professional development agendas, meeting minutes/notes, presenter biographies, teacher handouts, participant created products from training sessions, post workshop perception surveys, and copies of facilitator presentations.

A review of School Alpha's website discovered no documents available to the public connected to trauma-informed practices or teacher training. Therefore, teachers and the superintendent were emailed individually requesting documents connected to trauma-informed practices and past training/professional development provided for teachers. One teacher forwarded an email sent to teachers from a trainer at the local Intermediate School District (ISD) which explained the ISDs commitment to providing a greater awareness of trauma-informed practices and described some of the work the ISD has done as part of their Trauma Leadership Team. From this document, the following first-cycle codes emerged: *overview*, *resources*, *relevance*, *district representative*, *trusting relationships*, *trauma-informed planning*, *community engagement*, *application*, *ACEs*, *sustainable*, *capacity and capability*, and *history, language, culture*. The highest frequency code was *ACEs* since the intent of the email was to provide teachers with a definition of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma as well as to explain their connection to the behavior of students. *Community engagement* was identified twice within the document as the ISD trainer explained to teachers how the area educational authority was focused on "bringing together community agencies to assess how mental health problems affect our community" and why it is important "to take steps to improve mental health in our families, schools, and community" (Personal communication, email, June 15, 2021). The ISD representative stated in the email that schools have "a pivotal role in working with students that have been exposed to trauma or toxic stress, predominantly because of the child's daily attendance and connection to his or her teacher and the school's capacity to communicate the

child's current functioning to the agencies in which the child and his/her family are involved" (Personal communication, email, June 15, 2021). This statement confirms the importance of Alisic et al.'s (2012) findings which pointed to the importance of teachers identifying behavior changes in students, monitoring their behavior, and providing emotional support due to the substantial amount of time they spend working directly with students.

Five artifacts were available on School Beta's website related to the focus of the research. Four documents were district policy and procedure documents. Four documents were the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 American Indian education policies and procedures, one set for each tribal nation in the area for each school year. A fifth document on the website was the 2021 Title VI Indian Education Open Hearing meeting agenda.

Community engagement was the most frequent code identified among School Beta's American Indian education policies and procedures. *Community engagement* refers to communicating and collaborating with parents/families/care givers, tribal elders, the local community college, the local public university, and a variety of community organizations and businesses. An example of language connected to the code of *community engagement* is a statement from School Beta's American Indian education policies and procedures. It states that School Beta "will consult with local tribal officials and parents of Indian children" regarding educational programing and activities so those community authorities can make recommendations and provide feedback. *Community engagement* was coded 100 times from the policies and procedures; however, it is important to note that the language for the Indian education policies and procedures was duplicated from one school year to the next and the same language was used for both local tribal nations. The differences in the policies and procedures included dates and the names of the tribal nations. This inflated the frequency of the *community*

engagement code. If duplications were removed, *community engagement* was identified 25 times in each policy and procedure—still a prevalent recurrence. Thus, although there was an inflation of the code frequency, the duplication sends a message that School Beta sees substantial value in community engagement.

The second highest frequency code identified from an examination of School Beta's Indian education policies and procedures was *capacity and capability* with a total frequency of 48. C*apacity and capability* is defined in the codebook as the knowledge, resources, and ability to provide guidance, counseling, mental health service and trauma-informed care to students. An example of *capacity and capability* in the policies and procedures is the stated purpose for providing educational programming information to tribal officials and parents. The purpose is to allow "for the participation of Indian students on an equal basis in the district." This statement shows the commitment of School Beta to implement a system of checks and balances in an effort to provide American Indian students the capacity and capability for greater success through equal access of high-quality educational programs. As was the case with *community engagement*, School Beta's commitment to building capacity and capability for American Indian students is evident in the high frequency of *capacity and capability*.

The fifth document available on School Beta's website was the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI Indian Education Formula Grant open hearing meeting agenda. The purpose of the grant is to help schools meet the unique academic and cultural needs of American Indian students. One requirement of this grant is to hold an open hearing/meeting so the school district can involve the tribal communities, parents/families, and community partners in the planning and improvement of American Indian student education. Although the agenda for the last open hearing was posted on School Beta's website, the minutes to the meeting were not available to

the general public. Communication with the Native Studies Educator and Coordinator for the school district requesting a copy of the meeting minutes yielded no response. Subsequent communication with a school administrator led to acquisition of the minutes from the relevant Title VI hearing.

At the beginning of the minutes, it stated that Title VI is a "federal obligation to native communities to aid in the continuation of culture, language, and native history/studies." The minutes acknowledged the requirement of redress regarding the historical atrocities towards Native Peoples which has led to a loss of language, culture, and history. Three prominent codes emerged from reviewing the Title VI open hearing agenda and meeting minutes – *community engagement*, *safety*, and *history, language, culture*.

The purpose of the open hearing was to establish School Beta's commitment to *community engagement* by connecting the community with the school to review educational programming that will promote American Indian "culture, language, and native history/studies" by making it a part of the curriculum and school culture. This would be accomplished through Native Studies classes, the celebration of Native American Heritage Month, and the beginning of Ojibwe language classes next school year. The open hearing minutes also revealed a recommendation to provide cultural training for staff and to leverage the resources of a Michigan university and the local community college to explore the historical trauma imbedded within the community and affecting students at School Beta.

Due to the historical trauma among the tribal communities, *safety* was an important code connected to this document. The hearing acknowledged the importance

of creating a collaborative learning environment where students feel safe and secure "mentally, physically, emotionally, and culturally." For this to occur, the meeting stressed continuing collaboration between the school district and the community. This collaboration was considered of "upmost importance." However, the meeting did not address the feeling of safety, or lack of, for other stakeholders within the educational community such as teachers.

The focus on safety, community engagement, and Native history, language, and culture resonates with Bath's (2008) three pillars of trauma-informed care, the most important of which is safety. The purpose of the Title VI meeting also aligned to the six guiding principles of trauma-informed care defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). These guiding principles include safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues (Trauma Informed Oregon, 2020).

Step 2—Focus group results

Three focus groups were conducted, one with School Alpha and two with School Beta with the participants of each focus group consisting of members from each district's Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) team. School Alpha's focus group consisted of six teachers, the superintendent, and the curriculum coordinator from the Intermediate School District (ISD). The first focus group for School Beta consisted of two teachers, the superintendent of School Beta, and the ISD curriculum coordinator. The second focus group from School Beta was made up of three teachers, one school principal, the district superintendent, and the curriculum coordinator from the ISD.

The intent of the focus groups was to collect data at a more macro level by exploring how

historical trauma within the community effected student learning, understanding what professional development has been provided to teachers, identifying the challenges teachers face working with students exposed to adverse experiences and/or trauma, and how past training opportunities effected teacher confidence and competence in relation to historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students. The data collected helped in the development of a teacher survey which was distributed to all School Alpha and School Beta teachers following the focus groups.

Each focus group was asked the same eight questions (Appendix A). Based on the responses of the focus group members, some follow-up questions were asked to provide clarification or elaboration. The sessions were recorded on Zoom and automatically transcribed using Otter.ai. The Otter.ai transcript for each focus group was carefully reviewed for accuracy and completeness and corrections were made manually as needed. The transcripts were then exported into Microsoft Excel and the data organized for coding using the code charting method as defined by Saldaña (2016).

Focus group members were first asked to describe how historical trauma within the community affected student learning. The School Alpha focus group explained the extent of historical trauma among their student body and the need for frequent training specifically on the history of trauma within their community and what teachers should know in order to be trauma informed. The origins of School Alpha and its physical location on a tribal reservation provide some context and clarity to the responses given by the focus group members. For example, the original purpose for creating School Alpha was to provide an education that was sensitive to the history and needs of Native students – something that many Native community members felt was lacking from the nearby public school district at the time School Alpha was formed. According

to one of the focus group teachers, “I don’t think there’s very much trust with a lot of the population in education, in schools, because of what happened in the past.” The history as to why School Alpha was formed and its mission to provide a strong educational focus towards Native student needs is one reason for the higher frequency of the *history, language, culture* first-cycle code for School Alpha in comparison to the frequency of the code with School Beta. During the coding for the School Alpha focus group, h*istory, language, culture* had a frequency of 12 compared to a frequency of six for School Beta.

School Alpha’s focus group discussed how history affected the community perception of schools leading to codes such as *safety* and *trusting relationships*. A School Alpha teacher explained how “School was something that was upsetting. School was something that was traumatic. School was something that was uncomfortable.” Another teacher from School Alpha responded by making the claim that schools “are still causing some of that trauma.” School Alpha’s superintendent provided more details to the origins of the school and explained how poorly Native students were treated in the public schools before the establishment of School Alpha; therefore, the original goal of School Alpha was to create a safe learning environment for Native students and to heal some of what was lost throughout history such as the language, culture, and customs. “At that time, people were afraid to say, ‘I’m Native, I’m proud of it.’” The superintendent further stated that they want students to bring back the language, culture, and customs that was partially lost.

According to one of the School Alpha focus group members, the idea that schools are still causing trauma is due to a lack of teacher training. When the school first opened, there was no training for teachers. There was no training on the history and culture of the two local tribes and no information provided to them regarding the boarding schools and the intergeneration trauma

they have caused. Training in these areas was not a priority of the school founders during the origins of the school. The priority was on the establishment of the school and daily operations. This information provided by the focus group led to identifying *priorities* as a code. Information relevant to priorities was identified 10 times during the School Alpha focus group session.

A School Alpha teacher, who is also a tribal member, personally understood the impact historical trauma has on learning for American Indian students. “There’s not a tribal child living today that doesn’t experience, whether they realize it or not, some form of historical trauma because their parents and their grandparents and their great grandparents and their great, great grandparents suffered the result of what happened to us historically.” The teacher further explained that past unresolved traumatic events that have carried over from one generation to another have “changed our culture, it’s changed our standards of living, our lifestyles, the whole social fabric of our way of life.” The teacher stressed the importance of teacher training in Native history in order for teachers to recognize signs of trauma among their students. Another teacher from the focus group supported her recommendation for additional teacher training in tribal history. This teacher was concerned that she works for a Native American school and only knows a little of the history because the district has not made it a priority to train the teachers in the history. Therefore, there is a strong need for a specific type of professional development.

The School Alpha focus group was concerned regarding the infrequency and limited amount of time dedicated to training teachers in historical trauma and trauma-informed practices and this concern was heightened due to the school’s original purpose of better serving American Indian students and the tribal communities. According to the School Alpha teacher who is a tribal member, historical trauma “needs more than a one- or two-hour workshop once a year.” In response to this statement, another teacher said, “I feel like I have not been given enough training

to be able to understand what you feel we should understand." The focus group discussed how the original purpose for starting School Alpha was to address the loss of Native language and culture due to colonization and assimilation and there was a feeling that the local public school district was not addressing Native educational needs including being trauma informed. Although School Alpha is trying to address the preservation of Native history, language, and culture, teachers believe that the teaching of the traumatic history of loss is not frequent, is inconsistent, and lacks specific strategies for teacher to use with students. Teachers know a little of the history but not enough to support the American Indian students they teach.

The School Beta focus groups identified limited time as one reason for the lack of historical trauma-informed training. According to the superintendent of School Beta, "There's so much other professional development we're required to have I think some of that has gone along the wayside." However, the superintendent did acknowledge the importance of this training. "It needs to be brought back because we have new faculty members that aren't from the area" therefore they do not know the history, the culture, and the traditions. "That would be a huge help for them to understand our community."

The School Beta focus groups had a similar response regarding the traumatic impact assimilation had on the tribal communities of the region. Trauma is a "cyclical process" according to one School Beta teacher and as a member of a tribal nation, he saw the direct impact of the trauma on his family across generations. It is a "tough cycle to break." The process of attempted assimilation through the establishment of boarding schools led to a situation where "few people have all of that rich history and those customs." A second teacher from the same focus group agreed that trauma is cyclical and sees the effects of this trauma among the younger students. This teacher provided an example of this cyclical process. Teachers often play the role

as therapist, listening to students and helping them sort their feelings and messages they receive from their parents and family. For example, parents feel their children are not good in school because they were not good in school, leading to students lacking confidence and having low self-esteem. The low self-esteem leads students to feeling that their future is limited to the occupation of their parents or in other words a prescribed destiny. This information led to identifying *student confidence* and *teachers as therapists* as codes. Due to the frequent and consistent manner in which teachers work with students, teachers tend to take the role of therapist. This role naturally occurs due to the establishment of trusting relationships where students feel safe sharing personal information with teachers. This explains why the code *teachers as therapists* appeared a total of 15 times among the three focus groups.

Student confidence was another focus of discussion between the School Beta focus groups. Student *confidence* was a first-cycle code that appeared six times during the School Alpha focus group and eight times with School Beta for a total frequency of 14. A teacher from one of School Beta's focus groups feels the school district is attempting to "show these younger generations that you can overcome." This notion is in contrast with the original intent of forming School Alpha which was to address concerns that School Beta did not properly address the needs and wants of the tribal community. According to this teacher, School Beta is working to address the cyclical issues of historical trauma among the tribal communities and is more focused on Indian educational practices to improve the AI student confidence and self-esteem.

School Beta's superintendent explained how the district is working to address the historical trauma within the community which does have a significant effect on student learning. "We have come leaps and bounds over the last several years in bridging the gap between our communities so that our children are at the forefront no matter where they come from." The

superintendent believed School Beta is committed to providing the highest quality education possible for all students, Native and non-Native, and believed that parents are seeing this commitment to helping all students. “I think parents are seeing that that has changed over a few generations were the school is there for all kids.” However, he believed there is still work to do and that work is continuous. “There’s always work to do to try to make sure are kids are taken care of and getting the language in our school and getting the culture in our school.” These statements from the superintendent address the concerns of the Native communities which originally led to the establishment of School Alpha. School Beta understands the history that has led to a distrust of public schools and according to the superintendent is taking action in response to community concerns by focusing on what is in the best interest of students. The opinions expressed by the superintendent connected to the codes of *trusting relationships*, *safety*, *teachers as therapists*, and *history, language, and culture*.

Although there is the belief that the relationship and trust between the tribal communities and School Beta have improved, there are still concerns among the tribal communities about publicly acknowledging historical trauma and mental health issues. There is a negative stigma associated with receiving mental health services and a distrust of such services. The negative stigma and distrust did not arise as a discuss point during School Alpha’s focus group but was mentioned three times during the School Beta focus groups. According to a teacher in the second focus group for School Beta, the school district tries to convey to students that they are safe at school and that they can talk to the teachers about personal issues or concerns. However, there is a negative stigma regarding mental health issues among the tribal communities and still a concern for safety with being transparent regarding one’s feelings because public school staff are often associated with the trauma caused by the boarding schools. According to a School Beta

teacher, “One of the things we try to do, especially with young students, is to say you’re at school, you’re safe, you can talk to me, I’m always here for you.” However, “some of them have been told, ‘I can’t tell you. I can’t talk about it. I’m not allowed to. My mom says not to talk to you about that stuff.’” By not knowing the thoughts and feelings of their students, teachers are challenged to adjust instruction and social/emotional supports to provide a trauma-informed environment. Although some students are directed not to share their feelings, one teacher believes if you know the situations and backgrounds of students or not, a critical and non-negotiable component of any trauma-informed school is to create a safe environment. “Promoting safety is number one.” According to this teacher, if students do not feel safe, it is difficult for students to learn. This belief supports Bath’s (2008) three pillars of trauma-informed schools: a safe environment, strong connections between students and their mentor or caregiver, and helping students to manage their emotions and impulses. Safety was clearly a priority of all three focus groups with language connected to the code of *safety* appearing 18 times.

Focus group members were asked to explain the trauma professional development or training teachers have received and by whom. All focus groups indicated that there was some historical trauma training in the past through a member of the tribal community; however, the training was conducted years ago and was a single session. There was not continuation of the training and not detailed implementation plan. This information was coded as *infrequent* and *community engagement*. For School Alpha and School Beta, the span of time since the last time training was provided to teachers has led to a situation where new teachers and staff members have not received training. The superintendent from School Beta explained that the focus on much of their training over the last two to three years has been in social emotional learning and not historical trauma and it has been some time since training was offered to teachers. “I know

we have had professional development from tribal leaders many years back and we do need to revisit that because we have a lot of new faculty member who don't know the culture and history of our area." This gap in historical trauma training was coded as *lack training or experience*.

According to one of the teachers from School Beta, the training in social emotional learning was a good start to understanding the history and intergenerational trauma and a second teacher stated that trauma-informed training provided a general introduction of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma but did not provide information about historical trauma among Native communities. Members of the School Beta focus groups believed that the district is doing a better job addressing the needs of students through social emotional training and a staff overview of general trauma but there has not been specific historical trauma training which is needed to improve confidence and competence. One of the school principals for School Beta explained the healthy "working relationship" the district has with the local tribal community and that they have brought in members of the community for various student programs. A teacher from School Beta explained that part of the reason that specific historical trauma training has not been provided is due to other school priorities and limited capacity to provide the training. "The world's really pushing from a lot of different directions, and we have so many other requirements right now." The teacher went on to explain that the district is doing the best it can to address all the issues and is committed to breaking down the barriers to teaching Native languages and culture.

Responses from School Alpha regarding past training and priorities were similar to School Beta's. A teacher from School Alpha referred to the training they received as "cursory training" and not focused on trauma among the Native communities which concerned the teacher since the majority of students attending School Alpha are Native and the school was started to

specifically address the educational needs of Native children. According to this teacher, a lot of discussion has ensued around the idea of historical trauma training specifically focused on trauma among the Native communities but there has not been a specific training on Native historical trauma. An overview of trauma was provided to teachers and staff from several members of the tribal community. References to past training as an overview was coded as *overview*.

In addition to the concern that past training was an overview, the School Beta focus groups explained that the same overview of trauma was provided to teachers numerous times. This information was coded as *redundant*. Members of both School Beta focus groups also mentioned that their experience, as either members of the tribal communities or their experience working with students with trauma, has contributed to their knowledge of historical trauma among American Indian students at their school. This information was coded as *experience* which had a frequency of 12 during the School Beta focus groups and 10 for the School Alpha focus group. One person from School Beta mentioned that some of their knowledge of historical trauma was due to college coursework which was coded as *coursework and research*. No focus group members from School Alpha indicated that their perception of confidence and competence was influenced by college coursework.

Members of School Alpha's focus group discussed not only what professional development was done in the past and its infrequency and redundancy but who provided that professional development which led to the question of who should provide future training/professional development in the Native history of the area and historical/intergenerational trauma? The discussion from the School Alpha focus group alluded to the importance of engaging the community by having a tribal member provide this training for

teachers because they know the history and the traumatic impact it had on the Native communities. This information was coded as *reputable and knowledgeable* and because of the focus on community members to provide the training, *community engagement* was used as a code when community members were identified as suggested trainers for future professional development.

The focus groups were asked to discuss their impressions of teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices. According to the School Alpha superintendent, "I would say that they have an understanding, but I don't know if they're particularly comfortable." The lack of comfort was coded as *safety* because the superintendent explained how the topic is "painful to bring up" and how it is embarrassing to admit that one does not know how to speak their own Native language. A teacher from School Alpha explained further the concern of many people over bringing the topic of historical trauma up for discussion. Although this teacher is a member of one of the tribal nations, "there are a lot of things, I have to be honest, that I don't teach the children about because I don't want to traumatize them." This further shows School Alpha's commitment to providing a safe learning environment for students which is a "pillar" of trauma-informed practices according to Bath (2008).

