Secrecy Versus Education: Cultural Maintenance and the Dilemma of Educating Non-Indians About the Pueblos

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The purpose of this paper is to examine how cultures, specifically the Pueblo Indian cultures, can be maintained in the presence of outside cultural influence. In the last 400 years, Pueblo culture has been dramatically changed by the influx of first Hispanic and later Anglo cultural influences. Analysis of current programs to maintain culture reveal a foundation of building cultural identity as well as language skills and conformity to group cohesion principles. Non-Pueblo individuals were found to have a limited role in cultural preservation, however the education of non-Pueblo people has the potential to be both a constructive and destructive force.

1. Introduction

How can a culture be maintained in the presence of other cultures? How can a relatively small group of people maintain its traditions, language, and values when other cultures surround it and influence the lives of the community members? What role does the education of outsiders play in cultural continuity? In the last 400 years, Pueblo culture has been dramatically changed by the influx of first Hispanic, and later European American, cultural influences. Analysis of current programs to maintain Pueblo culture reveals that they emphasize the importance

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of building cultural identity and language skills, while they also conform to group cohesion principles. Thus, at present, non-Pueblo individuals have a limited role in Pueblo cultural preservation. However, the education of non-Pueblo people about Pueblo culture has the potential to be either a constructive force or a destructive force in the maintenance of Pueblo culture, and thus an examination of appropriate ways to ethically undertake it is also necessary.

The purpose of the current paper is two-fold. First, this paper examines how cultures can be maintained "from the inside" in the presence of outside cultural influence, specifically focusing on current efforts among the Pueblos of New Mexico. Though the nineteen Pueblo communities in New Mexico have different cultures and government systems, as well as a number of different languages (Sando, 1992), they do share some common features, such as the aforementioned efforts at cultural maintenance. Secondly, this paper looks at the role of the education of non-Pueblo people about Pueblo culture in efforts to maintain Pueblo culture "from the outside," considering the basic ethical dilemmas of such intercultural education.

2. A Brief History of Contact

Like other Native groups in the Americas, the legacy of Columbus was not a positive one for the nineteen Pueblos of New Mexico (Sando, 1992). Unlike some, the Pueblo people were never forced as a group to leave their land to make way for European development (except in the case of young people sent to government boarding schools). Nevertheless, the last 400 years have been ones of change as the New Mexican Pueblos have fought for cultural maintenance against the tide of outside influences.

The Spanish were the first Europeans to invade what would come to be New Mexico, starting with Juan de Oñate, who led a group of colonists to the area in 1598 (Eggan, 1979). Although Coronado had explored the region fifty years earlier, this was the first European group who came with the intention of staying. Over the next 250 years, Spanish became the common language used among the Pueblo people, as more and more Spanish-speaking colonists arrived and prospered. In addition to this language influence, another major change that the Hispanic world brought to the Pueblo people was Catholicism. Priests encouraged the Pueblos to adopt Catholicism,

attempting to subvert traditional beliefs and practices. Religious persecution at times drove the Pueblos to maintain native religions separately and secretly (Suina, 1992).

In 1846, the territory of New Mexico was taken over by the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. English began to replace Spanish, the influence of the Catholic Church was diminished, and the Hispanic communities' claims on Pueblo land were broken (Eggan, 1979). However, the influence of American culture was itself frequently negative for the Pueblo people. Pueblo children were sent to boarding schools, attempts were made to suppress Pueblo culture, and native sovereignty and land claims were challenged. There was also the damaging legacy of anthropologists, who studied the Pueblo people to benefit their own careers and reputations, revealing sacred secrets and taking important artifacts and remains for museum collections on the east coast of the United States (Suina, 1992).

Four hundred years of domination and control has been a fierce challenge to Pueblo culture. Yet the Pueblo people have stubbornly refused to let their culture die. This leads to two research questions for the present paper: (1) How can the cultures of indigenous people be maintained? and (2) What is the role of outsiders in encouraging the preservation of Pueblo cultures?

