

Social Work and the Indiana Native American

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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July 1994

Graduation: July 22, 1994

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ABSTRACT

Social work has been, for a long time, focused mainly on micro or counseling skills. In the last decade, much research on related to social work has pointed out this limitation, especially in the context of working with minority cultures. One such cultural group, the Native Americans, have a variety of needs which may be met through the macro, or more activist skills a social worker needs.

This thesis begins with an analysis of the Native American community in Indiana; including the social problems, values and conflict, cultural differences, oppression, barriers, and sources of power all relevant to the experience of an Indiana Native American. Using this analysis as a point of reference, both macro and micro practice concerns are discussed being the implications of becoming a more ethnic-sensitive social worker, particularly in working with Native Americans. Ideally, this research will lead to social work becoming more a multicultural practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Judy Gray, assistant professor of social work for all of her patience, support and enthusiasm in advising me through this thesis. She has been more than generous with her time, especially considering her busy schedule.

A special thanks also to Stephen Paul, Executive Director for Students of Native American Culture this past year, and his family, for taking time out of a busy schedule to assist in helping me to put focus on my project and for serving as a strong resource in my community analysis.

A tremendous thanks to Sally Tuttle, Executive Director; Joyce Green, Bookkeeper; and the rest of the staff at Indiana American Indian Manpower Council in Indianapolis for a great deal of the community analysis and social work practice recommendations made early on in my researching the Native American community.

Thanks to Lora Siders, Secretary to the Council for the Miami Nation for her important input and recommendations in the values issues which affect Native Americans in Indiana today.

Thanks to Chris Terwilliger, who has served as a liaison to many Woodlands Native Americans, for his input and recommendations in the writing of the community analysis.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

Introduction

This section will discuss the actual Native American population as a community within Indiana. It will examine the population, social problems, values and conflict, cultural differences, oppression, barriers, as well as tribal, organizational, and resources power sources. This section serves as a baseline for the proceeding sections concerned with actual social work practice. It is important to keep in mind that although this analysis is based on Indiana Native Americans, the information may or may not pertain to any individual Native American in Indiana.

Identifying the Population

Indiana is home to people of 103 different native nations. As of 1993, there are 14,949 Native Americans living in the state of Indiana. Native Americans in Indiana, as well as in many states where they are living outside of a reservation, are given the title "Urban Indians" by their states. Since there are no reservations in Indiana, the state has given the population this title. There are large numbers of Native Americans from the Miami nation, as well as some Sioux, Pottawatami, Choctaw, their different tribes/ clans, and other nations in Indiana. Most Native American nations and tribes originating from Indiana were forced to relocate in the past, but still have affiliations with Indiana today. The Miami nation is the only one which can be traced back through history as being from Indiana and still

living in Indiana (Tuttle).

Perceived needs of Native Americans in Indiana varies. Many Native Americans are not looking for outside help at all, they are wanting to "do their own work" (Terwilliger). It seems that the influences of the majority culture may be unwanted and the "help" offered many times to fit needs are not helpful. It seems that oftentimes, Native Americans are offered help in a rather condescending manner. The perception Native Americans have of people who want to help is a negative one.

"Indian people are at the bottom of any kind of scale in terms of any economic or political factor one wants to consider" (Wilkinson 451). According to the Indiana American Indian Manpower Council, the needs of Native Americans are large. Job placement and training are of utmost importance to fill the needs of the Native American population. The poverty rate for Native Americans in Indiana is more than triple that of the rest of Indiana, at 24.6%. In 1990, the unemployment rate for Indiana Native Americans was at a rather significant 10.2% (Bureau 138). The rate of unemployment for Native Americans in 1993 has since increased to a 12.8%, and the school dropout rate is 12.4%; both rates being somewhat higher than the rest of the Indiana's population (Tuttle).

Social Problems

There are a variety of social problems which occur in this population within the Indiana community. First, it seems that there is no support system for the Native Americans. The reason

for this is that there is no recognized tribe within this state. When a state has recognized a tribe, specialized state and federal funds are released to all Native Americans in that state. Tribal recognition is simply an acknowledgement from the state government that Native Americans exist and are entitled to funds specific to Native Americans. Presently, there are no specialized state funds and few federal funds which go towards Native Americans in Indiana. If even one tribe was to become recognized within Indiana, funds for services could be directly given to all Native Americans. The symptoms for this lack of support within the state take the form of a high poverty rate, a high unemployment rate, and also, a high dropout rate (Tuttle).

This data is kept recent by the Bureau of the Census, but also by the Indiana American Indian Manpower Council. It seems to be an ongoing process to measure the successes of the Council and the Native American community. This council is the only organization to serve Native Americans and is primarily aimed at helping Native Americans become self-sufficient (Tuttle).

Due to the fact that Indiana Native Americans come from over 100 tribes, it is difficult to measure whether any subgroup is experiencing more of these problems than others, but it is possible that those who are not affiliated with the Miamis may have less connection with other members and even less of a support system.