School Beta's answers to the question regarding the impression of teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices did not focus as much on safety. School Beta focused on the areas of *teacher collaboration*, *teachers as therapists*, and *community engagement*. The members of School Beta's first focus group explained how school staff are like family and often collaborate to determine how best to teach and support students. According to one of the teachers, "When I can know the family history, that helps me to be able to understand what this kid may be going through." The teacher further explained how

collaborating with other teachers who may better know the history and/or family situation of a student helps them to develop a strategy for working with that student. Although teacher collaboration can assist teachers with learning how to improve their ability to work with students who had adverse experiences and possible trauma, there is still a need for teacher training in historical trauma. A teacher from School Beta indicated they had Adverse Childhood Experiences training over 18 months ago and that was the first time they realized there was a difference between general trauma and historical trauma and how trauma can alter the brain. Since the training, there are new teachers to the school district therefore they were not present during the last training. The teacher was asked if they felt more confident and competent than the other teachers who did not attend the training and the teacher said no, they felt "informed." They did not feel confident and competent. The training had brought awareness of trauma and the differences in the types of traumas but did not lead to a growth in confidence and competence. Another teacher from the same focus group responded to those comments by indicating they don't feel completely informed therefore they feel even less confident and competent in historical trauma practices. According to the teacher, if they do not know the root cause of student behavior, they don't know how to respond and help students. One of the school principals for School Beta stated that the school is aware of the trauma among the students but does not know specific strategies for addressing the trauma. "How do I do it? Can I do it? Do I have the training? Where's my next step? Does that next step make sense?" Teachers and staff are unable to answer these questions because detailed, relevant, applicable, and frequent/sustained trauma training is not made available. Although, there is a lack of training according to all three focus groups, teachers often learn about their students by talking with each other and leveraging the trusting relationships established with students.

The focus groups were asked if teachers requested any specific training in trauma practices and if so, what was requested? According to one of the teacher leaders from School Alpha, he has pushed for a deeper understanding of adverse experiences and trauma, but the trainings provided by the district were general overviews on the topic. Another teacher from School Alpha specifically asked for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training since many of the students come to her about adverse experiences in their homelife. “I feel that I am not well trained to give them what they need or what they deserve.” This feeling of being inadequately trained and therefore not competent to address personal information shared with the teacher was coded as *unqualified*. The superintendent and another teacher from the focus group explained that one of the advantages of their school is its small size. Being small helps with establishing close relationships with students and is one reason why students often confide regularly with their teachers. The personal information they receive from students has created a greater sense of urgency for proper training because students are sharing deeply personal information about their adverse experiences and trauma and teachers are unsure on how they should respond.

Training in historical trauma is important to the teachers at School Alpha and the superintendent agrees that they should have an understanding of historical trauma. However, in additional to understanding the historical trauma, the superintendent wants to focus on resilience as a way of breaking the cycle of trauma. The difficulty of breaking this cycle was mentioned by a School Beta teacher. According to Cayir, et al. (2018), home and school can be sources of resilience for children and adolescents with trauma. High levels of resilience established early as a child and adolescent improves resilience among Native populations (Cayir et al., 2018). Another teacher from School Alpha agreed with the superintendent’s focus on resilience; however, the teacher stated, “to build resilience, you have to know where you’ve been to

understand why these things have happened." This statement emphasized the importance of understanding the history, language, and culture of the students and for this to occur requires additional training for teachers that is focused specifically on providing a historical foundation of the trauma, an explanation of how trauma can transfer from one generation to another, specific strategies teachers can use with students, and to provide an understanding of when situations are beyond the expertise of teachers and requires a mental health professional. Venet (2021) explained further that resilience requires an ecological approach where different systems interact to help build resilience. "While some point to 'resilience' as a strength or an asset of individual children, the research on resilience takes a more ecological approach in which a child's capacity to respond to challenges is supported by interlocking systems like family, community and access to resources" (Venet, 2021, p. xv). The foundation to Venet's (2021) views on resilience is Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory which describes how the continuous and reciprocal interactions of various systems influence an individual. For School Alpha to successfully address improving student resilience to adverse experiences and trauma based on the vision of the superintendent, School Alpha will need to examine the social resources within the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979). According to Nettles, Mucherah, and Jones (2000), the social resources of parents/families/caregivers, teachers, and schools should be leveraged to protect students by building their resilience.

Another teacher emphasized how School Alpha and the teachers are able to build strong relationships with students but sometimes they feel those relationships are so strong that teachers can't help but bring the "weight" of those conversations home with them. The teacher explained that they viewed teachers serving in a therapist capacity for students as a responsibility that is a safety concern for teacher mental health. Teachers often listen to the adverse situations of

students and provide advice and support as best they can; however, teachers realize they have a limited capacity and capability to do so. According to the School Alpha teacher, their capacity is limited by time since they are only able to work with students during the school day. They are also limited by their level of knowledge and experience with trauma-informed practices. The teacher emphasized that there is only so much training that can be done and so much that teachers can do to help students. Teachers need to realize their limits. "Sometimes I've gone home and cried because a kid has felt comfortable talking to me and I'm there and I support them and there's nothing I can do. I just have to be there and let them know they have someone in their corner." Loomis and Felt (2020) acknowledged in their research the impact student trauma has on teachers and referred to the teacher's above statement as *secondary trauma* and what The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2008) referred to as compassion fatigue. The teachers in both School Alpha and School Beta focus groups acknowledged the difficulty with not getting emotionally involved in the adverse personal experiences of students.

The superintendent from School Alpha acknowledged how students have a trust in teachers and have even contacted her on weekends and in the middle of the night with thoughts of self-harm. "We do have to draw the line somewhere. We're not professionally trained." The superintendent stated they must communicate boundaries with students and when they need a mental health professional instead of a teacher. This is challenging for schools who establish strong bonds between the teachers and students like School Alpha and is an example of what Rutledge et al. (2015) referred to as the dual role of schools – attending to not only the academic but the social and emotional needs of students. However, the School Alpha superintendent does not want teachers to put themselves at risk. This reference to risk led to a different perspective on the code of *safety*. *Safety* was coded when there were references to student mental health

concerns; however, *safety* was also used as a code when there were concerns regarding teacher mental health and concerns regarding teachers putting themselves at professional risk by placing themselves in a mental health support role although they are untrained to do so. This information from the School Alpha focus group led to the establishment of *teachers as therapists* and *mental health professionals* as first-cycle codes.

The focus groups were asked about the challenges teachers face working with students exposed to adverse experiences and/or trauma. One challenge identified by the School Alpha focus group was how trauma is chronic and not acute. The roots of trauma among the tribal nations date back generations and the trauma is often addressed through “self-medication” with alcohol and drugs. According to one teacher, the self-medication “becomes a way of life.” This cyclical and chronic trauma from one generation to another can be broken. According to a teacher from the School Alpha focus group, “we as a system need the tools to be able to help break that cycle.” According to School Alpha’s superintendent, both tribal nations have programs and community resources to address the issues stemming from intergenerational chronic trauma but little for kids and teenagers. Therefore, this may explain why students see their teachers and the school in general as their primary source for trauma-informed care. According to one of the teachers from School Alpha, "We are the first ones outside the direct family that has that direct influence in those children's lives. So, if the cycle is going to be broken, we as a system need the tools to be able to help break that cycle." Teachers from both School Alpha and School Beta want to help students beyond just their academics and would like additional training in historical trauma-informed strategies to be confident and feel competent in doing so. According to Ko et al. (2008), “Creating and sustaining trauma-informed child-service systems require a knowledgeable workforce, committed organization, and skilled professionals”

(p. 397). Loomis and Felt (2020) identified the importance of professional development if teachers are going to be able to identify students who have trauma from adverse experiences either directly or passed down from generations. The teachers are committed to helping the students and have acknowledged they need training to be knowledgeable and skilled to do so which requires a commitment by administration to provide the time and resources for training.

Although teachers are committed to helping students with the assistance of proper training, according to a school principal from School Beta, family members don't view school districts as the place for therapy. "They've been told do not say any of the family business to people at school" although students do because of the trusting relationships established between teachers and students. Another possible reason for the trust in teachers is the routine and predictability of school. According to Bath (2008), trauma-informed schools provide safety through consistency and predictability which reduces the fear of the unknown and creates a feeling of safety with students. The consistent and formal structure of formal education provides the predictability and allows students to form relationships with teachers that they see daily.

One of the challenges that was presented during the second focus group with School Beta was how involved the school and teachers should be with student mental health issues, what strategies should be used, and where is the limits of what teachers can and cannot do? This was a similar concern acknowledged by the School Alpha focus group and their worries regarding teachers serving in a mental health role with students. "Where does it become appropriate and inappropriate, legal and not legal?" asked one of the district principals. These questions are connected to the code of *safety*. How safe do teachers feel with providing social and emotional support to students with adverse experiences and trauma and what techniques do they know to use? Do they fear that if they do not use the proper technique that it may resurface or

retraumatize students? Are they concerned about the legal liabilities associated with providing mental health advice to students? According to Oehlberg (2008), teaching today requires alternative strategies and skills to address student traumatic stress which has fallen on teachers although school is not a mental health facility and teacher are not professionally trained to be therapists. Oehlberg believed teachers are expected by parents, the community, and the nation to support students who have traumatic stress. This may be true of other communities but according to this research, there is a negative stigma regarding the historical trauma among the tribal communities and the intergenerational effects of this trauma; therefore, many tribal community members prefer that social and emotional issues are not transparently expressed outside the home as indicated by the school principal during the focus group session.

One of the principals from School Beta also addressed the issue of capacity and capability but focused on how to manage and prioritize the multiple tasks of running a school/district. He stated that their "mandate as an educational facility is still reading, writing and arithmetic and that's what our teachers went to school for and by and large that's what our administrators went to school for." Therefore, School Beta would like to implement more trauma-informed training for teachers and practices throughout the district, but the challenge is the capacity and capability to do so with other academic priorities schools must address. According to Lee (2015) and Han and Weiss (2005), there is degradation of teacher support and the implementation of mental health programs due to a shift towards academic accountability such was indicated by the School Beta principal. Han and Weiss (2005) stated that administrator assignments, the allocation of resources, curriculum selection, and teacher training were additional factors shifting priorities away from school mental health services. According to Han and Weiss (2005), an essential to identifying and implementing mechanisms to increase the

fidelity of school mental-health programs is providing opportunities for teachers to give feedback in the development and implementation of mental health services. School Alpha and School Beta do value and realize the need to train teachers in historical trauma-informed practices and their commitment and participation in this research provided teachers the opportunity to give the feedback which is critical according to Han and Weiss (2005).

A teacher from School Beta agreed with the statement from the principal regarding the difficulty with prioritizing the multiple responsibilities of schools but added the importance of increasing parental support. The teacher thought possible parenting classes might help but some parents would take advantage of the opportunity and others may take such an offer as a message that they are not being good parents. The principal indicted that the district has a social worker, and the community has the health department as resources for parents, but parents do not access those resources; therefore, the offer for parenting classes may not be well received. “They don’t want their dirty laundry getting aired at the school.” Some members of the tribal communities are protective of their privacy and some of this protective approach is due to the historical trauma associated with formal education.

In one of the focus group sessions for School Beta, a teacher explained that teachers are overwhelmed trying to help students with trauma. Another teacher believed this overwhelmed feeling is due to the lack of quality trauma training. The more they learn from these trainings, the less they feel they know about trauma because the few trainings they have received were overviews and did not include specific applicable strategies. A teacher from one of the focus groups attributed this overwhelming feeling to the change in students over time. Students have greater social and emotional needs than in previous years. According to this teacher, “I can give you a band aid, but you might need a brain surgeon.” In other words, students are facing greater

adverse experiences than in years passed and more students are exhibiting signs of trauma; therefore, they are in greater need of social and emotional support from teachers. This increase in demand for psychological support challenges teacher confidence and feelings of competence in historical trauma-informed practices. The lack of confidence and competence was coded as *uncertain* and *unqualified*. A different teacher from School Beta believed that it is not so much that the students have changed over time but what is expected of teachers. The teacher stated that social and emotional issues existent 20 and 40 years ago, but teachers are now being "pushed" to handle more of these issues as an additional responsibility of being a teacher. Therefore, t*eachers as therapists* was a code that appeared four times during School Alpha's focus group and 12 times for School Beta.

To explore further the statement that student needs for social and emotional support has increased over time, School Beta focus group members were asked if there was a specific moment or time frame where they saw this shift, or did it gradually increase over time? Two teachers indicated that it increased slowly over time. One teacher did express that they feel the school district has improved in this area due to educating the parents. Some of the parents of the current students have been students in the district and received social and emotional support from teachers, some of which were the teachers for the parents and now their children, which has established a trusting relationship. This has led to parents being more transparent and expressing the needs of their child/children. Alisic et al. (2012) expressed how teachers are instrumental in monitoring trauma and supporting healing due to the significant amount of time they directly work with the students; however, this teacher from School Beta expanded on this notion and indicated how veteran teachers who have been with the district over time are instrumental because they have established trust with the community by teaching generations of students.

Although this information from School Beta focus group members shows that the district is making some progress in this area, the statement is also in contrast to statements from other focus group members who indicated that parents have trust issues with teachers and schools and do not want their child/children to share their personal feelings and what happens at home.

With the expectation that teachers need to be therapists for students in some capacity, teachers in the focus groups stressed the importance of learning specific strategies to use in trauma-informed care. A teacher from School Beta stated that much of trauma education and social emotional education focuses on recognizing signs of trauma and being empathetic but not on strategies to use with students. This information connects with how Trauma Informed Oregon (2020) distinguishes between trauma sensitive and trauma informed. Trauma sensitive is having an awareness of ACEs and trauma while trauma informed is implementing policies and procedures to create action in addressing student exposure to ACEs and having trauma. According to the statement by this teacher, the focus of past trauma and social emotional education was recognizing signs of trauma and being empathetic which is trauma sensitivity and not trauma informed. The past teacher training sessions also did not include a history of the trauma among tribal nations and how language, culture, and traditions were lost; therefore, the trainings were not culturally competent to address specific trauma-informed strategies for American Indian students which was a concern identified in prior research by Williams (2013).

Focus group members stated that the more teachers learn about Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma through the district provided professional development, the less they feel prepared. The learning objectives of the past trauma training provided to teachers should be reviewed and revised to be more specific, applicable, and focused on the historical root causes of the trauma among the tribal communities and specific strategies to implement in the classroom

for American Indian students as well as other students who are non-Native. Another important point by this teacher was about the idea of creating a safe environment for students. The teacher informed the focus group that an emphasis on implementing trauma-informed practices in the classroom should not be focused only on those students exhibiting social and emotional issues. "There's not a lot of emphasis on how to actually manage it in the classroom so that your other 20 students are continuing to feel safe." The idea of being mindful when implementing trauma-informed practices to make sure these practices are not only for students exhibiting social and emotional issues but for all students prevents what might be seen as *paradoxical marginalization*. This manifestation of marginalization can emerge when time, effort, and resources are marshaled in order to address concerns regarding the marginalization of a specific group of students and in this effort other students not targeted for these interventions may be pushed to the periphery. This situation may be interpreted by the group pushed aside as a safety issue. They may feel that their needs, including a safe and welcoming learning environment, is not being met due to redirecting focus on addressing the needs of a historically marginalized population of students.

To inform the development of a teacher survey, the focus groups were asked what information do we want to know from teachers that will help their school district to develop and implement training/professional development in historical trauma informed practices with the goal of building teacher confidence and competent? A teacher from School Alpha stated they would like to know if teachers can tell the difference between historical and general trauma. "Historical trauma is very important because it gives us a lens to work through. It gives us a way to identify people in populations and identify patterns, but where the rubber meets the road, trauma is trauma." The meaning behind "trauma is trauma," according to the teacher, is to avoid

comparing pain and to make the point that historical trauma is no greater or less influential on the mental well-being of students than other forms of trauma. According to this teacher, educators absolutely need to analyze trauma from the historical point of view to understand the cyclical nature of trauma and to provide context for addressing current trauma. Another teacher from School Alpha indicated that teachers often do not know how to handle the trauma students bring with them to school and another teacher indicated the importance of the time when students first arrive at school because this is the time to immediately establish the feeling that school is a safe space which was not the case in the past for American Indian students.

The School Alpha superintendent addressed the question regarding what information would be helpful to collect from teachers to better design future professional development in historical trauma informed practices by sharing her vision for improving training. She would like for the school to focus on addressing the misinformation regarding life on the reservation. There is a misconception that if you live on the reservation that your poor and that you don't want and deserve certain things that other kids want. She questioned where people get this information and wants people to understand that some of the issues assumed to be particular issues only on tribal reservations are actually issues everywhere and are not exclusively tribal. For example, the trauma of poverty is not unique to tribal reservations but is a universal trauma. The superintendent wants teachers to understand and be aware of where all students are coming from and to help students with their level of confidence that they are worth something and they can do more than what they believe their destiny is. For example, many students think they can only be the profession that their parents are although that may not be there passion or interest. This is the reason why School Alpha takes students outside of the community to expose them to other experiences and opportunities that they may not think are possible for them. "They are scared to

death" according to the superintendent but it is important "for the kids to be able to see the potential in themselves." This issue was not only mentioned by the superintendent but also by other focus group members both with School Alpha and School Beta. Therefore, *student confidence* was a code used which appeared six times during the School Alpha focus group session and eight times for School Beta.

From the viewpoint of School Beta, one of the teachers believed the districts has started taking the steps of being trauma informed but "we've put our feet in the water." The teacher said it is a slow and gradual process and it is important for teachers to have a good understanding and knowledge of the history that created the trauma. Another School Beta teacher expressed the importance of having people who lived through the boarding school experience come to the school and talk about the trauma. One of the teachers from the second School Beta focus group believed it's important for teachers to know the difference between historical trauma and general trauma. They would also like to know what are the "precursors" to certain student behaviors and what is lacking in students' lives which would cause such behaviors? Another School Beta teacher would like to know teacher familiarity with the process of determining that a student is showing signs of trauma and what they should do next. One of the School Beta principals explained that teachers need to understand that in many instances there are different people that can help students such as behavior specialists and counselors.

After listening to the comments by members of the School Beta focus group, the superintendent of the district was concerned about the level of professional development the district has provided teachers in social emotional learning, ACEs, and trauma and now hearing that people continue to feel unprepared to work with students with trauma. "I found it interesting, maybe even alarming, that we've been trying to provide as much social emotional opportunities

and professional development over the last two or three years as we possibly can and then I'm hearing that the more we know, the less we're feeling that we know and are comfortable." The superintendent stated that now since it has come to light that teachers want specific training on strategies, the district is more informed to better plan future professional development. The superintendent also thought of the idea of making a list of resources for teachers or maybe only administrators to take the burden off teachers, so they don't feel like they have to be therapists/mental health professionals. The superintendent stated that the teachers are doing a tremendous job taking care of the kids and focusing on the whole child, but it is getting more difficult because they are seeing more issues and it is difficult to get enough social workers in the district and districts in the surrounding area to address the increased demand for mental health counseling. People are not willing to come to a more rural area of the state therefore creating a shortage of social workers and counselors which places the burden of mental health support for students on the teachers.