3. Maintaining Pueblo Culture

Culture has been defined in many ways by different researchers. For the purposes of this paper, culture can be defined as "the set of values, norms, and expectations shared by a group of people." Hofstede (1991) gives a helpful model for understanding this broad view of culture. He describes *human nature* as those things that we all share; for example, we all eat and sleep. On the other extreme, he defines *personality* as those things that make us different from other people, our own style and personal values. He then terms what lies between these two poles *culture*, or the values, attitudes, customs, and sets of behaviors that we share with other people as group members. Thus, from this perspective, culture includes languages, ceremonies, religious practices, schools, food, games, economic systems, and child-rearing practices.

3.1. Preventing Outside Intrusion

In order to maintain their culture, it has often been in the best interest of the Pueblo people to not share information with outsiders (Suina, 1992). Secrecy helps to protect Pueblo cultures from outside influences and prevents private knowledge from being learned by those who should not know it. For instance, the decision to physically close off the roads leading into the Pueblos at certain times is made to protect the Pueblo people's privacy. Another way of protecting the culture is to prohibit or limit photography (Suina, 1992). In addition to preventing outside intrusion, in order to maintain their culture it is also important for the Pueblos to pass the culture on to the next generation.

3.2. Teaching Language to the New Generation

Language is an influential aspect of cultural preservation, as language serves many functions in a given community. The linguistic relativist view, known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Whorf, 1956; Lee, 1996), goes so far as to predict that the language a person uses, with its vocabulary and grammar, directly affects the way that person views the world. Thus, language affects a person's perception of reality. The result of this for the Pueblo communities is that children learning English may perceive the world differently than those who grow up speaking Tewa or Tiwa.

For most people, the most complete way to learn a language is as a child. At puberty, the critical period for language learning ends, making native acquisition nearly impossible, in spite of the fact that adult learners have more cognitive strategies on which to rely (Singleton, 1995). Thus, some Pueblo language programs focus on teaching young children. One example of this is the Head Start program at Taos Pueblo. Although only a small portion of the Pueblo children participate in this program, those that do are exposed to Tiwa, the language of Taos Pueblo. The Headstart building has a designated room where only Tiwa is spoken, and the children learn quickly to switch into Tiwa when they enter. Tribal members are involved in this educational curriculum, with the War Chief for the Pueblo working part-time in the program (field notes, June, 2000).

Another language program was developed at Cochiti Pueblo (Benjamin, Romero, and Pecos, 1997). In this example, activities using the Keresan language were developed for children and teenagers

to give them a chance to learn the language in a natural, non-academic setting. The activities are part of an after-school program for students at Cochiti. This program also encourages the learning of traditional culture, perpetuating the oral traditions of Cochiti Pueblo.

Language teaching must come from the Pueblos themselves, however, not from the local public school system. In the early 1990's, a mostly Hispanic county in northern New Mexico prepared to address the issue of Pueblo language maintenance by developing a bilingual education program for children (Martinez, 2000). Although intended for the Pueblo children, any child would have been eligible to participate as the program was to be funded with state bilingual education funding. The Pueblo Tribal Council angrily rejected this effort and denied the right of anyone outside the Pueblo government to use the language without permission. Although the bilingual teachers who tried to start the program had good intentions, they did not understand the Pueblo perspectives and viewed the language very differently than the Tribal Council did.

3.3. Teaching Culture to the New Generation

In addition to language teaching, the traditional ways of farming are also taught at Zuni and Tesuque Pueblos. These farming techniques are sustainable and serve as a vehicle for teaching children about traditional ways of living. The Pueblo people involved in these projects use organic farming and teach children the importance of culturally significant crops such as corn. They also encourage children and adults to participate in cultural group activities rather than in non-Pueblo replacements (television viewing, for example). In addition, participants maintain the local irrigation system and gain an appreciation of the ways that agriculture often made the difference between survival and death for the ancestors.