The focus groups concluded with a reflection question. Members were asked to reflect on the conversations during the focus groups and to identify what was the most important thing they heard or something that stood out to them during the discussions. For School Alpha's superintendent, it was hearing how teachers want future professional development to be focused on specific historical trauma-informed strategies/tools they can use. This does not mean just in the classroom but when students get on the bus, when they walk into the school, and when they entered the classroom. One teacher from School Alpha was more specific regarding strategies. What can teachers do in five, ten, or fifteen minutes that can make a difference with students? What stood out for the curriculum coordinator from the Intermediate School District was having a better understanding of the different levels of understanding and expertise in the history of

intergenerational trauma among the tribal communities and the different levels of knowledge staff members have about this topic. Some people may be stronger in the tribal history while others may be stronger in establishing trusting relationships with students, parents, and community members. The curriculum director stated that teachers are more of the experts than people at the ISD because they are in the school every day working directly with students, their families, and the community. Something that came to mind for the superintendent was the possibility of looking at the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS) data which is collected three times a year. SRSS is a universal screening tool used "to identify students who may be at risk for challenging, antisocial behavior" (Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative, 2020). The superintendent believed that there may be data in the screener that will be helpful for School Alpha in the planning for future teacher training in trauma-informed practices.

A teacher from School Beta and the ISD curriculum coordinator was thankful for just having the opportunity to have a conversation about historical trauma among American Indian students and the teacher training needed to build confidence and competence. According to the curriculum coordinator, this conversation doesn't happen often and when professional development is being planned, the needs of teachers is not carefully considered. The curriculum coordinator stated how professional learning regarding instructional strategies is centered around content areas and does not consider the social emotional needs of specific student populations. For the curriculum coordinator, what stood out to her was the number of times the focus group members spoke about the trusting relationships they have with the students. The ISD does not have this close relationship because they are often focused on the broader systems piece without thinking about the importance of what is needed and wanted from each student and each adult.

For one School Beta focus group teacher, it is still shocking to think that the history is so

recent. It was not that long ago since the closing of the last Indian boarding school. What stood out for another School Beta teacher was how trauma can alter the brain. It is important to realize that student behavior issues are sometimes greater than "a child having a bad day and acting out." This reminded the teacher of Ruby Payne's (citation) work regarding issues of poverty. What stood out for another teacher from School Beta was the need for strategies to recognize trauma and then strategies to use to help individual students which will require more focused training and something greater than an overview of trauma. For one of the School Beta's principals, what stood out the most was the realization that historical trauma can have a substantial effect on students and how complex historical trauma is for a specific group of people. For the superintendent, what stood out was the information that the more training the district has provided in trauma and social emotional issues, the less teachers feel prepared. Therefore, future professional development needs to focus on specific strategies and a careful examination needs to be done to determine who will provide the training. The curriculum coordinator for the ISD stated that what stood out to her was School Beta's 100% commitment to address these gaps in the type of professional development provided to teachers and how this information can better inform their continuous improvement team.

Step 3—Survey results

A nine-question survey was developed in Qualtrics and sent to every teacher at School Alpha (16 teachers) and School Beta (37 teachers). The data collected from the three focus groups informed the writing of the questions for the teacher survey. The survey was designed to be short and to limit the number of short answer questions to increase the chances teachers will complete the survey. Two of the nine questions were multiple choice with seven short answer questions. The within-case coding process began with exporting the results from Qualtrics into

Microsoft Excel and to use code charting to document preliminary codes/jottings and final codes during the first cycle of coding.

Thirty-three teachers responded to the survey out of 53 teachers total from School Alpha and School Beta for a response rate of 62%. Teachers were first asked from what source(s) have they received training or professional development in historical trauma-informed practices? They were given the choices of my school/district, from a source outside my school/district, have not received training/professional development, and other with space to write a response. Six teachers from School Alpha and eight teachers from School Beta indicated they received some training/professional development from their school/district. Four teachers from School Alpha and seven from School Beta indicated they received no training from the district and/or another source. Three teachers from School Beta identified college courses as the source for some of their knowledge in historical trauma and two teachers stated outside sources in general with no explanation as to who the outside sources were. These findings connected to the codes of *lack training or experience*, *historical trauma trained*, and *coursework and research*.

The survey asked teachers to describe how confident they felt in historical trauma-informed practices related to American Indian students and what experiences have led to their confidence or lack of. The responses from the survey identified a disconnect between the amount of training and professional development provided to teachers and their level of confidence. For School Alpha, seven out of 11 teachers stated they were trained in historical trauma; however, when asked to describe how confident they feel, 10 out of 11 were uncertain and did not feel confident in their skill level regarding trauma practices. This was also the situation with School Beta. Out of 22 teachers responding to the survey, 14 identified as having received some form of training from the school/district or an outside source such as taking a college/university course.

One teacher believed their life experiences is what has contributed to their highly confident feeling. However, 12 of the 22 teachers indicated they do not feel confident and two of the 10 who do feel confident felt they do need and would welcome more training in historical trauma-informed practices. Therefore, the training teachers received at both School Alpha and School Beta does not mean that teachers feel confident. This brought up the question as to why?

Teacher not seeing the relevance in the content of the training they received was another reason why teachers did not feel confident. *Relevance* was coded when teachers indicated that they received training, but it was not related to a specific population such as American Indian students, connected specifically to historical trauma of American Indian students and their families, and/or did not provide specific strategies unique to dealing with historical trauma. A School Beta teacher stated in the survey that they did participate in training, but it was limited and "nothing was geared to this particular population," referring specifically to American Indian students. When asked the question what experiences have contributed to your level of confidence, a teacher who stated they do not feel confident at all attributed this lack of confidence to having "general trauma training" and nothing specific to historical trauma of American Indian populations.

Some teachers who stated they are confident or somewhat confident in historical trauma-informed practices indicated experience as the reason and not formal training or professional development; therefore, *experience* was added as a code to the code book. Of the 11 teachers who completed the survey from School Alpha, five (46%) identified personal experience either working with students who have experienced trauma or have experienced trauma themselves. For School Beta, 32% of teachers who responded to this question indicated their experience in the classroom or as members of the tribal community are responsible for their higher confidence

in historical trauma-informed practices. One teacher from School Alpha and zero from School Beta identified training through the school/district as the reason for their confidence. The closest indicator to training or professional development was college coursework. Three teachers, one from School Alpha and two from School Beta, identified college courses taken as the reason for their higher level of confidence.

After asking teachers about their perceptions of confidence, the survey explored teacher perceptions of competence in historical trauma-informed practices and what contributed to their feelings of competence. For teachers who felt competent, their responses were coded as *qualified*. Teachers who did not feel competent had their responses coded as *unqualified*. For School Alpha eight teachers did not feel competent and one teacher stated they feel "somewhat competent" which was coded as *qualified* although the word "somewhat" indicated they are unsure of their competency. Two additional teachers responded to the question; however, their responses did not indicate if they felt *qualified* or *unqualified*. Four of the eight teachers identified limited experience as a leading factor in their lack of competence and two teachers stated the lack of training and knowledge as the reason for lacking competence. One teacher who lives on a reservation and is married to a member of the Native community knows "very little about this subject," referring to historical trauma associated with attempted assimilation of Native peoples through the boarding school movement. Teacher responses that indicated they had limited or no experience or training in historical trauma-informed practices were coded as *lack of training or experience*.

For School Beta, more teachers felt competent in historical trauma-informed practices than teachers from School Alpha. Eight School Beta teachers felt competent with four of the eight stating their feelings of competence was associated with their years of experience as a

teacher and the relationships they have established with American Indian students and members of the community. Two teachers indicated their feelings of competence was associated with attending training with one teacher's higher competence level due to being a member of the tribal community.

Nine out of 22 teachers who responded from School Beta stated they did not feel competent in historical trauma-informed practices regarding American Indian students; therefore, their responses were coded as *unqualified*. Three teachers did not clearly state they were confident or not but felt they had a general knowledge of trauma either through training or experience. These responses were coded as *overview*. One teacher explained they felt competent but was uncertain in their answer due to the level of training they received. They felt "fairly competent but more training would help as the training has been geared to the general populations and not just Native Americans." A teacher from School Alpha also indicated a similar level of training stating, "I have had general trauma training" and followed up this statement with "I know very little about this subject." Another teacher from School Beta stated that "the trauma-informed practice that we have had has only increased my awareness." This is a significant statement because according to Trauma Informed Oregon (2020), "awareness" is associated with being trauma-sensitive which means they have not implemented policies, procedures, and practices to address trauma. Trauma Informed Oregon (2020) believed that all organizations, including schools/districts, should be trauma-informed not just trauma-sensitive. Organizations that are trauma-informed realize the impact of trauma, understand the road to recovery, can identify the signs of trauma, and respond through policies, procedures, and practices that help with recovery and prevent re-traumatization (The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014, p. 9).

The survey asked teachers what deters or undermines their feelings of confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices. For both School Alpha and School Beta, the primary deterrents were a lack of experience, knowledge, and training in the historical trauma of American Indian communities and historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students. Between School Alpha and School Beta, 35 teacher responses out of a total of 42 for the two questions about deterrents that undermine their feelings of confidence and competence referred to a lack of experience and training and how they do not feel qualified to work with students with historical trauma. This is 83% of teachers who feel a lack of confidence and competence in their qualifications in historical trauma-informed practices.

The final question on the survey asked teachers about kinds of knowledge and new understandings that would improve their confidence and competence. Eighty-two percent of teachers from School Alpha identified wanting additional training specifically in historical trauma and trauma-informed practices with three teachers specifically looking for training that is applicable to the trauma among Indigenous peoples. One teacher stated they wanted training in the "tribal history to understand the local roots" of the trauma.

Seventeen teachers from School Beta responded to the survey question of which 13 teachers indicated they wanted additional training in historical trauma and trauma-informed practices. Some teachers provided information on specifically what they expected from additional training. One teacher stated, "I would like to understand the history behind the trauma and also receive training on best practices to deal with the issues associated with the trauma." Another teacher requested a "systematic training" referring to a training over an extended period of time with multiple sessions and not the "one-and-done training" like past teacher trainings. The one-time and infrequent trainings was a criticism during the focus groups and individual

teacher interviews. One teacher from School Beta wanted a history lesson so they had the "basic understandings of the history and how to approach these topics with students." To understand this history, a School Beta teacher suggested "more time with the community" referring to the idea of engaging with the tribal community to provide this history to teachers. These requests from teachers for future training in the history and origins of trauma among the American Indian communities was coded as *training wanted* and *history, language, culture.*

Step 4—Teacher interview results

The final phase of data collection was individual teacher interviews. All teachers from School Alpha and School Beta were sent an invitation through email to participate in an interview providing teachers the opportunity to expand on their answers to questions from the teacher survey. Thirteen teachers responding to the email with 11 agreeing to participate in an interview. Five teachers from School Alpha and six teachers from School Beta were interviewed with eight of the interviews conducted and recorded using Zoom and three interviews conducted over the telephone which were not recorded. Thirteen questions were asked of all teachers with follow-up questions asked when there was a need for clarification or elaboration.

Thirty-one first-cycle codes were identified during all phases of data collection. Twenty-nine of these codes were used during the coding of teacher interviews for School Alpha and all 31 codes were used to code the data collected from School Beta teachers. The most frequent codes from the School Alpha teacher interviews were *overview*, *infrequent*, *lack training or experience*, *community engagement*, *teacher collaboration*, and *history, language, culture*. The most frequent codes from School Beta teacher interviews were *mental health services*, *lack training or experience*, *trusting relationships*, *community engagement*, *teacher collaboration*, and *history, language, culture*. The most frequent codes that were common between School

Alpha and School Beta were *lack training or experience*, *community engagement*, *teacher collaboration*, and *history, language, culture*.

The first interview question explored why teachers indicated on the survey that they are not confident in trauma informed practices for American Indian students although they have received some training/professional development from their school district. Interviews with School Alpha teachers discovered that teachers did receive some training in the past, but it was an overview of trauma and did not include a detailed history of the trauma among the Native communities and specific strategies for addressing trauma among American Indian students. In the words of one teacher, they received the "table of contents" and they received the "table of contents" multiple times. For School Alpha, some of that training was as basic as watching the documentary *Paper Tigers* multiple times. The documentary chronicled the life of six students with trauma over the course of a school year. Teachers also expressed that training was "one-off's" meaning they were conducted only once or infrequently with large spans of time between trainings. One teacher expressed concern that for School Alpha being a Native American school, they feel that teachers are not receiving enough training in Native history and historical trauma including strategies to use with students. Another teacher from School Alpha explained how the topic of historical trauma is a very sensitive issue among the Native and non-Native communities and is a reason why there has been limited conversations around the topic. According to the teacher, it is difficult to get families involved in their child's education because of the lack of trust in schools. This mistrust is due to associating current schools with the Indian boarding school movement. One teacher from School Alpha believed they understand trauma but does not understand how trauma "trickles down" from generation to generation and what teachers are supposed to do to address this type of trauma.

The quality and format of past training is another reason why teachers don't feel confident and competent although they have received some form of trauma training. A teacher from School Alpha explained that a trauma training was conducted two years ago by their school psychologist and another training was conducted by a regional presenter from the Intermediate School District (ISD), but it was not a workshop where teachers were interactive in the learning process. It was more of a presentation in which one teacher described how they "all sat and endured."

The lack of practical application was another reason teachers stated as to why they do not feel confident and competent after receiving past trauma training. According to a School Alpha teacher, the trainings did not provide information or strategies for teachers to use with students. The teacher explained that if they don't know what to do, there is the possibility they may cause more harm which is not only unsafe for the students but also a potential liability for teachers.

Teachers interviewed from School Beta had similar thoughts as to why teachers don't feel confident and competent although they received some training. One of the similarities was how past training was more of a general overview of trauma and did not include specific strategies for identifying trauma and strategies for helping students with trauma. Four out of the six School Beta teachers interviewed mentioned that the training they received was an overview and did not specifically focus on historical trauma. One teacher described the training they received as the "1,000-foot view of things" with no interaction with the workshop participants. The training was mostly lecture and showed videos. "We just sat there and kind of listened and no time where we provided with steps on how to deal with anything." This lecture format led to teachers being disengaged with the training. The same teacher explained another training opportunity provided by the ISD where teachers were able to pick from a variety of workshops

with one choice focusing on student trauma. The teacher chose to attend the trauma training but due to the conference format where teachers had a choice of sessions, not all teachers chose the trauma training session. Other teachers who attended the training stated it was an overview of trauma with a focus on brain trauma and not on historical trauma among Native communities. This concerned a teacher since "over half of the student population is Native."

Not all the teachers interviewed believed past training provided by the school districts was unhelpful. Two teachers from School Beta believed the training they received was "fantastic", "an excellent introduction" and "really impactful." For one of the teachers, it helped them to become more familiar with trauma terminology and research conducted in this area. For the other teacher, it was encouraging that everyone in the district, including K-12 teaching staff, support staff, and bus drivers participated in the training which was conducted by community members. The overall response to the training was positive because people saw it was applicable and therefore found value in the information provided. However, this statement conflicts with the other four School Beta teachers who were interviewed. These teachers did not have positive view of past trainings.

Although two School Beta teachers enjoyed the training they participated in, they did have concerns regarding the infrequency of the training. For example, one teacher has taught in the district for seven years and has attended one trauma training. There were explanations given as to why there have been few training opportunities. A limited capacity to provide the training was one explanation. Schools get consumed in running the daily operations which includes providing mandated professional development. This limits the capacity of schools to provide training in historical trauma although there is a need and demand for such training.

Another concern from a teacher was who should conduct trainings in trauma? One of the

past sessions offered to teachers was led by a group of different agencies and community leaders. Although engaging community resources is important and valuable, the teacher was concerned about their lack of knowledge regarding how a school is run. The teacher kept asking herself, "What does this person know about actually running a classroom?" The training did not take the content to the next level and show teachers how to implement this knowledge using various strategies with students. "It just wasn't really that applicable."

Teachers were asked if there were any new or newer teachers that were not employed at the time trauma training was offered either by their school district or the Intermediate School District (ISD). For School Alpha, teacher turnover goes in waves and lately there has been little teacher turnover. One teacher stated that there are two teachers who missed the last trauma training from the district and ISD. Although turnover at School Alpha has been low, a teacher did recommend that a training in trauma-informed practices be offered at least once a year. For School Beta, five of the six teachers interviewed agreed that there are newer teachers who missed the last trauma training provided to the staff. However, the number of teachers not trained is not exactly know and each teacher interviewed had a slightly different estimated number. The number ranged from four at the high school level and six at the elementary level to teachers saying three to four people overall have not been trained.

Twenty-two times during the focus group discussions and 26 times from surveys, teacher experience, either in the classroom or as a member of a tribal community, was identified as an influence on teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices. Therefore, during the interviews, teachers were asked if their confidence and feeling of competence stems from experience rather than formal training. Two of School Alpha teachers said yes, their experience has better prepared them than formal training with one teacher saying

training better prepared them and another teacher believed it was a combination of both. One of the School Alpha teachers explained that they rely more on personal experience rather than training because trauma training is only offered every two or three years which is not enough. They believed that training should occur two times a year at minimum. The School Alpha teacher who said their confidence and feeling of competence comes from both their experience and training explained how the school district has done something with trauma every year although some teachers stated the district has not. The teacher explained how they feel different than other teachers because of the variety of responsibilities they have had in the school district which has provided them a more comprehensive view of how the district has approached social and emotional issues including trauma-informed practices.

All six School Beta teachers interviewed agreed that their experience as a teacher and their life experiences better prepared them. One of the School Alpha teachers stated that their experience relationship building with students was how they were able to build their knowledge of student trauma and they have become good at dealing with acute student situations. When asked why acute situations and not chronic, the teacher stated, “Cause I’m a terrible therapist.” The teacher went on further to say, “that’s one of those hidden curriculum kind of things that teachers will have to go through.” When asked if they or others with substantial experience have been asked to conduct a training for teachers less experienced, the teacher said they have not been asked and would not feel comfortable conducting such a training. His experience is in acute not chronic issues such as historical trauma. “I do not feel I am qualified or well trained.” One of the suggestions the teacher made to correct this issue is to take a “longitudinal view.” Instead of handling an issue immediately and moving on, it is important to reflect on the situation to determine what worked, what didn’t work and determine how working with a student about an

issue can be approached in an improved way.

According to a teacher from School Beta, “the majority of staff somehow has a relationship with the tribe, even on a personal level.” This includes being a member of one of the tribal nations. In addition, the majority of students at both School Alpha and School Beta are American Indian; therefore, teachers indicating experience has more of an influence on their perceived confidence and competence would make sense since they work with a majority American Indian student population on a daily basis. The personal connections make teachers more involved and more interested in learning the history of their students and would explain why many teachers have requested more trainings centered on local tribal history. A teacher from School Beta believed that teachers may be able to recognize trauma but do not connect history as the root cause of the trauma.

The small size of the schools also explains why experience has more impact on teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices. According to a School Beta teacher, teachers get to work with students over a span of years. Working with the same students over multiple grades allows teachers to understand student challenges better and in the case of some teachers, they have taught other family members such as older siblings and parents. However, this perspective changes when there is a new student to the area. According to a School Beta teacher, “I am not confident about a situation with a brand-new kid who I know nothing about.” The teacher is confident they can handle situations with students once they know more about the student but less confident in the beginning when they know little about a student.

A School Beta teacher was not surprised that many teachers believed their experiences improved their confidence and competence over formal training since there has only been one

training that she can remember in the past seven years. “You’re more confident with something the more you do something.” Therefore, if there has been a lack of training, then confidence would be low. The training they participated in included videos to help with recognizing trauma, but it focused on extrovert behavior. What about the students who are quiet and don’t exhibit troubling behavior? By working with students every day and establishing trusting relationships, teachers get to know each individual student which allows teachers to recognize small behaviors and actions that cannot be identified or expressed through training.

Teachers from School Alpha and School Beta both agreed that understanding the history that has led to trauma among American Indian students is important. The next question was who should teach this history to teachers? The teachers from School Alpha had a variety of answers including elders, historians from the tribes, someone from the local college, the school founder, and someone from the local historical society. A teacher suggested bringing in someone from outside the school district because they have done some historical training in the past from a member of the staff and the perspective of someone outside the district would be helpful. The answer from School Beta teachers were similar but also added new ideas. The teachers recommended having someone local who has strong knowledge of the history of the tribes and the boarding school movement. Suggestions included professors at the local college, a historian and tribal member from one of the local charter schools, a panel of tribal members from both local tribes, the tribal councils, elders from the tribes sharing their personal stories, and one teacher suggested a “true Native historian.” One of the School Beta teachers stated in the interview that the difficulty lies with who can present and teach well? There are locals who know the history of Native trauma but may not have the presentation and teaching skills to conduct a training. This connects to a statement by a teacher who expressed concerns that presenters from

community organizations that have conducted trainings in the past at the school districts were unfamiliar with classroom practices and pedagogy.

To confirm and expand on the answers given by many of the teachers in response to the first interview question regarding the discrepancy between training provided and the lack of teacher confidence and competence, teachers were asked if training should include strategies for working with students and families and if so, do those strategies differ when working with students verses family members? Four teachers from School Alpha and six from School Beta agreed that future trauma training should include specific strategies for working with students and families. One teacher from School Beta stated that the precursor strategy should be identifying students with trauma then following up with strategies to help students with trauma. As for the second part of the question which asked if those strategies differ between working with students and working with parents/families, the thoughts were mixed. Three teachers from School Alpha and School Beta believe they do differ and that you would address students differently than working with adults. One teacher gave an example of a weekly email they send to parents with grade reports and updates on their child and they have been receiving responses "which is something that is not normal" because many parents have an "adversarial relationship" with the school system. The foundation of this adversarial relationship is the history of boarding schools in Michigan and the association that school "was not a place of fun and safety. It was a scary place." Another teacher stated believed there are many differences in strategies used with students verses those used with parents. They gave an example of homework. As a teacher, you can use strategies to help motivate students to complete their homework however homework in not a priority in the Native communities. There is a belief by parents/families that school business should be done in school and when you return home you focus on the responsibilities at

home such as taking care of younger siblings. Three teachers from School Alpha and School Beta where unsure if the strategies differed and no teachers from either school indicated that there is no difference.

Teachers were asked if trauma-informed practices differ between general trauma and historical trauma? The basis for asking this question came from the statement by a teacher during the School Alpha focus group. The teacher made the comment that "trauma is trauma" when the group discussed what is historical trauma and how does that manifest into current trauma among American Indian students. Teacher responses were mixed which indicated the complexity of the topic. Two teachers from School Alpha and three teachers from School Beta stated they believe there is a difference between general trauma and historical trauma. However, there were two teachers that were unsure and others who believed the two types of trauma are intertwined and therefore difficult to distinguish a difference. A School Alpha teacher stated that they view general trauma as recent. However, they are unsure as to what historical trauma means and what is considered historical and how does it "trickled down" from one generation to another. The teacher believed there is a difference between historical trauma and general trauma, but they are unsure if a teacher should work with students differently. This relates to a statement from another School Alpha teacher who believed practices differ on a case-by-case basis. "Each student is so different that some of our students it is coming from historical stuff" and for other students their trauma may be due to something that happened the night before. A teacher from School Beta believed there is a vast difference between general trauma and historical trauma therefore the strategies used with students would be different. "An individual that might have the trauma of abandonment might not have the same emotional scarring or emotional change and thoughts that somebody who has PTSD." Another teacher from School Beta stated that to get to the root cause

of trauma you must "step back generations to identify why might this be happening." You look at what the parents and the grandparents have gone through to understand its impact on the current generation. One teacher explained that adverse experiences effects people differently and for those who have not established a strong foundation of addressing the trauma will have more difficulty than those who have. One teacher from School Beta believed that school districts are more comfortable dealing with general trauma than historical trauma because it does not narrowly focus on discriminatory actions against a specific group of people. "When you get into the historical trauma, I think it starts to get a little bit more personal and so there's a sensitivity that you want to have there." The teacher was disappointed to hear that some people believe that there is no difference between general and historical trauma. "We have to acknowledge that there's a difference."

The references by teachers that public school has historically been associated as an unsafe place led to a follow-up question. Teachers were asked if they feel that students and their families continue to have a mistrust of the school system or is the level of trust improving? A School Beta teacher believed there is still a mistrust of the public school system which is what led to the formation of School Alpha, a charter school located on a tribal reservation specifically aimed at better serving the Native student population. Many of the students were originally from School Beta and transferred to School Alpha upon its opening. Although there is this mistrust, the teacher believed School Beta has made improvements which has increased the level trust.

Teacher collaboration to provide internal support in the absence of teacher training was discussed during the School Alpha and School Beta focus groups; therefore, this topic was explored further during teacher interviews. Teachers were asked if teacher on staff who are tribal community members help non-Native staff to understand the history of the tribal nations and the

trauma associated with the boarding schools which has transferred across generation. Teacher collaboration was coded 14 times for School Alpha teacher interviews and 20 times for School Beta. Some of the teachers interpreted the question as asking if tribal staff members have provided a formal training while other teachers interpreted the question as tribal staff members helping non-Native staff through less formal means such as conversations and collaborations. Three teachers from School Alpha said that a tribal member on staff has provided information to the staff but the knowledge was not provided in a structured and formal workshop format. One School Alpha teacher stated that the culture teacher attempted to pass on this history through a traditional talking circle, but it came across as a storytelling circle and not as a lesson in the history of the local tribal nations and the challenges they have faced.

For School Beta, five teachers indicated that tribal staff members do help non-Native staff to understand tribal history and the trauma associated with colonization and assimilation through the boarding schools. This was done more on an individual basis and not through a formal training session. A School Beta teacher said that the responsibility for these conversations has fallen on tribal staff members although they believe it is not their responsibility. The teacher believed that non-Native teachers need to learn on their own initiative and do research to learn about historical trauma among Native communities. Another teacher stated they have learned a substantial amount of information from other teachers about certain family histories which has been greatly helpful in determining how to address issues with specific students. However, one challenge to this source of information has been teacher turnover and the loss of institutional knowledge. The School Alpha teacher who has educated staff on local tribal history retired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year and the Native American culture and language teacher for School Beta moved out of state to pursue other interests.

To expand the inquiry into members of the tribal community leading training opportunities for teachers, the next question asked teachers if tribal community members from outside the school been given the opportunity to plan/develop a training in historical trauma. Two teachers from School Alpha said yes, two said no, and one teacher did not know. One tribal member who did plan a training was a staff member and another tribal community member provided some training, but some time has passed since the training therefore some of the information may have been forgotten and new teachers were not employed at the time of the training. All six teachers interviewed from School Beta indicated that no tribal community member has planned or conducted a historical trauma training. As one School Beta teacher said, "They haven't been given the opportunity" and another teacher stated, "I don't know if that kind of outreach has ever been made." One teacher from School Beta said they were very disappointed that tribal community members and tribal staff members have not been provided the opportunity to plan, develop, and implement historical trauma training although they are highly educated and knowledgeable in the history. Tribal members have come to School Beta for a presentation or an activity but not to conduct a historical trauma training. However, a teacher did indicate that the current administration is the most open administration they have seen and is optimistic that more community involvement will occur especially with more tribal community members represented on the school board.

Capacity and capability was a code that had a significant frequency during the first three steps of data collection – 15 times for School Alpha and 62 times for School Beta. Understanding the capacity and capability of teachers to focus on social and emotional support in addition to the responsibility they have for academics is important. According to Crosby (2015), teachers often do not know how to balance their traditional classroom responsibilities and needs

of students who may experience adverse conditions or have trauma due to those situations. Ko et al. (2008) stated that school have to determine how to balance their mission and responsibility of educating students while also helping students with trauma. Therefore, teachers were asked how they know when a student's issues are beyond their capacity as a teacher and such circumstances warrant the need for a mental health professional? One teacher from School Alpha stated they had never thought about this because they rely on their years of experience to know when someone needs professional therapy or treatment. The teacher explained further that referring a student for therapy can be challenging because there are students whose parent(s) are teaching them to not trust authority, either in school or outside of school such as medical professionals. However, teachers did say there is slowly more trust between the school and the students, and their families as more tribal members are in positions of leadership with higher degrees of education as a result of opportunities to access affordable college education for people with American Indian heritage.

Another School Alpha teacher stated that due to the small staff, teachers have the flexibility and capacity to hold team meetings where they can discuss student issues and decide as a team what their capacity and capabilities are in response to student issues. For one School Alpha teacher, the dividing line is safety. If there is any concern for a child's safety, someone such as the Behavior Intervention Specialist or administration is consulted. However, there have been times when the teacher feels the situation is more serious and needs to be addressed in a more serious way than what administration feels should be done. The major concern this teacher had is their lack of confidence for identifying when a situation is serious enough to talk to administration. Another teacher from School Alpha feels they are often informed to contact CPS or the Behavior Intervention Specialist but have never been told who specifically to contact and

when. The concern of this teacher is that some situations in the past were not taken serious by administration. “What is considered an important enough trauma for administration?” The teacher believed there needs to be clearer direction from administration as to how to deal with student issues stemming from traumatic or adverse experiences. Another teacher from School Alpha explained that since teachers have a lack of trauma training, they get frustrated and send the students to the office frequently. They do not want to deal with the behavior according to a School Alpha teacher.

To further examine the topic of when a teacher knows a student social and emotional issue is beyond their capacity, a follow-up question was asked inquiring about new teachers verses tenured teachers. Do the newer teachers have more difficulties identifying their limits when supporting the social and emotional needs of students? How do they know when something is beyond their capacity as a teacher? The teacher believed some newer teachers have a difficult time knowing where the dividing line is but also believed they do not know what those limits are with administration. Sometimes administration responds to the teacher’s frustrations with “You need to figure something out. You can’t keep sending them to the office.” This places the responsibility of making trauma-informed decisions on the teacher who may not feel confident and competent to make such decisions. According to teachers at both School Alpha and School Beta, they have not been trained in what to do and don’t know when it is appropriate to send them out of class to another professional. A School Beta teacher believed it differs when you know an issue is beyond your capacity as a teacher depending on the situation. The difference is the point when you have reached an impasse in reaching the student and the point of impasse is different with each student. Oner teacher stated that you have to be humble enough to know when a situation is beyond your training and expertise.

Two teachers from School Beta mentioned that they often know when something is more serious with students through writing assignments. Students may divulge something that is serious enough to pass on to administration or a mental health professional. The teachers have created a trusting relationship with the students so much in fact that they feel comfortable sharing such personal information. The importance of this trusting relationship was discussed by another School Beta teacher who said they will refer students to the counselor, but the issue is the counselor does not have the close relationship with students like the teachers have. This teacher statement aligns to the research of Asay and Lambert (1999) who explained how a caring and therapeutic relationship has twice the positive effect on children verses clinical therapeutic techniques for trauma (Bath, 2008).

For one School Beta teacher, they believed knowing the point of when a student issue needs to be addressed by administration or a mental health professional is easy as a mandated reporter. When a situation becomes a safety issue for the student, it is out of the capacity and capability of the teacher. For this teacher, the "red flags" are apparent. However, they are apparent because of the years of experience the teacher has. How apparent are situations for teachers who do not have the level of experience? Another teacher from School Beta stated that if a student comes to them multiple times about the same issue, they will recommend they talk to a professional counselor. In the case of School Beta, they have a guidance counselor and a contracted social worker. The issue however is that the social worker only serves 7-12 while the principal serves the K-6 students. "I just want to make sure that they're also talking to the person who's actually trained." In addition, the teacher believes that the more eyes the better in helping the students. "I want to know more about how to recognize which type of behaviors that appear to be ADHD that really are historical trauma linked."

To further explore identifying what mental health services and options are available, either internally within the district or externally, teachers were asked if the tribal communities and the community at large have mental health services that can help students if needed. Two teachers from School Alpha said the services are limited and there are also the complications regarding the lack of trust of medical services which is often taught to the kids by their families. Some of this mistrust is due to the historical atrocities cause by people in authority positions but according to another teacher, part of the issue is a negative stigma of mental health issues. School officials have even drove students across the street to the health center, but students and families do not want the mental health services. They are afraid that they may see or run into someone they know since it is a small community therefore the word about them seeking mental health services may spread among the community.

Although one of the School Alpha teachers stated the mental health services among the tribes and the general community are limited for students, two School Alpha teachers said there are services available. However, one teacher stated that the demand is so great for their services that they are very full or have limited capacity. This contradicts the information from another teacher that there is a stigma against mental health services and students don't want to seek help. The teacher that stated there are plenty of services also indicated that there are services within the school, but the social worker is part-time which limits the capacity to address the increased demand. The part-time status makes it difficult for the social worker to establish trusting relationships with the students. In addition, the social worker's capacity is limited because she is servicing multiple schools as the social worker for the ISD.

School Beta mentioned there is an ISD provided school counselor who is in the school five days a week, but their main responsibility is more managing transcripts and not addressing

mental health issues with students. The School Beta teacher also identified the local medical center as another resource for mental health services. Another teacher from School Beta indicated that the tribal community has psychologists, but they also connect with other services in the larger area. Another teacher agreed with the two teachers from School Alpha that services are available for children but the demand for mental health services is high. The need for it is so great that I don't know if it always gets met." The local tribe has a behavioral health organization who received referrals from the schools frequently. One teacher stated that the mental health services of one of the tribes is "phenomenal" but was unsure about the other local tribe. One teacher commented that there were more services for women than men and if someone is not a member of the tribe, they were in "dire straits" because there are little mental health services in the community for non-tribal students which connects to paradoxical marginalization.

Three teachers from the teacher survey indicated that their feeling of confidence and competence partially comes from taking college coursework. Although this was a small number of teachers, the one-on-one interviews provided an opportunity to dive deeper into this idea for training. Teachers were asked if they thought a college course in historical trauma and the history of the tribes in the area would improve confidence and competence. Three teachers from School Alpha did not think it was a good idea. One teacher from School Alpha said that some of the newer teachers indicated that the training they received from the district was in their college coursework in preparation for becoming a teacher. Another teacher said that there is no time for teachers to participate in college courses and recommended training through regularly scheduled professional development days. One teacher said it may help but it is difficult to connect coursework content to practice. A School Beta teacher said yes and no to college coursework. The teacher stated college coursework would be helpful because the local college is a community

college managed by a tribal nation therefore the keynote classes are Native American history courses which goes in depth into Native history, traditions, and culture. However, the teacher doesn't feel that many teachers would take a college course. Another School Beta teacher felt college coursework would help if courses explored the roots of trauma within the Native communities. Another teacher thinks it would help if it was taught "competently" from someone who knows the Native history well. It would be better than the "one-and-done" trainings offered by their school district. A teacher stated that college coursework would be more impactful if teachers took the course(s) after having some classroom experience. The teacher also suggested a team of teachers take a course and bring the knowledge back to the district and train fellow teachers.

The last two questions of the teacher interviews asked teachers about recommendations they have for a formal historical trauma training and who should conduct such a training? Two teachers from School Alpha recommended a training that is systematic and ongoing involving community stakeholders. Community stakeholders would bring in valuable knowledge regarding the history of colonization and assimilation and its traumatic effect on the language, culture, and traditions of the tribal communities. These teachers believed this knowledge would bring more urgency to the problem of historical trauma and would help districts to rethink and re-prioritize teacher training in historical trauma-informed practices. Currently such training continues to be pushed aside to make room for other operational and mandated school priorities. side due. According to one of the School Alpha teachers, the district is reactionary and is focused "problem to problem."

A teacher recommended that training should make sure that people understand the root causes of the trauma from the boarding schools and how trauma can pass from generation to

generation and the harmful impact it's had on the tribes. Teaching specific trauma-informed strategies to use with students instead of an overview or introduction to trauma was also recommended. Another recommendation was interactive trainings that engage teachers in the planning and learning process. This supports the research of Crosby, Howell, and Thomas (2018) who indicated that teachers believe school staff should have input on administrative decisions to develop a trauma-informed school climate including providing input on policies and procedures. The same teacher also suggested teachers cross training other teachers. This would address teacher turnover issues and the loss of institutional knowledge as teachers move on to other opportunities.

One of the community partners suggested by a teacher was the local Boys and Girls club. They work with the students after school and know them well. A teacher from School Beta stressed the importance of finding someone which is not only knowledgeable but a good presenter such as a local tribal member who is an educator at one of the local charter schools, a professor at the nearest college and other people in the history department at the college. Another teacher suggested a team or panel of people to conduct the training such as a medical expert, a social worker, and elders from the two local tribes.

Second-Cycle Coding Findings

Thirty-one codes were identified during first-cycle coding. To assist with second-cycle coding and the identification of themes, a visual representation of the coding process was developed which provided details of the process from data collection to code assembly, pattern coding for the identification of categories, and the emergence of themes (see Appendix E). For second-cycle coding, pattern coding was used. Pattern coding is taking the initial summary segments of data from first-cycle coding and grouping similar codes resulting in the

identification of categories and emerging themes.

Code Assembly

Code assembly was used to group similar first-cycle codes. Three groups of codes were identified. The first group of codes addressed school district relationships with the tribal communities and the community at large. The second grouping, which had the largest group of codes, addressed School Alpha and School Beta's expectations of teachers and how they were similar or different to teacher perceived expectations of their responsibilities. This group focused on teacher perceptions of how their level of experience and the training they received influenced their feeling of confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices. The third code assembly were codes that addressed district commitment to preparing teachers to be confident and competent in historical trauma-informed practices. Examination of the codes for code assembly into three groups determined that a code did not have to be exclusively in one group. Some codes were relevant for two or all three groups. *Safety*, *trusting relationships*, *community engagement*, *capacity and capability*, and *history, language, culture* were codes that were universal and identified for all three code assembly groups. These codes were color coded to show their association with all three groups.

Categories and Themes

Each code assembly group was examined for what Saldaña (2016) referred to as common "scripts." Coded passages from artifacts, focus groups, the teacher survey, and teacher interviews were re-examined to identify similarities among the codes, especially for first-cycle codes that have multiple meanings. For example, the first-cycle code *safety* appears in all three code assemblies; however, *safety* has multiple meanings and does not refer to the safety of only one group. In one aspect, *safety* refers to the feelings and concerns some students and families have

towards schools which is associated with historical attempts of assimilating children during the boarding school movement. *Safety* also refers to the perceptions of teachers and their level of confidence and competence working with students who have trauma. Some teachers identified they do not feel safe to provide social and emotional support to students with trauma because they are not properly trained to do so or lack experience working with students with ACEs and/or trauma. Teachers were concerned that they may say or do something that may traumatize or re-traumatize students therefore creating an unsafe environment for students.