Another way of teaching children and adults about traditional culture is through animal rearing. Taos Pueblo, along with 40 other tribes across the western United States, is part of the Intertribal Bison Cooperative (LaDuke, 2000). The mission of the cooperative is buffalo restoration. In the last few years the herd at Taos has doubled in size and new buffalo are brought from other Native American communities for breeding (field notes, June, 2000). The buffalo are care for by adults, however the children in the community learn about their importance in the history of the Pueblo.

Through these examples, we can begin to see that education plays an important role in maintaining Pueblo culture. Not only does it serve to maintain traditions, but it also serves to build cultural identity in young people. A study of Navaho students found that the students most likely to graduate from high school were those from the most conservative families and areas (Deyhle, 1995). Deyhle claims that one reason for this may be a more secure self-identity that enabled them to resist the effects of European American and Hispanic racism and cultural influence. Although the Navaho Nation is very different from the Pueblo communities in terms of size, history, and traditions, this finding may lend credence to the importance of traditional education for Pueblo children. Education may help them to remain a part of the Pueblo community and teach them to value their heritage, in order that they, too, can help maintain the culture. Such education may simultaneously help them to be successful in public education.

4. Intercultural Education

From the perspective of the Puebleo people, language learning is an inappropriate way for non-Pueblo people to learn about the Pueblo culture. Suina (1992) describes the different concepts of knowledge held by Pueblos and European Americans. In the United States, he claims, language and other knowledge are usually viewed as a commodity rather than as a part of someone's identity. The Pueblo perspective is often incomprehensible for teachers operating from the view of language as something separate from a person. However, from the Pueblo perspective, giving the language to outsiders is inappropriate and offensive. Traditional language use in the Pueblos is closely tied to religious and ceremonial functions, and as a result they believe it should be kept for the exclusive use of tribal members. Thus the Pueblos have resisted the writing of their languages and the teaching of them to outsiders.

While language-based efforts at educating non-Pueblos about Pueblo culture have met with failure, intercultural education, when pursued in a developmentally appropriate way, still holds hope for helping outsiders to participate in the maintenance of Pueblo culture. The goal of intercultural education is to teach respect and empathy for other cultures, and as a result to reduce ethnocentrism. *Ethnocentrism* is the degree to which someone is able to shift frames of reference in order to see something from the perspective of another person.

Intercultural conflict is often the result of cultures having different values, expectations, and communication styles, without individuals having the ability see differences as acceptable and developing ways of interacting with people from other cultures. Thus, ethnocentrism can cause intercultural conflict, especially when an individual feels his or her cultural perspective is threatened (Bennett, 1993).

The *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969) proposes that the more interaction someone has with people from other cultures (given certain conditions), the less ethnocentric he or she will be. Unfortunately, contact can also serve to reinforce existing stereotypes and prejudice if the individuals do not share equal status and equal goals, and if they are not open to other viewpoints. A number of other theories of intercultural communication can also be applied to the issue of how to teach outsiders about the Pueblos, including the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; 1993). This model is applicable to the situation of educating non-Pueblos about Pueblo culture in that it describes stages of ethnocentrism and suggests appropriate activities to encourage students to develop the ability to judge other cultures as valid and valued.

4.1. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, developed by Milton Bennett (1986; 1993), is a theoretical model that describes an individual's process of movement from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism in his or her perceptions of other cultures. Bennett's model has six stages of increasing sensitivity. The first three stages describe ethnocentrism; the latter three describe ethnorelativism.

In the ethnocentric stages, one's own cultural frame of reference is seen as the only possible frame. One's own cultural perspective is central to all experience, and as a result cultural differences are judged based on one's own standards. Bennett's first ethnocentric stage is *denial*, where there has been no significant contact with members of other cultural groups. This may be because of geographic isolation or segregation. Individuals in denial are unable to construe difference, and as a result they may dehumanize culturally different people.

When significant contact occurs, often it helps the individual to pass into the next ethnocentric stage—*defense*. The defense stage

occurs when individuals are confronted with cultural difference and are threatened by it. The other culture is seen as "bad" or "wrong," because it is not congruent with one's own. Another possible reaction is to see differences as evidence of one's own culture's superiority. At times, this stage may occur among minorities or individuals without power in the opposite direction. In this case, referred to as *reversal*, the dominant culture is seen as the standard and all other cultures, including one's own, are evaluated negatively. In defense the beginnings of cognitive categories for culture are developed, but cultural differences are seen as negative.