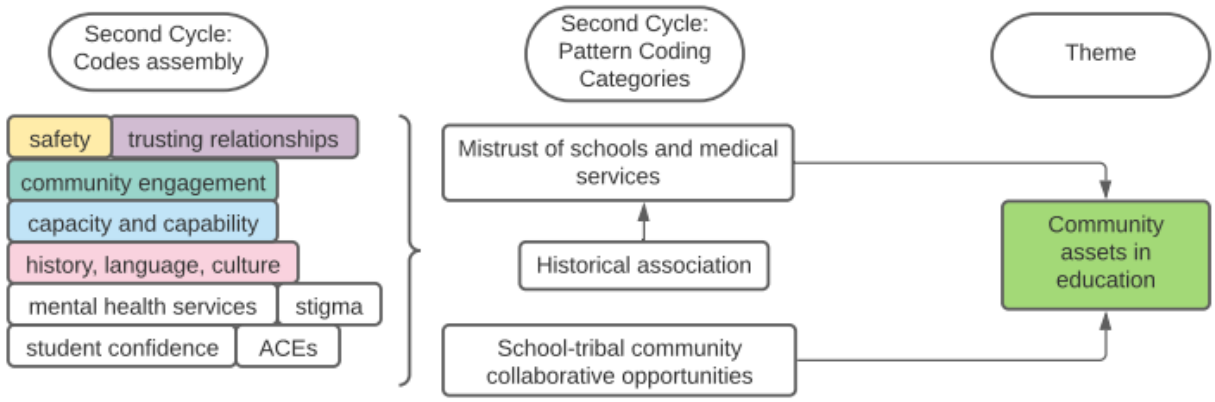
First-cycle codes for each code group with similar "scripts" were consolidated into categories or what Saldaña (2006) also referred to as "meta codes." Categories and subcategories were grouped using the taxonomy approach (Saldaña, 2006). Through taxonomy, categories and subcategories are grouped without inferring a hierarchy. No category or subcategory is superordinate or subordinate to another.

Two categories/meta codes emerged for the first code grouping related to school and community relations. The first was *mistrust of school and medical services* and the second category was *school-tribal community collaborative opportunities*. The *mistrust of school and medical services* included the subcategory of *historical association* referring to how members of tribal communities' associate school with an unsafe place due to the history of schools used as a vehicle for assimilation and the destruction of Native history, language, culture, and traditions. It was this history that was the root cause for the mistrust tribal communities currently have in schools as well as the mistrust in health services, which includes mental health services, and why some tribal family members, as indicated in teacher interviews, inform their children to not tell teachers and school administrators about their private thoughts/feelings, concerns, and family business. These two categories led to the theme of *community assets in education*. *Community*

assets in education refers to how tribal community members and resources in collaboration with school resources can establish a strong foundation for trauma-informed schools that address the historical trauma among American Indian students and can help heal the fractured relationship due to history between schools and the tribal communities. The sequencing from code assembly to theme for codes associated with school and community relations are detailed in Figure 9.

Figure 9

School and Community Relations Codes to Theme Sequence



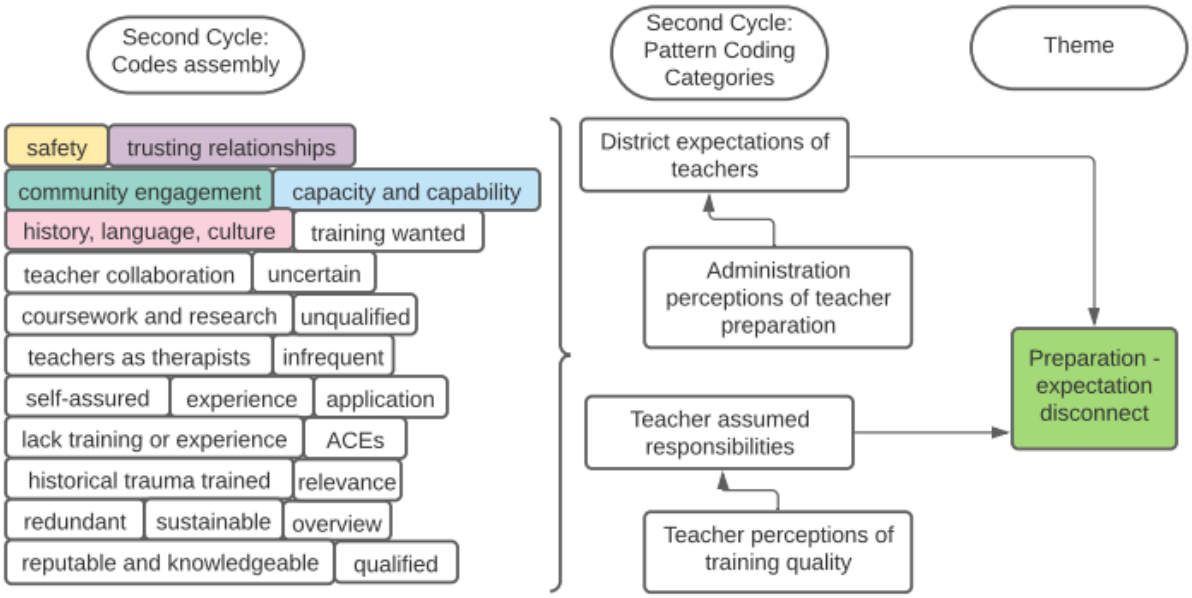
Note: The shaded codes are codes represented in all three code assembly groups. The mistrust of school and medical services category contains the subcategory of historical association which is the root cause of tribal community mistrust in schools.

Two categories emerged from the first-cycle code grouping associated with teacher preparation and experience in historical trauma-informed practices. Each category had a subcategory which explained an important aspect of the category. The first category in the teacher preparation and experience grouping was *district expectations of teachers* with the subcategory *administration perceptions of teacher preparation.* District expectations of teachers are directly influenced by administration's perceptions that teachers have participated in past

trainings in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma either through the school districts or through the Intermediate School District (ISD). One of those expectations according to teachers is to serve as a pseudo counselor and therapist for students although teachers do not feel confident and competent with this responsibility. Teachers assume the responsibility because of their trusting relationship with students and their passion for helping students which leads to the second category of t*eacher assumed responsibility. Teacher perceptions of training quality* is a subcategory and indicates the concerns teachers have regarding the training they received. Those concerns include the generality of trainings, the lack of implementable strategies, not teaching the history of the boarding schools which has led to intergenerational trauma, the infrequently of when training is being offered, and the redundancy of training opportunities. Analyzing the two categories led to the theme of *preparation-expectation disconnect*. The research discovered there was a disconnect between teacher and administration perceptions regarding the quality and frequency of trauma training and how prepared teachers are to address ACEs and trauma among students. The sequencing from code assembly to theme related to teacher preparation and expectations are detailed in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Preparation-Expectation Disconnect Codes to Theme Sequence

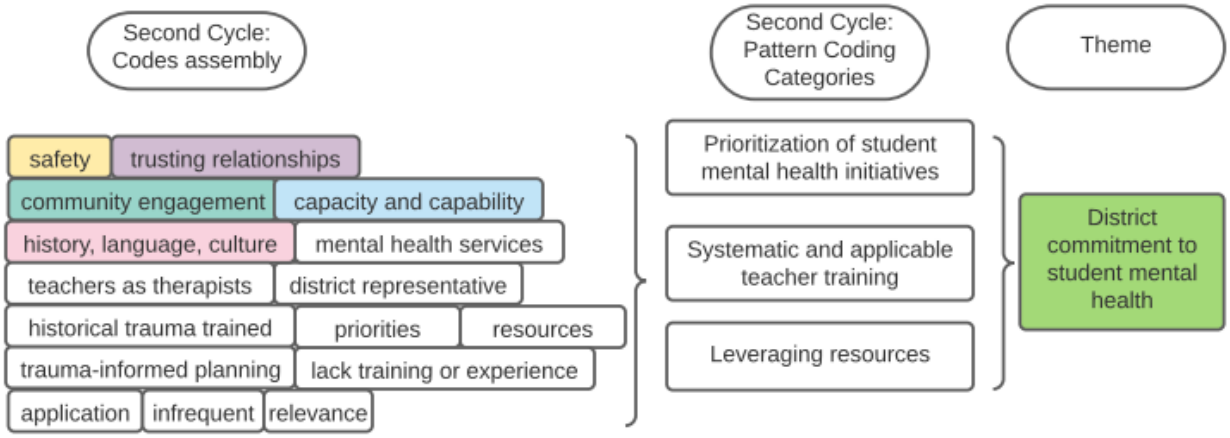


Note: The shaded codes are codes represented in all three code assembly groups. Each pattern coded category has a subcategory.

The third codes assembly grouping centered on the commitment of School Alpha and School Beta to trauma-informed policies and procedures and the training necessary for teachers to feel confident and competent regarding historical trauma practices. Figure 11 shows the sequencing for this area which resulted in the theme of *district commitment to student mental health*.

Figure 11

District Commitment Codes to Theme Sequence



Note: The shaded codes are codes represented in all three code assembly groups.

Three categories were identified from this first-cycle grouping leading to the theme *district commitment to student mental health*. *Prioritization of student mental health initiatives* was the first category. Teachers from both school districts indicated they do not feel their school district has made historical trauma-informed practices related to American Indian students a priority because of the numerous time-consuming tasks involved in daily operations of a school and mandated educational initiatives including required professional development. *Priorities*, *resources*, *capacity and capability*, *historical trauma trained*, and *trauma-informed planning* are all first-cycle codes that contributed to the identification of this meta code. The second category was *systematic and applicable teacher training* which addressed the concern teachers had that past trauma training was a macro approach to the topic, lacked relevance, was infrequently offered, and not applicable for teachers to use with efficacy. First-cycle codes such as *resources*, *application*, *infrequent*, *relevance*, *capacity and capability*, and *history, language, culture*

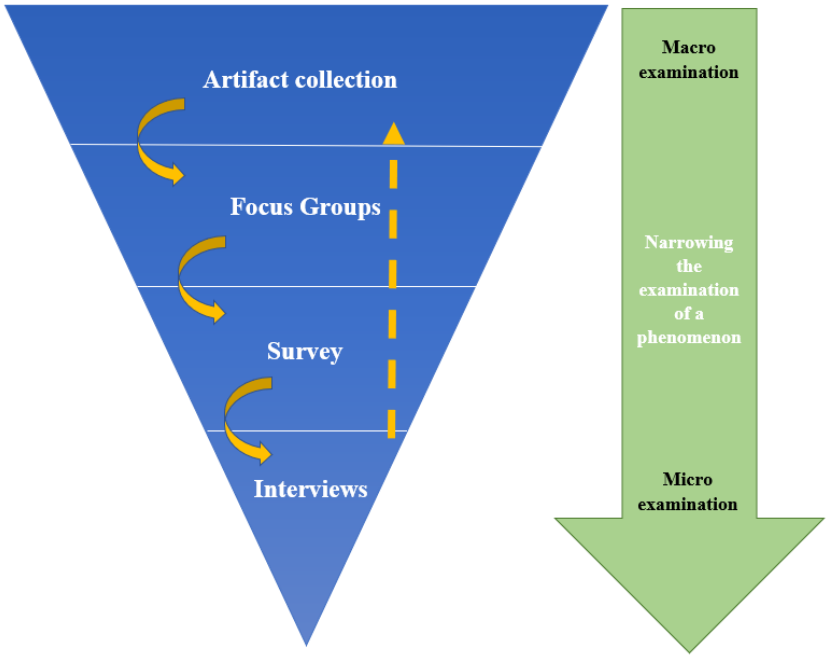
contributed to identifying this category. The third and final category regarding district commitment to historical trauma-informed practices was *leveraging resources.* During the four-step data collection, teachers and focus group members indicated that there are internal and external resources available that are not accessed. For example, teachers indicated that tribal staff members and tribal nation members outside of the school have not been given the opportunity to share their knowledge of the history that created trauma among the tribal communities and has not been given the opportunity to conduct teacher workshops in techniques for working with American Indian students with ACEs and trauma. Teachers were also asked about tribal mental health resources and general community resources for students and how the districts are collaborating with those resources to provide mental health support for students when needed. First-cycle codes such as *safety*, *trusting relationships*, *community engagement*, *capacity and capability*, *mental health services*, *district representative*, *historical trauma trained*, and *trauma-informed planning* all contributed to the identification of leveraging resources as a code category.

Triangulation

The first-cycle coding process identified 31 codes from data collected using methodological triangulation through school artifacts, focus groups, a teacher survey, and teacher interviews. Four data collection methods were used to increase the credibility and validity of the study with each stage of data collection used to guide the data collection at the next stage. This allowed data collection to begin at a more exploratory and broad level examination of the phenomenon of teacher perceived confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students with each stage of data collection allowing for a more targeted focus of examination (Figure 12).

Figure 12

Narrowing the Examination of Teacher Confidence and Competence



Note: With each phase of data collection, understandings of the phenomenon became more and more defined as indicated by the narrowing of the process. The orange dashed upward arrow from interviews to artifact collection indicates revisiting artifacts after learning more about specific artifacts to collect.

Data collected during focus groups, the teacher survey, and the teacher interviews provided more information about possible specific artifacts to collect which were previously unknown during the initial artifact collect phase. For example, information collected during the focus groups and teacher interviews provided specific details to past professional development and training teachers participated in either through the local school district or the Intermediate School District. This provided the opportunity to reconnect with School Alpha and School Beta

personnel with an inquiry into specific training sessions.

Review of Results

Among the 31 codes identified, 18 codes had similar frequencies between School Alpha and School Beta. Thirteen codes had substantial differences in their frequencies between School Alpha and School Beta with 12 of the 13 codes having a greater frequency with School Beta. The higher frequencies with School Beta may be the result of more data collected through artifacts, focus groups, the survey, and teacher interviews from School Beta since they are a larger school district with more participants in the study at all stages of data collection. For example, one artifact was collected from School Alpha while five artifacts were collected from School Beta. School Alpha had one focus group of eight participants while School Beta had two focus groups totaling 10 people. A total of thirty-three teachers responded to the Qualtrics survey with 22 of the 33 teachers coming from School Beta (67% of the participants). Six teachers from School Beta conducted an interview verses five teachers from School Alpha.

Although frequencies can help to identify patterns, regularity, and like categories based on the number of occurrences, codes with higher frequencies don't necessarily mean they are more important than other codes or have greater impact than codes with less frequency. A coded narrative may bring to light experiences, values, attitudes, and beliefs that are powerful testimonials and informative about a phenomenon. This was the case with some of the lower frequency codes in this study such as *priorities* (frequency of 17), *stigma* (frequency of 14), and *sustainable* (frequency of 13). The belief by teachers that School Alpha and School Beta needs to re-prioritize the importance of historical trauma-informed training for teachers is a significant finding and how training should be sustainable for an extended period and not a "one-and-done" session that was the case with past training opportunities for teachers. *Stigma* was another

significant code and one of the reasons why the need for this research has been discussed in the past by School Alpha and School Beta but has not been provided to the point where teachers feel confidence and competent. There is a negative stigma associated with mental health services, especially among the tribal communities where the historical trauma runs deep and is often not discussed due to the sensitivity of issue and the devastating effects the trauma has had on the mental and physical well-being of the community.

First-cycle codes were analyzed and based on the similarities of the codes were organized into three groupings or what Saldaña (2016) referred to as "codes assembly." The three groupings include codes associated with community collaboration and assets, codes related to teacher perceptions of their preparation verses administrative expectations of teachers, and the third grouping centered on School Alpha and School Beta's commitment to historical trauma-informed teacher training, instructional practices, and overall student mental health. Among the 31 first-cycle codes, five codes fit into all three groups – *safety*, *trusting relationships*, *community engagement*, *capacity and capability*, and *history, language, culture*.

Safety was a significant code and is a "pillar" of trauma-informed schools. However, this research discovered that safety did not only mean the feeling of safety for American Indian students and their families. It also refers to the safety of all students and the safety for teachers as they work with students not only as an instructor but as a trusted source for students to share their personal thoughts, ideas, and challenges. Trauma-informed schools need to create a safe learning environment for all students who should feel supported and cared for. Teachers should also feel safe by being properly prepared/trained, supported by administration, and provided the resources to address student trauma. Teachers in general do not feel confident and competent in trauma-informed instructional practices related to American Indian students and they do not

properly understand the history that has led to the trauma and how the history has affected the language, culture, and traditions of the Native peoples due to the lack of frequent, consistent, relevant, and applicable training in both the history and trauma-informed strategies. Teachers fear they may say or do something that may traumatize or re-traumatize students because they are not properly trained and do not understand when a student situation is beyond their capacity and capability as a teacher and when professional mental health services is needed.

Due to the strong trusting relationships teachers have established, students will continue to share very personal thoughts and happenings at home; therefore, teachers are seeking quality training in the history that is the foundation of this trauma among the tribal communities and what strategies to use with students and their families to navigate the complexities of this trauma. This research discovered that there is some disconnect between the expectations of teachers as not only content level experts but also as daily counselors and therapists in the classroom. Administration at the district and ISD level has offered and provided training to teachers, but the training has not been sustained over time, has not been specific to the needs of the tribal communities, and lacked specific strategies for teachers to use. For districts make changes to professional development requires a shift of priorities from being reactionary and letting daily school operations take up resources and time to being more proactive and making the mental health of students and teachers a priority.

The results show that there is still a mistrust of schools among some tribal community members due to the history of the boarding schools and the association of school as an unsafe and unpleasant place. However, this is improving due to School Alpha and School Beta working to be more trauma-sensitive and informed. It has also improved due to more tribal members being involved in the school as board members, teachers, staff members, and community

partners. School Alpha and School Beta both understand the importance of continuing to foster collaboration with tribal community leaders and organizations and to leverage the assets of the community in order for their districts to progress towards being more trauma sensitive and informed.

Three themes were identified as the result of first and second cycle coding. *Community assets in education*, *preparation-expectation disconnect*, and *district commitment to student mental health* all affect teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices specific to American Indian students. The themes show how complex this type of trauma can be. For healing among the community to occur and for school districts to be a major source of that healing, School Alpha and School Beta's work towards trauma-informed practices and teacher training needs to incorporate the Tribal Critical Race Theory tenents identities by Brayboy (2005) and understand the reciprocal interaction and collaboration of various systems as indicated by the Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of teachers regarding their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instructional practices related to American Indian students. The study also examined the influence past professional development/training had on teacher confidence and competence and what teachers need and want to build their confidence and competence. Chapter 5 begins with a brief recap of the research procedures and the research questions. The chapter includes a discussion of the major findings by research question and the implications of the findings. The chapter then steps back to reflect on the limitations of the study and discusses opportunities for future research regarding teacher confidence and competence as it relates to historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students.

Recap of Research Procedures

This qualitative study collected data from two school districts through organizational artifacts, focus groups, a teacher survey, and individual teacher interviews. Data was collected from these sources in a specific order so the data from the previous stage assisted in directing the collection of data in the next phase. All focus group sessions and eight of 11 teacher interviews were recorded to improve the accuracy of transcription with three interviews transcribed verbatim as interviews were conducted. Pre-coding and preliminary jottings were used to create a codebook that included a description of each code along with typical and atypical exemplars. Coding of artifacts, focus group transcripts, the teacher survey, and teacher interview transcripts were done manually using the codebook as a reference. A modified version of Saldaña's (2016)

codes-to-theory model was developed and used to transition codes to categories and categories to themes (Appendix E).

Revisiting the Research Questions

The study centered on addressing four research questions with the first question focusing on understanding the commitment of schools to trauma-informed policies, procedures, and instructional practices. Each school in the study is required to follow the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) therefore the second question examines the ways historical trauma of American Indian communities influence the school continuous improvement processes. The third and fourth research questions examine how confident and competent teachers feel in their knowledge of trauma-informed instructional practices specifically connected to American Indian students and what training teachers need and want to build their confidence and competence.

Interpretation of the Findings

The first research question sought to identify how Michigan schools with a high American Indian student population established a commitment to establishing and implementing trauma-informed policies, procedures, and instructional practices. In the focus groups, teacher surveys, and individual teacher interviews, both districts expressed the importance of being trauma-informed and more specifically informed in practices to address the trauma among American Indian students. However, there is a level of subjectivity to the definition of "commitment." If commitment is a willingness and desire to be trauma-informed, both the administration and the teachers from School Alpha and School Beta are committed. Teachers and administrators expressed the importance of being trauma-informed and understand the impact historical trauma has on the academic, social, and emotional well-being of American Indian

students. Administration expressed the importance of incorporating this information into their continuous improvement process but have not due to time and capacity limitations. If commitment is defined as specific actions towards being trauma-informed such as the implementation of policies, procedures, instructional and social/emotional strategies, collaboration with the tribal communities, and teacher professional development in historical trauma-informed strategies connected to American Indian students, then the commitment of teachers and administration at School Alpha would be considered "emerging" and "developing" for School Beta on a scale from limited to proficient. Limited is having little to no evidence of working towards being a trauma-informed district and proficient is full implementation of and training in trauma-informed practices that include full collaboration and communication with the tribal communities in the development and implementation of historical trauma-informed practices.

School Beta has progressed further than School Alpha towards proficiency in historical trauma-informed practices due to publicly accessible evidence of Indian education policies and procedures for each federally recognized tribal nation represented in the district. The Title VI Indian Education meetings are additional evidence of commitment. The minutes from the April 2021 Title VI open hearing meeting explained the efforts taken by the district to collaborate and communicate with the tribal community and a commitment to cultural training, cultural research, Native language development, and maintaining "an environment where students are mentally, physically, emotionally, and culturally safe and secure."

The study began with collecting artifacts associated with trauma-informed practices from School Alpha and School Beta. A search of both district websites yielded no artifacts for School Alpha and four artifacts in the form of American Indian education policies and procedures and a

Title VI meeting agenda for School Beta. Published on the School Beta website were the Indian Policies and Procedures for the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school years for each of the two federally recognized tribal nations in the area. These policies and procedures show a strong commitment by School Beta administration and the school board to establish a trusting and collaborative relationship with local tribal officials and parents in the development, implementation, review, and revisions of educational programs and activities. In addition, the policies and procedures show the commitment to engage and empower the tribal community to make recommendations on the needs of American Indian students and how to communicate to those students the benefits of education programs and activities at School Beta. One of the sections of the policies and procedures stated that the district is committed "to ensure the maximum participation of tribes and parents of Indian children." The policies and procedures also indicate a commitment to American Indian student equal opportunities and participation in educational programs and school-sponsored activities by tracking and communicating American Indian participation rates to tribal leaders, parents, and the Parent Advisory Committee. If there are gaps in opportunities and participation rates, School Beta administration is to work with the Parent Advisory Committee and tribal officials to make modifications to improve equal access to educational programs and activities and to find ways to increase participation rates.

Although School Beta policies, procedures, and the Title VI meeting show a commitment to addressing the educational needs of American Indian students in the district and to working with the local tribal nations, the policies and procedures do not commit to a specific focus on historical trauma, the teaching of the history that is the foundation of trauma among the tribal nations, and historical trauma-informed instructional and social/emotional practices. A stronger commitment to historical trauma-informed practices and teacher preparation is evident in the

2021 Title VI-Indian Education Open Hearing meeting minutes. Title VI is the "federal obligation to Native communities to aid in the continuation of culture, language, and Native history/studies." The purpose of the Title VI meeting was to bring together School Beta and the tribal community to review current educational programs and to provide direction for these programs. Discussed during this meeting was the importance of the Parent Advisory Council "to offer input of what they think is critical to the education and flourishing of the Native community/youth" and to recommend actions to help heal and recover from what was lost through historical attempts at Native assimilation. One suggestion was to create high school Native studies and language classes. Most important to showing the commitment of the School Beta community was the recommendation at the Title VI meeting to provide cultural training for staff by a local college professor and to collaborate with a Michigan university and a community college to explore the historical trauma within the local community. This recommendation supports the findings from the data collected through focus groups, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews which indicated that some teachers attribute their stronger feelings of confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students to college courses they completed as part of their degree program.

The School Beta Title VI meeting minutes showed a commitment to addressing the historical trauma among the tribal communities. The document indicated there will be further research conducted in historical trauma to help the district move towards a more trauma-informed mindset. Although this information shows further commitment to address the community trauma that may affect students in their district, the minutes did not provide details as to what will be done with this research once completed including if the research will be used to design professional development for teachers. There was also no indication if specific historical

trauma-informed strategies will be taught to teachers to improve their confidence and competence although School Beta teachers expressed 69 times through focus groups, surveys, and interviews that they lacked training and experience and 37 times that they wanted more training.

During the focus groups, the superintendent from School Beta indicated that the district provided training to teachers in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma but was concerned hearing from teachers that the more they received training, the less confident and competent they felt. This sends a message to administration that the content and structure/format of the training is not conducive to the needs and wants of the teachers. Past training was structured to be a general overview of trauma and not specifically related to historical trauma among the tribal nations. In addition, the lack of confidence and competence is due to teachers not knowing the history of the trauma among the tribal communities and what specific strategies teachers can use specially for historical trauma. Teachers also expressed that the training received were one-time trainings and it was recommended that historical trauma training should be offered over a series of sessions with discussions regarding how to implement this new knowledge. The superintendent for School Beta expressed commitment to addressing this issue stating in the focus group sessions that they have more work to do to help teachers feel more confident and competent. The superintendent believes additional training in the history of the trauma among the tribal communities is necessary along with providing teachers written information on specific strategies to use. Teachers from School Beta indicated that they feel the district has made great progress in being more trauma-sensitive and that they are more informed but there is additional training that is needed to truly be considered trauma-informed, confident, and competent.

The lack of training in the history of the trauma among the tribal communities was also expressed by School Alpha teachers. During the teacher interviews, two School Alpha teachers showed physical agitation and a level of frustration in the tone of their voice as they talked about working for a Native school that has not properly provided training including a history lesson that would explain the foundations of this historical trauma. “Considering that we work at a Native American school, I learned really not a lot of information about Native Americans or the history working at this school” one teacher said. Another School Alpha teacher went further to explain that they know another school in the area with a high American Indian student population that requires staff to take a Native American history class as a requirement for employment which shows an additional level of commitment to historical trauma-informed practices.

During the focus group session for School Alpha, the superintendent expressed the notable progress the school made towards being trauma-informed through whole-child trauma and ACEs training in addition to a focus on building trusting relationships with students. The superintendent expressed her desire to continue building staff knowledge and understanding of trauma and especially historical trauma. In addition, the superintendent wants the school to focus on building resiliency with students and to teach them to be advocates for themselves and their peers instead of placing themselves in the role of victim. This includes having the confidence that they can go to college and/or pursue a career of their choosing. She wants students to understand they are not destined to a future that shadows the life and career of their parent(s)/caregiver(s) and they have the ability to follow their interests and passions. Teachers and administration are committed to showing students a variety of future possibilities and helping to build student confidence in themselves as a component of their trauma-informed

practices.

School Alpha administration also expressed commitment to giving teachers more tools to help students with trauma. During a focus groups session, the superintendent said they should re-examine data collected from the Student Risk Screen Scale (SRSS) which is given to students three times a year to assess if district systems and practices are effective in addressing the social and behavioral needs of students. The superintendent believes a re-examination of SRSS may yield important information they possibly missed during their previous SRSS data analysis which may assist the district in becoming more trauma-informed. This idea is additional evidence of commitment to being trauma-informed for not only American Indian students but all students.

The second research question for this study focused on how historical trauma influences the continuous improvement process of schools. The Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) is a framework for continuously improving student outcomes and is required of School Alpha and School Beta by their intermediate school district (ISD). The mission, vision and beliefs of the districts provide context for the process for continuous improvement which starts with a needs assessment and transitions into planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluating. This research will be used by School Alpha and School Beta administration to justify the focus for historical trauma-informed practices of American Indian communities and teacher training to build confidence and competence as the area of inquiry for MICIP. The data collected from artifacts, focus groups, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews will assist each district with their needs assessment by creating a data set and an initial initiative inventory for which to help in the development of three key components of the MICIP needs assessment: a gap statement, a data story, and a challenge statement. The data used for the needs assessment will serve as the foundation for the next phase of MICIP which is

the planning stage.

The data set during the MICIP needs assessment phase includes perception, attendance, engagement, academic, and intervention data. The data collected from this research provides valuable perception data mainly from teachers through focus groups, surveys, and individual teacher interviews. However, perception data is also collected from administration through their participation in the focus groups. Data is also available to develop a data story for School Beta through information in the Indian Policies and Procedures documents for each tribal nation and the Title VI Open Hearing meeting minutes. The data collected from this research will assist School Alpha and School Beta with their MICIP initiative inventory which is a reflection on the systems and initiatives that are currently in place, examines how these initiatives support the mission of the district, what personnel are involved in planning and implementation, what professional development was conducted to support the initiative, what financial resources were allocated to the effort, and examines the expected outcomes.

The third research question for this study aimed to examine how confident and competent teachers felt in their knowledge of trauma-informed practices specific to American Indian students. If teachers stated they felt confident, this perspective was coded as *self-assured* and competent was coded as *qualified*. If teachers were not confident, such perspective was coded as *uncertain* with a lack of competence coded as *unqualified*. Overall, the teachers from both School Alpha and School Beta did not feel confident nor competent in American Indian trauma-informed practices. *Uncertain* was coded a total of 46 times for both districts in comparison to 18 times for *self-assured*. *Unqualified* had a code frequency of 37 in comparison to 14 for *qualified*. Although there was a significant difference between the codes for confident vs. not-confident and competent vs. not competent, the greatest difference was seen during second-cycle

coding and across-case data analysis. For School Alpha, *self-assured* was coded only four times in comparison to 14 times for School Beta. *Qualified* was coded only two times for School Alpha compared to 12 times for School Beta. This difference is significant, and these findings are supported qualitatively by the concerns expressed by School Alpha teachers. An example of this concern was the information expressed by School Alpha teachers that they work for a Native American school but know little about the history that created intergenerational trauma due to a lack of training in applicable strategies for addressing the intergenerational trauma among American Indian students.

Two questions from the teacher survey specifically asked teachers to describe how confident and competent they felt in historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian students. For the question about confidence, one teacher from School Alpha stated they feel confident with trauma-informed instructional practices regarding American Indian students and nine teachers indicated they do not feel confident with one teacher not answering the question but stated that they believe it is important that the history of trauma among the tribal communities be taught. This is a significant finding especially since School Alpha is a school located on a tribal reservation and created specifically to provide a better education for Native students. The one teacher who felt confident indicated that their confidence was due to college coursework and not from experience working with American Indian students or from training provided to teachers by the district.

The teacher confidence level in trauma-informed instructional practices for American Indian students was higher for School Beta. Twenty-two teachers from School Beta responded to the question about confidence of which nine or 41% indicated they feel confident with 11 teachers stating they do not feel confident. One teacher did not answer the question but did state

they want more training in trauma-informed practices. Five of the nine teachers who stated they were confident indicated it was due to their experience as a teacher in the classroom. Three of the teachers indicated their confidence was due to college coursework with two teachers identifying professional development through their district as sources of their confidence. Therefore, for both School Alpha and School Beta, the majority of teachers do not feel confident. Those who feel confident mainly do so because of courses they took in college and/or from years of experience working with American Indian students with ACEs and trauma. According to the survey, past professional development offered by School Alpha and School Beta had little impact on the level of teacher confidence and competence.

Teacher perceptions of confidence is directly influenced by their beliefs in their level of competence in trauma-informed instructional practices. For School Alpha, the competence data collected from the survey perfectly matched the confidence data with nine out of eleven teachers who responded to the survey question stating they do not feel competent with one indicating they do. One teacher did not indicate if they felt competent or not but did express the importance of teachers knowing the history that led to the trauma within the Indigenous community. The one School Alpha teacher who felt competent did so not due to district training but through college coursework they took at the local community college which is a public tribal land-grant community college with a significant focus on Native American studies and promoting the customs and beliefs of Native Americans.

For School Beta, teacher responses regarding the question about competence also matched the responses on confidence providing additional proof that perceptions of competence are directly connected to feelings of confidence. Nine School Beta teachers felt competent with 11 teachers not feeling competent. Seven of the nine teachers who felt competent did so not

through district provided professional development but through their experience working with American Indian students with three indicating they also felt confident by taking coursework in college. Two of the nine teachers indicated that they felt confident through a district training.

The number of teachers who felt confident and competent from School Alpha and School Beta and the reasons for their feelings was supported by information collected during the 11 teacher interviews. Teachers from both districts indicated that the training they received in trauma was an introduction to trauma and the training did not focus specifically on historical trauma among the tribal communities and did not provide applicable and actionable strategies. Techniques and strategies for use in the classroom with students was identified as very important for teachers from both districts and is the reason why *application* was a code with a total frequency of 33. Teachers used the words “informed” and ”overview” to describe past training and they felt inadequately prepared due to limited understanding of not only trauma-informed strategies but the history behind the intergenerational trauma among the two local tribal nations. In the opinions of teachers, the lack of well-designed and applicable training has created a gap in the capacity and capability of teachers to properly support the social and emotional needs of students. Therefore, *capacity and capability* was a high frequency code for School Alpha (25 occurrences) and School Beta (75 occurrences) because teachers felt they lacked the capacity and capability to safely and effectively support students with mental health issues due to concerns regarding the content, structure, and frequency of trauma-informed training provided by their district. The feelings of competence and confidence they do have in historical trauma is due to a combination of their experience as an educator working with American Indian students, college coursework they took at a local community college or university that provides courses in Native history, and training/professional development they sought on their own initiative.

Teachers from School Alpha and School Beta were critical of past training provided by their school districts and the local intermediate school district (ISD). Therefore, the fourth research question sought to identify what training teachers felt they need and want to build confidence and competence in trauma-informed instructional practices related to American Indian students. The goal of this research question was to assist administration from School Alpha and School Beta to begin having conversations on how to revise training and professional development that would be more meaningful and helpful for teachers with the hopes that it would build their confidence and feelings of competence. Teachers clearly expressed concern over the content, format, and frequency of past training and identified these concerns as the root cause for their lack of confidence and competence. *Lack of training or experience* was coded a total of 129 times (60 for School Alpha and 69 for School Beta) while examining artifacts, focus group transcripts, the teacher survey responses, and teacher interview transcripts. The high frequency of this code is evidence that teachers do not feel adequately prepared to assist students with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma. Therefore, the research question aims to identify ways School Alpha, School Beta, and the ISD can revise training/professional development to go deeper than surface knowledge and provide information and strategies that are applicable and sustainable over time.

Teachers had two main concerns regarding the content of trauma training. The first concern was their lack of historical knowledge regarding the colonization and attempted assimilation of Native Peoples through the boarding school movement. Teachers would like to learn this history to establish a strong foundational knowledge for which to better understand historical trauma-informed instructional and social/emotional strategies for American Indian students. There was a small amount of this history presented to teachers from staff members who

are from the tribal community but not enough to help teachers feel confident and competent in historical trauma-informed practices. The training provided by tribal staff was again referred to as a quick "overview."

Teachers indicated that they struggle with truly understanding the impact the boarding schools in Michigan had on the loss of tribal language, culture, and traditions/customs and how this trauma can transfer from generation to generation. As one teacher stated from School Alpha, they feel confident in their understanding of acute trauma but not in chronic trauma such as the historical trauma created by the Indian boarding school movement. The training they received did not explain how this trauma led to a strong mistrust of schools which explains the comments made by some teachers and administrators about family members directing their children to not talk about family business at school. What makes this history complex and challenging to understand for teachers is the impact the trauma had over generations and how it is unresolved. The purpose of the boarding schools was the assimilation of Native children and some of the family members of current students attended these boarding schools while other family members heard the stories of various atrocities committed at these schools. Therefore, today's school districts are often associated with oppression and assimilation due to this history leading to a mistrust of schools.

The second concern by teachers regarding past professional development/training was the lack of relevance to their needs working directly with students with ACEs and trauma. Teachers recommended the teaching of specific historical trauma-informed strategies and how to implement these strategies in the classroom. In addition, teachers indicated they would like future training to explain how historical trauma-informed strategies differs from general trauma-informed strategies and how some characteristics of these strategies may be similar. This should

include what to say and do that is appropriate so they will not traumatize or re-traumatize students. Teachers also requested that future training include how to identify when student needs are beyond their capacity as a teacher and when students need to be referred to administration, the school social worker, the school psychologist, and/or community mental health professionals. Learning these strategies are important because American Indian students often approach teachers for support and to talk about their feelings and personal issues because of the trusting relationships teachers have formed with students. With these trusting relationships comes a great responsibility to listen carefully to student needs and determine what should be the best course of action.

Changes to the past format and frequency of trauma training was another suggestion from teachers. Trainings offered to teachers have been infrequent and conducted by someone from the ISD or someone selected by administration. Teachers indicated that the training received was sporadic, superficial, and often repetitive by presenting the same information multiple times and in some cases, as indicated by a School Alpha teacher during a focus group session, nothing more than watching the documentary *Paper Tigers* which followed six students over the course of a school year to showcase the trauma-sensitive program of an alternative high school in Walla Walla, Washington. Teachers recommended that historical trauma training be provided to staff on a regular basis and with more frequency. Teachers recommended a change from the "one-and-done" format of the past to a sustained series of workshops/training and reflections on the strategies implemented.

During the focus groups and interviews, teachers expressed concerns about the length of time since the last training in trauma. New teachers have been hired in both districts since the last training therefore these teachers have not received any training from the districts. To address this

issue, it is recommended that School Alpha and School Beta administration incorporate this trauma training as part of the onboarding process for new teachers. Another recommendation for administration and trainers is to provide tangible resources for teachers as they attend training. Teachers were asked during interviews if they received any resources such as handouts, trainer presentations, and articles as part of their past training in trauma. No teachers could recall resources given to them during past trainings. This recommendation was acknowledged by the superintendent from School Beta who stated during one of the focus groups that the district should provide teachers with a list or copies of resources for them to use and/or reference.

Teachers also suggested that future training be formatted as engaging and interactive workshops rather than presentations and the showing of instructional videos which was the typical format of past trainings. Teachers stated they would be more engaged in the learning process through various collaborative activities. A School Beta teacher expressed in one of the interviews that they have sat back and watched the reactions of teachers during professional development in trauma and noticed high levels of disengagement. This teacher and others used the term “workshop” instead of training or professional development because a workshop is actionable and hands-on with the content. As one School Beta teacher stated in a focus group session and in their interview, they felt “informed” but not confident and competent in historical trauma-informed practices. They felt “informed” because they were presented with the information but did not work with the information in a workshop format nor was their follow-up training to continue the learning.

A key question regarding the format/structure of future trauma training sessions is who should conduct the training? This question was asked of each teacher who participated in an interview. All five teachers from School Alpha recommended someone who was knowledgeable

in the history of the tribal nations in the area and the trauma associated with the Indian boarding schools. The School Alpha teachers recommended tribal members to conduct training. The School Beta teachers had more variety in their answers and suggested multiple people to conduct future training. Tribal elders, a Native historian, a panel of mental health and history experts, a professor at a local college, and a teacher from a local nearby school who is a tribal member and knowledgeable in the historical trauma of the area were all recommendations. One teacher cautioned that the decision of who should conduct the training is important because they may be knowledgeable in tribal history, the trauma associated with colonization and attempted assimilation through the Indian boarding schools, and in trauma-informed instructional strategies but may not be a good teacher and/or presenter. This has been the case with past ACEs and trauma training delivered by representatives from the ISD and tribal community members on staff. Teachers stated that these trainers/facilitators were knowledgeable but struggled to deliver the content in an engaging manner.