Knowledge of other cultures and reduction of their perceived threat can help the transition to *minimization*, the third ethnocentric stage. In minimization, cultural differences are seen as minor and similarities are stressed. This stage is still ethnocentric, since the implication is that these other cultures are actually similar to one's own, differing only in terms of superficial outer practices. The underlying assumption of individuals at this stage is that "deep down we're all the same," meaning "everyone is just like me." There is recognition and acceptance of superficial differences, while differences in values and beliefs are not recognized.

Through cultural self-awareness activities and an increased sophistication in the understanding of culture, a paradigm shift can occur from an ethnocentric perspective to an ethnorelative one. An ethnorelative perspective is one that recognizes that other cultural viewpoints are valid ways of judging the world. This shift is such a radical change in ways of seeing that usually individuals do not regress back to the ethnocentric stages in areas they see as cultural. Some differences that may not originally be seen at cultural (gender or sexual orientation, for example) may be able to be perceived ethnorelatively as well when linked to cultural differences. Bennett recognizes three ethnorelative stages: *acceptance, adaptation*, and *integration*.

Acceptance is the stage where a framework is created for appreciating other cultural perspectives as equally valid as one's own. At this stage there is differentiation and elaboration of cultural categories and development of a meta-level view of culture. There is respect both for differences in behavior and values. The individual may still confront aspects of other cultures that are personally offensive, but she or

he is able to recognize that there are different ways of "organizing reality" (Bennett, 1993:31).

In the *adaptation* stage, skills are developed for relating to and communicating with people from other cultures. One aspect of this is the development of empathy, or the ability to shift to someone else's frame of reference. Category boundaries become more flexible and permeable for individuals at this stage, and often more than one frame of reference is internalized. This is often the case for women or minorities who must operate very differently within the different cultures they navigate—the cultures of the workplace and the home, for example. The individual's identity is defined in pluralistic terms, "to see one's self existing within a collection of various cultural and personal frames of reference" (Bennett, 1993:39).

The last of Bennett's stages, *integration*, occurs only when someone is truly bi-cultural or multicultural. There is an internalization of multiple frames of reference that allows the individual to switch back and forth between different, sometimes conflicting, frames of reference. The challenge of this stage is to integrate those different selves into a "new whole" (Bennett, 1993:40). One aspect of this stage is the development of the ability to contextually evaluate situations from one or more cultural perspectives. At this stage, individuals operate outside of one cultural framework, thus becoming marginalized, but constructively so. They are able to use this outside position to interact constructively within a number of cultures. Many Pueblo people are bi-cultural, operating in the European American world at work, switching back to their traditional culture at other times.

4.2. Curriculum Design Issues

Intercultural curricula designers and teachers of students at any level can benefit from awareness of Bennett's model, especially in teaching about cultures like the Pueblos. By sequencing activities and materials from the most basic stage to the most sophisticated, it may be possible to help students to become less ethnocentric and more sensitive to the cultures of other people.

Constructive intercultural education should start with a culture-general approach before focusing on specific cultures as examples of difference. If students are in the developmental stages of defense or

denial, culture-specific examples may threaten their own sense of cultural superiority and result in the individual criticizing the culture he or she is learning about. When students get to the minimization level, they are ready to begin to delve into the complexities of another culture in order to develop increasing complexity in their concept of culture. Teaching about the Pueblo culture should be based on a previously built foundation of intercultural concepts (Meares, 1997).

4.3. Ethical Dilemmas in Intercultural Education

One of the challenges for educators introducing students to other cultural groups is the ethical double-edged sword of encouraging both respect and interest. Although teachers want to increase respect, what potential influence might the students' interest have on the culture they are studying? Respect is a paradoxical concept in this case. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2000) identifies six aspects of respect: empowerment, healing, dialogue, curiosity, self-respect, and attention. She describes curiosity about another person, wanting to know about them and understand them, as part of showing respect for who they are. In the case of the Pueblos, however, expression of curiosity may be inappropriate and may be seen by the Pueblo people as intrusion. In encouraging curiosity about the Pueblos, is a teacher encouraging respect or encroachment? This paradox leads to the third research question of the current paper: Is it ethical to teach non-Pueblo people about Pueblo culture?