Public Arena

The increased visibility in widely circulated and highly respected journalistic sources regarding the issues of trauma signals an intensifying public awareness to the emotional scarring caused by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and traumatic events. These journalistic sources have reported on general and more widely known categories of trauma but have also increased awareness of historical/intergenerational trauma, especially the trauma associated with the Indian boarding schools and the historical attempts at the assimilation of Native Peoples. Artifacts of popular discourse have further examined trauma-informed approaches and education's focus on student resiliency by challenging traditional definitions of trauma, stressing the importance of teaching the historical foundations of trauma among communities, and

addressing the perspective of "victimhood."

In an article published in *The New Yorker*, Sehgal (2022) stated that the term *trauma* has become more elastic in its definition and diagnosis therefore posing additional challenges for school districts designing professional development and training that will improve teacher confidence and competence. Trauma applies not solely to the person who experienced a traumatic event firsthand but to descendants of those direct victims, to historians studying trauma, and to people reporting on the trauma (Sehgal, 2022, para. 5). The superintendent of School Alpha, for example, is focused on teaching resilience for those American Indian students who are descendants to those who experienced firsthand the trauma of the Indian boarding schools and the attempted assimilation.

In this research study, data collected from focus groups, teacher surveys, and teacher interviews identified a concern by teachers regarding their lack of preparedness and knowledge in historical trauma. Teachers expressed that the training they received was an overview of general trauma. Using Sehgal's (2022) definition of trauma, it is clear that past trauma training provided by School Alpha and School Beta lacked elasticity because it did not include historical trauma. Instead, the training took a macro approach of generalizing trauma therefore sending a message that all traumas are essentially the same. The lack of focus on historical trauma specific to the Indian boarding school movement has led to a fear among teachers that they are woefully unprepared to address the mental health needs of students. In fact, teachers felt a lack of safety in their professional positions because they feared they may say or do something incorrect which could possibly trigger traumatic memories with students.

According to Sehgal's (2022) elastic definition of trauma, teachers working with students with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and/or trauma can themselves be traumatized by

assuming the mental health support for students. Sehgal (2022) stated that trauma applies to people reporting on trauma which fits the role and responsibilities of teachers as mandated reporters. Teachers from both School Alpha and School Beta expressed the difficulties they have regarding separating school from home and how they often bring their students' traumas home with them. This was acknowledged by the School Alpha superintendent who stated during a focus group session that the school had to set boundaries with students because they were contacting teachers beyond school hours. She stated that it is important to establish and protect that boundary between student and teacher although she did acknowledge, as well as the teachers, that it is difficult in a small school and community where strong relationships of caring and trust are established.

Sehgal (2022) stated that the world is "infatuated with victimhood" and expressed how important it is to understand that "modern life is inherently traumatic" (para. 6). This is why the School Alpha superintendent wants the school to focus on teaching students' resilience. Teachers from both School Alpha and School Beta expressed during interviews that they were concerned about their American Indian students who often have a sense of learned helplessness – a feeling of powerlessness and inadequacy. This explains why many American Indian students, according to the teachers, feel they cannot go to college or pursue the career of their choice because they do not feel they are smart enough to do so; therefore, they are destined to accept another path. This is the "victim" mindset that the School Alpha superintendent is trying to change. Sehgal (2022) stated that it is important to understand that everyone has experienced and will continue to experience some level of adverse experiences; therefore, School Alpha's superintendent would like to not only focus on teacher education in trauma-informed instructional practices but teaching students how to be resilient. The superintendent wants to focus on what Sehgal (2022)

referred to as “post-traumatic growth” instead of post-traumatic stress (para. 17).

Sehgal (2022) took the stand that the majority of people recover from experiencing a traumatic event. However, for historical events such as the Indian boarding school movement, one does not simply “recover.” A trauma associated with the targeted and systematic attempted destruction of language, beliefs, and customs of a people is something that one does not just recover from and is why this trauma among the tribal communities remains unresolved. Both the superintendents from School Alpha and School Beta, who are members of the local tribal communities, are well aware of the impact of this historical trauma on their community and is why this research is important to them as it will inform their planning for future professional development as part of their continuous improvement process to better support teachers.

In an article in *Harper’s Magazine*, Will Self (2021) ask the question “Is theirs to be a common destiny or a common suffering? Or quite possibly both, interdependently?” (para. 40). Self (2021) explained that some trauma theorists believe it is the secondary witnesses, the later generations, that are the ones who suffer the most because the primary victim often cannot recall the experience or in some cases have repressed the experience to prevent recall. This is the case among the tribal communities connected with this research. The historical trauma associated with the Indian boarding school movement runs deep and it is very difficult for many among the tribal communities to talk about this history and its effects spanning generations. Primary victims of the boarding schools are still among us since the last of the boarding schools in Michigan did not close until the 1980s. Therefore, some of the primary victims are grandparents of current students in School Alpha and School Beta.

Sehgal (2022) explained that for victims of a traumatic event or experience, “The anguish came later, with the realization of what had occurred” (para. 16). According to Self (2021), “it’s

the fidelity of recollection that becomes the most important issue for those struggling to establish an etiology of psychological trauma" (para. 13). However, the "fidelity of recollection" is not only important for survivors working through the trauma but for those learning about the history of the trauma such as teachers. According to Sehgal (2022), "Trauma has become synonymous with backstory" (para. 12). Therefore, to have a greater understanding of trauma-informed strategies to use with American Indian students, teachers need to know the "backstory" or history of the trauma and according to Sehgal (2022), the "backstory" will show a great diversity in the script on trauma and historical trauma. If teachers understand the backstory, they will have a greater understanding as to why Self (2021) acknowledged that some trauma theorists believe it is "the secondary witnesses who received the trauma in its truest form" which in the case of the schools who participated in this study, are the students who are descendants of the primary victims to the Indian boarding schools (para 46).

The works of Sehgal (2022) and Self (2021) are two examples that show the significant attention trauma has within the public arena. Public discourse has provided opportunities for reflection and greater awareness by the general public regarding historical atrocities that has led to unresolved trauma over generations such as the case with the Indian boarding schools and the attempted forced assimilation of American Indian children. One merit of these articles by Sehgal (2022) and Self (2021), as well as other public discourse regarding trauma, is that they help guide us back to the foundations of the conceptual framework for Adverse Childhood Experiences – the ACE Pyramid developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). The foundation of the ACE Pyramid is *Generational Embodiment/Historical Trauma*. Combined with the next tier of the pyramid *Social Conditions/Local Context*, trauma is conceived which if left unresolved, such as the case among tribal communities, leads to many of

the risk factors the teachers and administration from School Alpha and School Beta identified during this research. It is the public arena that will help create a greater sense of urgency for districts with high populations of American Indian students, such as School Alpha and School Beta, to reflect on their past practices and build the capacity to better train and support their teachers. By communicating and collaborating with teachers and community partners, School Alpha and School Beta will understand how to provide training and resources that will build teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices for all students including their American Indian student majority.

Implications for Practice

The results of the study show that teachers overall do not feel confident and competent in historical trauma-informed practices connected to American Indian students and this perception is due to concerns teachers expressed regarding the content, format, and frequency of past training/professional development sessions and who was teaching/facilitating those sessions. Teachers made specific recommendations for how to restructure training and this information can be used in the continuous improvement process (MICIP) for each district starting with the assessment of needs phase of the process. The area of inquiry for this phase has already been determined which is the concern regarding teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices related to American Indian students. The next component of the needs assessment is to create a whole-child data set which includes perception, attendance, engagement, academic, intervention, and other types of data. This study provides teacher perception data through focus groups, surveys, and interviews and administrator perception data through the focus groups.

The next component of the needs assessment is completing an initiative inventory which

explores the systems and initiatives already in place at each district. This component examines the expected and actual outcome(s) of an initiative, connections to the district mission, personnel used in implementation and monitoring, the level of commitment to the initiative by the district, the allocation of financial resources, identifying fidelity measures, and what training/professional development was conducted to support initiatives. The results of the study provide information for the completion of this component of the continuous improvement plan needs assessment connected to trauma-informed practices. The study identified what training/professional development was provided to teachers in ACEs, trauma, and historical trauma, who conducted those trainings, the level of fidelity in preparing and supporting teachers to work with students who have trauma, and the perceived level of district commitment to being trauma-informed. An example of a data source that could be used for the initiative inventory are the artifacts collected from School Beta. The study identified official policies and procedures from School Beta for American Indian education that was approved by the leadership from both local tribal nations. The policies and procedures are proof that School Beta is committed to working collaboratively with the local tribal nations and parents to assure equal opportunity and participation of American Indian students in educational programs and activities. The policies and procedures for School Beta, along with information from the Title VI Open Hearing meeting minutes, also address fidelity of initiatives related to American Indian students. For example, one of the procedures is to notify and send tribal officials and parents any documents related to the evaluation of education programs and the possible initiation or elimination of educational programs that may have an impact on American Indian students. Another fidelity measure is the establishment of a Parent Advisory Council as mentioned in the Title VI Indian Education Open Hearing meeting minutes. The purpose of this committee is to provide parents with an

opportunity to provide input on issues critical to the education of American Indian students.

The data provided in the study will assist School Alpha and School Beta in creating a gap statement and a data story. The gap statement briefly explains what has been done in the past to help teachers be more trauma-informed and what still needs to be done or revised to improve teacher confidence and competence. The combination of the study data, the summary of the data, the analysis of the results, the initiative inventory, and the gap statement will help School Alpha and School Beta to create in MICIP what is called the Data Story Summary. The summary captures the essence of the issue and will be used to prompt the start of the next phase of the continuous improvement process – the planning phase. One component of the data story is identifying the root cause of the gap/problem. Through teacher perception data from focus groups, surveys, and interviews it was determined that the root cause of not feeling confident and competent in historical trauma-informed practices is due to problems with training content, trainer knowledge, format, frequency, and priority of the training. Therefore, as part of the continuous improvement process, School Alpha and School Beta will take these root causes and the data collected from the study to create a challenge statement which begins to frame a measurable goal to begin the planning phase of the MICIP process which leads into possibilities for future research.

Taking a Step Back—Limitations

There are 12 federally recognized tribal nations in Michigan. The study included two school districts, one K-12 Michigan public school district and one public charter school academy, with a student population that includes school-aged children and young adults from two of the 12 tribal nations. The initial intention of the study was to include four school districts – two public school districts (a small rural district and the public district for the largest city in the

geographical area), one charter school located on a tribal reservation, and a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) charter school. The public school district from the largest city in the region has an American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) student population that is 31.5% of the AI/AN of the Intermediate School District (MI School Data, 2020). The school district was contacted multiple times with no response regarding the invitation to participate in the study. The BIE charter school has a student population that is nearly 50% AI/AN and makes up 13.8% of the AI/AN student population of the ISD (MI School Data, 2020). The BIE school did not accept the invitation to participate in the study citing past precedent of rarely participating in research studies. In addition, the school required a tribal IRB which is a lengthy process with a small chance of approval; therefore, the decision was made to not pursue the BIE school further. This left one public charter school academy and one public school district remaining to participate in the study.

Data collection began with requests for institutional artifacts. Artifact collection began with a search of School Alpha and School Beta's website for publicly available artifacts. A review of School Alpha's website yielded no artifacts available. Administration and teachers from School Alpha were contacted via email multiple times requesting artifacts connected to trauma-informed policies, procedures, instructional techniques, and teacher trainings. The email yielded no information on artifacts from School Alpha. One artifact was collected from School Alpha based on a later conversation with a School Alpha teacher during the teacher interview phase of data collection. Therefore, School Alpha data from artifacts was limited.

According to information collected during focus groups and teacher interviews, there was past professional development and training for School Alpha and School Beta teachers in trauma practices from the ISD and through internal resources. As specific teacher training/workshops

were referenced, teachers were asked if there were agendas, training presentations, meeting minutes, trainer bios, teacher work products, and/or workshop surveys that are available to be sent for the study. Between the teachers at School Alpha and School Beta, one teacher from School Alpha remembered an email sent to staff from a trainer at the ISD. No other teachers from School Alpha and School Beta could remember if training/workshop documents were provided to participants before, during, or after the training/workshops. The email was provided as an artifact for the study. The purpose of the email was to communicate the ISDs commitment to providing schools and districts with information about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma, but the email did not provide any specific or additional information that would be informative for the study. A review of School Beta's website discovered four artifacts which were the Indian Policies and Procedures for the district. Although four policy and procedure documents were available to the general public through the School Beta website, the four documents were nearly identical in language with slight changes to dates and names.

Another limitation to the study was the limited timeframe available to collect information. Revisions to the IRB application delayed approval. The start of the research began on May 7th, 2021, approximately one month before the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Due to the numerous end-of-year tasks and responsibilities for teachers and administrators, it was challenging to assemble the focus groups for each participating district. The focus groups were members of each district's Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Team (MICIP) which normally meet on Fridays during the school year. However, due to numerous tasks and responsibilities before the end of the school year, it was challenging to get all MICIP/focus group members to meet at the same time. This was the reason for two smaller School Beta focus groups instead of one larger group.

The lack of response to follow up questions was another limitation to the study. One of the teachers interviewed was a tribal member who had a wealth of knowledge and insight into the topic of historical trauma among the tribal nations and what districts should do to be trauma-informed. After the interview and analysis of the transcript, the teacher was contacted in hopes of asking additional questions which would provide more insight into the phenomenon of teacher confidence and competence. The teacher had resigned from the district to pursue another opportunity and did not return messages. The review of two other teacher interview transcripts identified the need for a follow-up due to incomplete information. Examining the transcript identified several areas where their response did not fully answer questions; therefore, an attempt was made to contact the teachers and to address the incomplete information. The two teachers did not respond. Attempting to contact these teachers at the beginning of their summer break was a possible reason for the lack of response.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided School Alpha and School Beta with data they could use in the beginning assessment phase of MICIP. The research introduced the area of inquiry as the confidence and competence of teachers in historical trauma-informed practices specifically related to American Indian students and provided data and information to complete their needs assessment. It is recommended that an action research approach be taken to complete the next phases of the continuous improvement process – planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluating. Action research is recommended over traditional educational research because traditional approaches try to predict and explain a phenomenon by manipulating variables to test a hypothesis (Mills, 2011, p. 3). According to Mills (2011), “In classroom and school settings, however, controlling all the factors that affect the outcomes of our teaching without disturbing

the natural classroom environment can be difficult" (p. 3). For action research, teachers will study their practices with the focus on taking action for continuous improvement. The focus of improvement in this case is to improve teacher knowledge and understanding of the root causes of historical trauma among American Indian students, what strategies to use to address traumatic issues with students and their families, and what continuous training and support is needed from the school district and the ISD to improve teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices.

It is recommended that School Alpha and School Beta approach future research in historical trauma-informed practices preparation for teachers using a collaborative action research approach. The goal of this type of action research is to work with a teacher researcher and educational stakeholders to utilize their knowledge and expertise towards continuous improvement (Mills, 2011). Collaborative action research aligns with what is currently in place at School Beta with the collaboration they have with the two local tribal nations and parents of American Indian students as indicated in their Indian Education Policies and Procedures documents and in the Title VI Indian Education Open Hearing minutes. This approach will also assist School Alpha to increase their tribal community collaboration efforts by engaging tribal nation leadership and American Indian parents in the research process. By collaborating with the tribal leadership and parents/families, the action research will be grounded in theory through Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979, 1986, 1994). Of the nine tenets of tribal critical rate theory, the recommended action research will address four (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429-430):

1. Indigenous people desire sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.

2. Culture, knowledge, and power have a different meaning when viewed through the lens of indigenous people.
3. To understand the lives of indigenous people and their differences, it is important to have knowledge of their beliefs, customs, traditions, and practices.
4. Theory and practice must be used to create social change.

For Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979, 1986, 1994), action research will incorporate all the systems through community collaboration. For example, the tribal leadership and the parents will help provide the historical context of the chronosystem and the culture, ideologies, widely held beliefs, and attitudes of the macrosystem. This knowledge will inform School Alpha and School Beta in the development or revisions to school policies, procedures, and teacher training regarding historical trauma-informed practices for American Indian student as part of the exosystem. The overall collaboration of the districts, the tribal leadership, and the parents/families makes up the meso and micro systems.

In the development and implementation of action research, School Alpha and School Beta should consider specific areas of being historically trauma-informed that was identified as important through this research study. One area is the feeling of safety. Future research should explore further the feeling of safety from various perspectives including the perspectives of students, parents/families, and teachers. Research should explore what factors make various stakeholders feel safe or unsafe regarding instruction and school operations and how can school districts create a safe environment for learning by addressing the concerns of the past.

Another area of research to explore further is addressing the capacity of districts to provide historical trauma-informed practices specific to Native Peoples. How does a school district build capacity for teacher training in this area while addressing mandated school/district

priorities? How do they re-prioritize initiatives so historical trauma-informed training of teachers is a higher priority? Who internally or externally should conduct training for teachers that is knowledgeable in the history of Native trauma and trauma-informed strategies teachers can use with students that will build the confidence and competence of teachers? These are future research questions to explore as action research is being developed and implemented.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices specifically connected to American Indian students. A qualitative research study was conducted with two school districts in a rural northern area of Michigan. Both districts are within the same intermediate school district with American Indian/Alaska Native students being over 50% of their student body. One school district is a public charter academy located on a tribal reservation and the other district is a Michigan public school district located three miles from the public charter academy. Both districts have the goal of being more trauma-informed and want to focus on the unique challenges of historical trauma within the local community and how that has an effect on student learning, social and emotional well-being, and teacher instruction.

The study was grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory, Tribal Critical Race Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory. Critical Race Theory and Tribal Critical Race Theory helped to provide a foundational context to the history of colonization and attempted assimilation of Native Peoples through the Indian boarding schools which has led to intergenerational trauma. This trauma has transferred from one generation to another creating a distrust of public schools due to their association with the boarding school movement which led to the near destruction of Native languages, cultures, customs, and traditions. Ecological systems

theory helped to navigate the complexity of historical trauma within the community where the study took place and to better understand the current relationships and interactions of the various district stakeholders and systems that effect students and how this research can help address ways to improve these relationships by helping to build the confidence and competence of teachers who work with American Indian students each day and who carry this intergenerational trauma with them. An ecological systems approach also highlighted the importance of leveraging the community assets and historical knowledge by engaging various community partners in the planning, implementation, and continuous review and revision of a historical trauma-informed school model for both School Alpha and School Beta that addresses the needs, wants, and concerns of American Indian students, their parents/families/caregivers, and the tribal community at large.

Data was collected in four steps – artifacts, focus groups, surveys, and interviews. Data collection from each stage helped in the planning of the next stage and as data was collected it was organized, analyzed, and pre-coded. Data was collected in four steps to provide triangulation of the data. First cycle coding used descriptive, process, and in vivo coding methods with second cycle coding using pattern coding to identify categories, subcategories, and themes. Of the 31 first-cycles codes identified from the data, five codes emerged as having a greater significance – *safety*, *trusting relationships*, *community engagement*, *capacity and capability*, and *history, language, culture*. From the first and second cycle coding, three themes were identified – *community assets in education*, *preparation-expectation disconnect*, and *district commitment to student mental health*.