In teaching, a teacher may create interest, which may serve to increase the outside impact on what it is he or she wants to help preserve. Although curiosity may be a positive sign of respect, it is also important to teach students to respect boundaries. Especially in a case like the Pueblos, where trust has been betrayed many times over generations and many topics of cultural interest may be considered inappropriate by member standards, the issue of boundaries and the role of outsiders should be addressed explicitly with students.

Respect is a worthy goal, but what will students do that will help or hurt the Pueblos? Students have the potential to take positive or negative actions. They may be encouraged to become collectors of Pueblo artifacts that help to support the market for both legal and illegal, authentic and inauthentic artifacts. They may become public servants and the respect developed in a class may help them to interact or

negotiate in a respectful manner with Pueblo leaders. Actions in the form of interaction with Pueblo people can have both positive and negative influences. They may, through their interest and respect, encourage Pueblo youth to value their own culture. In contrast, they may encourage the minimization of concern about outside influence, resulting in the "getting used to outsiders" that can decrease diligence about cultural protection and result in cultural loss.

5. Conclusion

The research questions posed in this paper have no easy answers. Pueblo culture has been maintained in the face of outside contact over the last 400 years and members of the Pueblos continue to work to strengthen and revive their languages and cultural practices. The role of outsiders in this effort continues to be negotiated. Although the primary role in cultural maintenance must be taken by the members of the Pueblos themselves, intercultural education of non-Pueblo peoples plays a part and must be undertaken with a sense of ethical responsibility with the goal of promoting respect among students. Education should work to move students from ethnocentrism towards ethnorelativity, validating the Pueblo cultures while encouraging cultural boundaries.

5.1. Limitations and Implications

The major limitation of this paper is that a non-Pueblo writer wrote it. As an intercultural educator I have thought about these issues, but it is impossible for me to totally shed my perspective as an outsider and understand the Pueblo dilemma. Ideally, teaching about the Pueblos would come from a member of one of the Pueblos. In spite of this limitation, there are also advantages to viewing a cultural problem as an outsider. Outsiders are able to see things that members of the culture are unaware of.

In addition to the intrinsic value of studying intercultural (Pueblo-non-Pueblo) interaction and education, this analysis may also shed light on similar cases of intercultural contact in other settings. In some ways, it is a unique situation, as the Pueblo people are the original inhabitants of their environment, and because of the particular history among the cultures in New Mexico. In other ways, however, this situation is being repeated worldwide. The aboriginal people of Australia and Japan (the Einu), for example, face many of the same struggles to

maintain their culture in the presence of huge cultural impacts from other groups.

This is more than just an academic case study. It is a case of survival and community. With the public issues of casino taxes, land claims, and sovereignty struggles that currently face New Mexico and other states with Native American populations, students studying at a university now potentially could be in a position in the future as voters, judges, business owners, or simply as citizens to take action, positive or negative, in relation to Pueblo issues. It is the responsibility of educators, in a country where there are many different cultural groups, to prepare students to live together with an attitude of respect.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Study

Suggestions for future study and development of the ideas presented in this paper include testing the relative ethnocentrism of students before and after exposure to the curriculum. In his Developmental Model of Intercultural Communication, Bennett has developed an instrument to assess levels of ethnocentrism that could be used for this purpose. Additional study might also focus on the role of the teacher in promoting respect and lessening ethnocentrism.

This paper is only a start to addressing the complex pattern of issues woven between cultural maintenance and outsider education. Although the two issues can be addressed separately, they benefit from examination within the context of one another. If educators can promote respect while encouraging students to not be overly intrusive, they can help to sow the seeds for preservation of Pueblo culture in an environment of non-interference from outsiders.

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