Community assets in education includes the various resources, internally and externally, districts have to address this mistrust of schools based on historical precedence. School Alpha

and School Beta understand the importance of community engagement and the establishment of trusting relationships in order to provide a safe learning environment; however, this research identified how stronger school and tribal community collaboration opportunities can help build the capacity and capability of districts to be more historically trauma-informed to address trauma specifically among American Indian students.

Preparation-expectation disconnect refers to the difference in perspectives between teachers and administration regarding teacher confidence and competence in historical-trauma informed practices for American Indian students. Teachers have been trained in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma, but the training was an overview, lacking in the history of Native trauma and detailed strategies for use with students, repetitive, and inconsistent/infrequent. In addition, there has been concern regarding who is knowledgeable and skilled in providing training to teachers in the history of trauma among the tribal communities and in strategies appropriate for American Indian students with ACEs and trauma. Administration has a stronger level of confidence in teacher knowledge and abilities in trauma-informed practices than teachers do because of past training provided. However, teachers do not feel confident and competent due to concerns regarding the quality of past trainings and especially due to the trusting relationships they have established with students which has increased students sharing their personal feelings and issues therefore placing teachers more in the role of therapist and social/emotional support. This has made teachers feel unsafe because they are not trained as therapists and are concerned that what they say to student may traumatize or re-traumatize.

The concerns by teachers over the quality of past training connects to the third theme of the research which is *district commitment to student mental health*. The research indicated that

districts have a desire to provide training and support to teachers in historical trauma-informed practices, but the daily responsibilities and tasks of school has reduced this as a priority. Therefore, districts need to leverage internal and external resources to build capacity to collaborate with the community in developing and implementing a systematic, applicable, and meaningful teacher training program that will provide them the historical context of Native trauma and the strategies which will increase teacher confidence and competence. This commitment to student mental health requires that districts are mindful that they are not creating these systems only for American Indian students who exhibit signs of trauma but for all students and for students who do not outwardly show signs of distress. This will address the situation of *paradoxical marginalization* which is the concern that interventions targeted for a specific group of students who are traditionally marginalized may push other students to the periphery therefore causing marginalization of other students.

Alex Shervin Venet (2021) stated in the introduction of *Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Education,* that schools working towards being trauma-informed is at a crossroads because there is debate if a trauma-informed approach is a healing force in schools or the latest buzzword in education. There are few examples of schools and districts that are fully trauma-informed and even fewer that are trauma-informed in Native history and intergenerational trauma. Venet (2021) claimed that "schools are engaged in a trial-and-error process as they implement trauma-informed practices, leading to wonderful gains in some places and missing the mark in others" (p. xvii). This research identified that School Alpha and School Beta are both in the "trial-and-error" stage with School Beta further ahead in the process than School Alpha. Both districts show gains, especially in the area of building trusting relationships with students, parents/families/caregivers, and tribal leadership; however, there is additional work to be done to

improve teacher confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices by reworking the content, format, and frequency of teacher training and workshops and increasing commitment to this initiative by making teacher training in this area a priority.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Questions

1. How does historical trauma within your community affect student learning?

2. What professional development or training in trauma has been provided to teachers?

3. Describe any professional development/training in historical trauma regarding American Indians students you have received.

4. Discuss your impressions of teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices.

5. Have teachers requested specific training or support in trauma practices? If so, what have they requested?

6. What challenges or concerns do teachers have regarding working with students exposed to adverse experiences and/or trauma?

7. What information do we want to know from teachers that will help your schools to develop and implement training/professional development in historical trauma with the goal of building teacher perceived confidence and competence?

8. Of all the things we talked about today, what is the most important thing you heard or something that stood out to you? (Reflection)

Appendix B

Qualtrics Online Teacher Survey

1. School/district where you teach?
   a. School Alpha
   b. School Beta

2. From what source(s) have you received training/professional development in historical trauma-informed practices?
   a. My school/district
   b. A source outside my school/district
   c. I have not received training/professional development in historical trauma
   d. Other:

3. Describe how confident you feel in historical trauma-informed practices for Native/American Indian students.

4. What experiences have you had that contribute to your level of confidence?

5. Describe how competent you feel in historical trauma-informed practices for Native/American Indian students.

6. What experiences have you had that contribute to your current feelings of competence?

7. What deters or undermines your feelings of confidence in historical trauma-informed practices?

8. What deters or undermines your feelings of competence in historical trauma-informed practices?

9. What kinds of knowledge or new understandings would improve your confidence and/or competence in historical trauma-informed practices for Native/American Indian students?

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Although some teachers have indicated they have received training/professional development through their school/district, they have indicated they are not confident in trauma informed practices for Native/American Indian students. Why do you think this is the case?

2. Are there any newer teachers to your school that may not have been with the district when training/PD was done?

3. Would you say that whatever confidence and competence you have is from experience and not formal training?

4. If understanding the history is important, who should the school/district bring in to teach the history?

5. Should the training include strategies for working with students and families? Do you think those strategies differ?

6. Do you think the trauma-informed practices differ between general trauma and historical trauma?

7. Do members of the tribal community which are on staff help other staff with understanding the history of their community trauma?

8. Have tribal community members on staff been given the opportunity to help plan or develop training/professional development in historical trauma?

9. How do you know when a student's issues are beyond your capacity or the capacity of the school and when there is a need for professional mental health help?

10. Does the tribal community and community at large have mental health services that can provide support/assistance to students?

11. A number of staff that said they were very confident or somewhat confident indicated that it was due to them taking college courses. Do you think a college course would assist more people in being confidence and feeling competent?

12. What would be your recommendations for formal historical trauma training?

13. Who should do the training?

Appendix D

Data Gathering Log

Date	*Place*	*Activity*	*Who*	*What to Explore*
5/7/21	School Beta	Artifact collection	School/district records	Indian Policies and Procedures 2019-2020
5/7/21	School Beta	Artifact collection	School/district records	Indian Policies and Procedures 2020-2021
5/7/21	School Beta	Artifact collection	School/district records	Title VI Indian Education Open Hearing agenda
5/14/21	School Alpha	Focus group	MICIP team	Effect of historical trauma on student learning Professional development/training provided Teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices Training requests of teachers Challenges and concerns of teachers
5/14/21	School Beta	Focus group	MICIP team (partial)	Effect of historical trauma on student learning Professional development/training provided Teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices Training requests of teachers Challenges and concerns of teachers
5/21/21	School Beta	Focus group	MICIP team (partial)	Effect of historical trauma on student learning

				Professional development/training provided Teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices Training requests of teachers Challenges and concerns of teachers
6/15/21	School Alpha	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 1	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
6/15/21	School Beta	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 2	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training.

				Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
6/15/21	School Alpha	Artifact collection	ISD Trauma Leadership Team	Email from ISD Trauma Leadership Team. Definition of early childhood trauma and trauma in general. Trauma education in schools in the area to date.
6/16/21	School Beta	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 3	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
6/18/21	School Beta	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 4	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices.

				How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
6/18/21	School Beta	Interview (Telephone)	Teacher 5	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
6/21/21	School Beta	Interview (Telephone)	Teacher 6	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence.

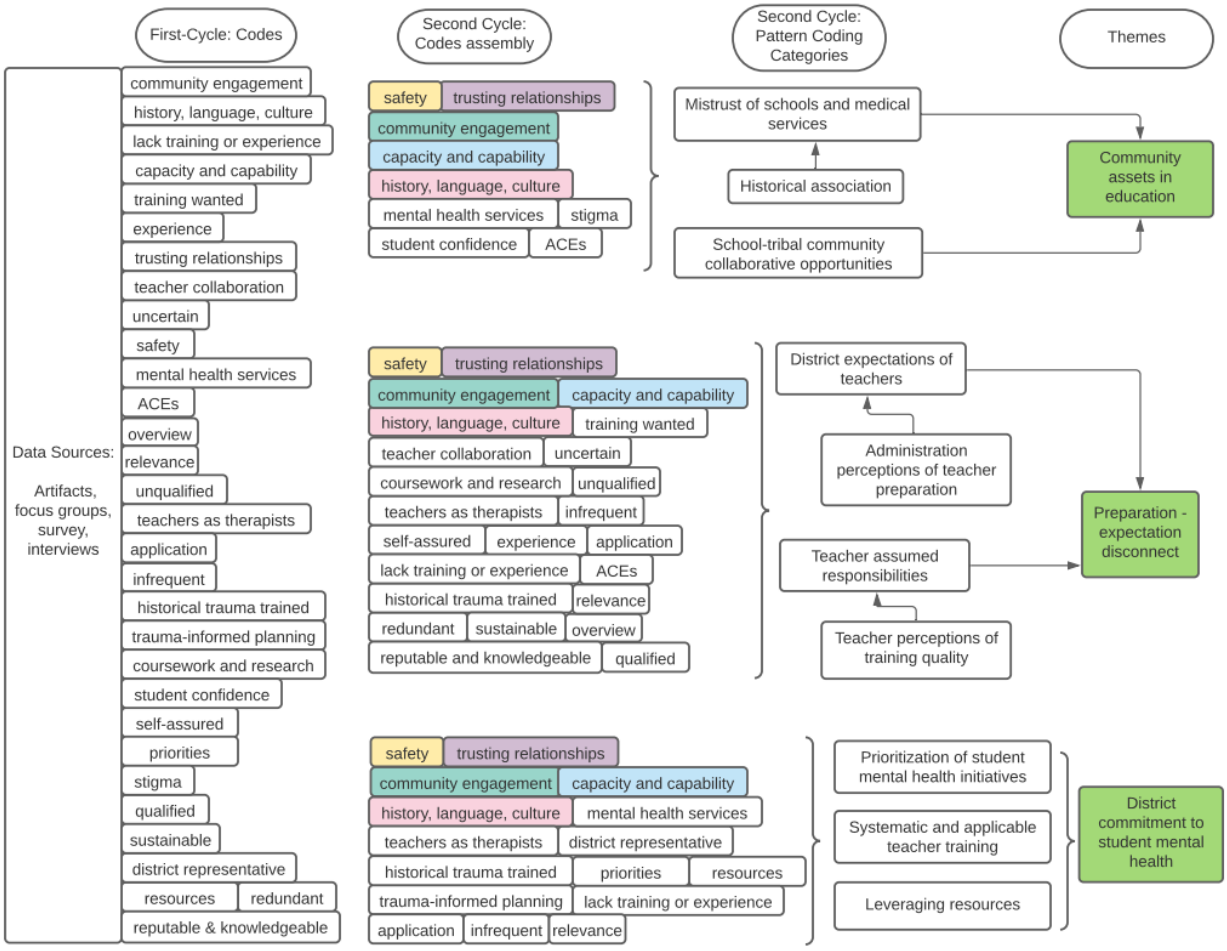
				Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
6/30/21	School Alpha	Interview (Telephone)	Teacher 7	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
7/1/21	School Beta	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 8	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence.

				Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
7/1/21	School Alpha	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 9 Teacher 10 Two teachers decided to conduct the interview together since they are in the same household.	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
7/5/21	School Alpha	Interview (Zoom)	Teacher 11	Teacher perceptions of confidence and competence in historical trauma practices. How to gain confidence and competence. Recommendations for formal historical trauma training and who

				should design and conduct the training. Strategies for working with American Indian students and families with trauma. Tribal community involvement in professional development. Access and availability to mental health services within the community.
8/14/21	School Beta	Artifact collection	Native Studies Educator and Coordinator	Title VI-Indian Education Open Hearing agenda and meeting minutes Native Studies programming Recommendations for the improvement of American Indian student education

Appendix E

Teacher Confidence and Competence Code-to-Theory Model



Appendix F

IRB Exemption

IRB EXEMPTION STATUS:
The IRB HSBS has reviewed the study referenced above and determined that, as currently described, it is exempt from ongoing IRB review, per the following federal exemption category:

EXEMPTION 1 at 45 CFR 46.104(d):

Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted **educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices** that are **not likely to adversely impact students'** opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Note that the study is considered exempt as long as any changes to the use of human subjects (including their data) remain within the scope of the exemption category above. Any proposed changes that may exceed the scope of this category, or the approval conditions of any other non-IRB reviewing committees, must be submitted as an amendment through eResearch.

Although an exemption determination eliminates the need for ongoing IRB review and approval, you still have an obligation to understand and abide by generally accepted principles of responsible and ethical conduct of research. Examples of these principles can be found in the Belmont Report as well as in guidance from professional societies and scientific organizations.

SUBMITTING AMENDMENTS VIA eRESEARCH:
You can access the online forms for amendments in the eResearch workspace for this exempt study, referenced above.

ACCESSING EXEMPT STUDIES IN eRESEARCH:
Click the "Exempt and Not Regulated" tab in your eResearch home workspace to access this exempt study.



Thad Polk
Chair, IRB HSBS

Appendix G

School Alpha Letter of Consent to Conduct Research

March 25, 2021

Timothy Constant
University of Michigan-Dearborn
College of Education, Health, and Human Services
19000 Hubbard Dr.
Dearborn, MI 48126

Dear Mr. Constant,

I am writing to express my support for your research study, "Teacher Confidence and Competence: Examining Training in Historical Trauma Informed Practices in Support of American Indian Students," to be conducted by you in the Spring of 2021. School is very supportive of research efforts dedicated to improving instruction and the academic achievement of our students.

To that end, School will permit you to conduct your research with our school. We approve the collection of data through school documents, focus groups, questionnaires, and teacher interviews with a focus on examining teacher perceived levels of confidence and competence regarding historical trauma-informed practices and how professional development/training can help better prepare teachers in trauma-informed practices to support students.

We look forward to learning the results of your research and for supporting you in the research.

With kind regards,

Superintendent
School

Appendix H

School Beta Letter of Consent to Conduct Research

April 19, 2021

Timothy Constant
University of Michigan-Dearborn
College of Education, Health, and Human Services
19000 Hubbard Dr.
Dearborn, MI 48126

Dear Mr. Constant,

I am writing to express my support for your research study, "Teacher Confidence and Competence: Examining Training in Historical Trauma Informed Practices in Support of American Indian Students," to be conducted by you in the Spring of 2021.
Schools is very supportive of research efforts dedicated to improving instruction and the academic achievement or our students.

To that end, the Schools Board of Education will permit you to conduct your research with our schools. We approve the collection of data through school documents, focus groups, questionnaires, and teacher interviews with a focus on examining teacher perceived levels of confident and competence regarding historical trauma-informed practices and how professional development/training can help better prepare teachers in trauma-informed practices to support students.

We look forward to learning the results of your research and for supporting you in the research.

With kind regards,

Superintendent of Schools
Schools

Appendix I

Research Information Sheet Provided to Participants

Title of Study: Teacher Confidence & Competence: Examining Training in Historical Trauma Informed Practices in Support of American Indian Students

Researcher: Timothy Constant

Faculty Sponsor: Paul Fossum, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Introduction

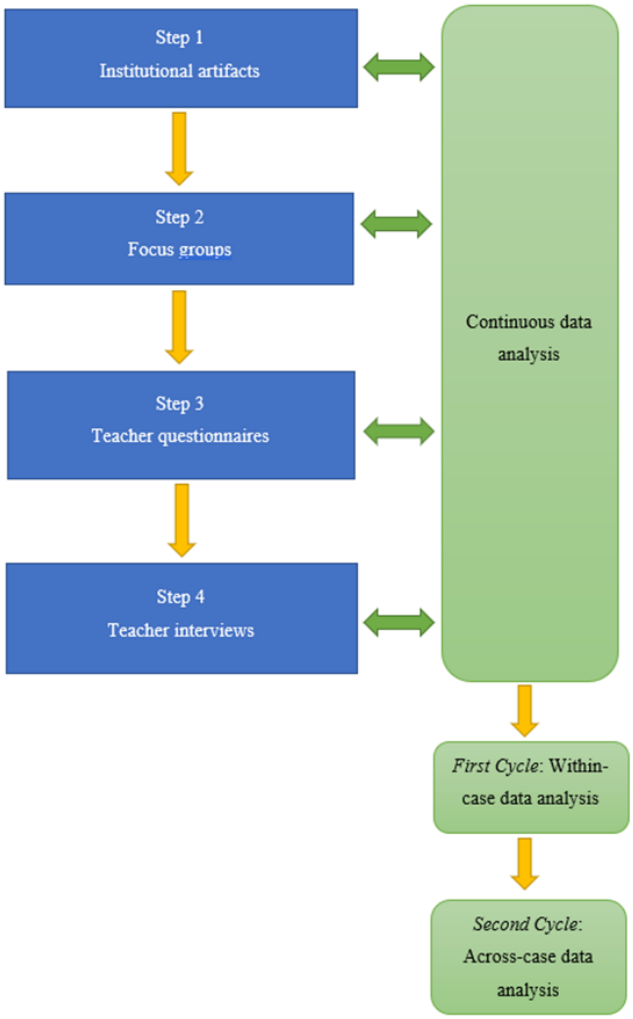
You are being invited to participate in a research study about teacher perceived levels of confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instructional practices specifically to support American Indian students. This study is being conducted by Timothy Constant from the University of Michigan-Dearborn between April and June 2021.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine current school commitment to addressing historical trauma among American Indian students, to examine current teacher perceptions of self-confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instruction as it relates to American Indian students, and to identify training/professional development teachers want and need to improve their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices.

Study Procedures

Teachers are the central focus of this study and no contact will be made with students nor student information requested. The collection of data is conducted in four steps as shown in the following figure.



The first phase is collecting institutional documents/artifacts from participating schools related to trauma-informed policies, procedures, and practices to determine what trauma-informed initiatives have been done in the past and what are currently implemented and/or planned.

The facilitation of focused groups is the second phase of the study, one from each participating school, which will include the members of each school's Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Team. These focus groups will be one to two sessions for an estimated one to two hours and permission to record these focus group sessions will be requested. The intent is for the focus groups to meet virtually. The purpose of the focus groups is to provide information for the development of a teacher survey by answering seven questions related to trauma-informed practices and professional development.

The third phase of the study is electronic distribution of a survey to all teachers to collect teacher perceptions of their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed practices. The survey will be short and should take no longer than five minutes to complete.

Voluntary individual teacher interviews is the fourth and final phase of the study. This phase provides teachers the option to meet one-on-one with the researcher, Timothy Constant, to provide more information regarding their perceived level of confidence and competence and what professional development/training they need and want which will help improve their confidence and competence in historical trauma-informed instructional practices specifically connected to the support of American Indian students. Permission to record these interviews will requested.

Benefits

The data collected from this study will be reported to each participating school and can be used in the Assess Needs phase of the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) to create a data story that will help define a measurable goal for improvement. Data will be reported to the school/district as soon as data is collected and organized so there is not an extended wait for the information.

Risks

All data collected from this study is protected information and will be stored and secured using the University of Michigan's Dropbox account which is secured with two-factor authentication. Information will not be collected that will identify you to further protect your confidentiality and avoid any potential risk for an accidental breach of confidentiality. In addition, participation in the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. These steps are in place to provide minimal to no risk.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Costs

There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to assist with the collection of institutional documents, participate in focus groups, answer questions from the survey, or continue with the interview phase. You are free to not answer any questions or

withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, any information collected prior to the withdrawal will be deleted/destroyed and not used in the study.

Confidentiality

All information collected during the course of this study will be stored without any identifiers (anonymous). No one will be able to match you to information and answers you provide.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Timothy Constant at (248) 214-8620 or by email at tnconsta@umich.edu. The University of Michigan-Dearborn faculty advisory for this research study is Paul Fossum who can be contacted at pfossum@umich.edu.