Dominant Values and Conflict

"Providers [of social services] must yield to the spiritual

life that holds Indian lives together." Spirituality is a necessary part in the life of a Native American. Suppression of this need only harms the Native American and her/his culture (Horse 493). Common bases for spirituality in Native Americans include a respect for Mother Earth and a respect for all humans (Tuttle). Another commonality in spirituality may be that all living things have a spirit and respect is important for all survival (Terwilliger). However, it is important to realize that there are several differences between nations and tribes. Spiritual beliefs and customs vary greatly but are often generalized. One Native American may not believe or practice as another does (Tuttle).

Perhaps one conflict within the Native American community and also with the outside community, stems from the Native American value on spirituality. Grave desecration, the excavating of remains for use in museums, is a timely and controversial issue. This conflict occurs in many states where human remains are being kept in museums. In Indiana, this topic is presently quite heated. A common spiritual belief in the Native American cultures is that people do not die, they pass on. To remove the remains of a body from the earth interrupts this journey and violates the people (Tuttle).

Another value conflict many Native Americans experience with the rest of the outside community is in the recent mascot issue. Team mascots, such as the Braves and the Warriors, are seen as offensive to many Native Americans. Besides the stereotyping in

name and decoration, having people as mascots is offensive. Says Sally Tuttle, "...mascots are animals and Native Americans are not animals..." Not all Native Americans agree on this issue, however. The Miami nation's stand on mascots is one of pride. Says one member of the Miami Council, they are "proud to be recognized by others" and recognized as positive, as winners. She also mentions that this opinion, like any, may not be agreed upon by every individual within the nation (Siders).

Cultural Differences

"The American Indian people are a family" (Wilkinson 451). Perhaps there is no cultural group in which the extended family is emphasized more than in the Native American family. The Native American extended family includes much more than blood lines and relatives in the European sense, it includes tribal alliances and associations, clan membership, family names, and friendship (Goodluck 519). Geographic proximity may also make a difference, but in an example given by one Native American woman, some needs are met by tribes and tribal connections which leap over geographic regions and even tribal identification (Tuttle). Many of these "family systems" are interstate and overstep geographic boundaries, perhaps mainly due to the history of governmental policy removing Native Americans from original homelands. Households in separate states may be misunderstood by many human service providers because this family structure is so far-reaching (Horse 463).

Another outstanding feature of the Native American culture

is that of age and interdependence in the family structure. Children and elders are the most respected groups in this culture (Tuttle). Integration of these generations is extremely important in Native American culture. Elders and children are not to be isolated from each other, for the most part (Horse 493). The linear nuclear family system model shows a progression from birth to old age with periods of increasing independence continuing throughout. The extended system model, however, is much more circular and is marked by "periods of self reliance balanced with mutual interdependence". Value orientation among Native American families are more group oriented, as opposed to striving towards autonomy and independence (Horse 464).

Differences and Oppression

The way of Native American tribes and nations is a drastically different way from the mainstream, majority culture in Indiana. It is hypothesized that the idea of poverty could be non-existent if the tribes were allowed their original structure. The notion of progress within a community is usually seen as moving up or moving out, while the Native American concept of progress stays within the original community. Survival as a group, not just individually may be a goal of the Native American people, especially considering how much of these tribes and nations have been divided geographically and legislatively (Wilkinson 453-54). Perhaps this hypothesis can be illustrated by pointing out the importance of the extended family in Native

American culture. The priorities of this family does not lie in leaving the family to "succeed" elsewhere, but to work together collectively. What may appear to others as poverty, according to numbers, is not poverty to the nation, tribe, or clan. Lifestyle and geographic differences must be taken into account when discussing this hypothesis.

Native Americans are constantly being generalized by social services workers and others. They are all seen as the same and not recognizably different by much of society, especially in Indiana where a Native American may not be distinguishable from another or from a European American. There are at least 150 North Native American tribes which exist (Terwilliger) and there are people from at least 100 of these tribes living in Indiana (Tuttle). Each tribe is also like a small nation. Each one has its own distinct language, religion, culture, and history. Among North Native Americans, there are 200 mutually exclusive unintelligible languages alone (Carpenter 455)! It is important to see each of these tribes as individual, as separate nationalities (Wilkinson 452).

Barriers

Prejudice against Native Americans is not a problem in Indiana. Unlike many other minorities or ethnic groups, Native Americans are not always visibly different from those people in the majority and many Native Americans do not necessarily have physically distinguishing characteristics (Tuttle, Terwilliger). It is not surprising to find that one of the strongest concerns

Native Americans here in Indiana is that many people feel that Native Americans are "dead and gone", especially in this region. Many people seem to believe that the only Native Americans left are those living on reservations (Tuttle).

Stereotyping of Native Americans is still very strong, in Indiana and all across America. A few of these stereotypes and myths pointed out include: laziness, drunkenness, stoic, warlike or bloodthirsty, unemotional, aloof, and a number of others (Edwards 499). Common stereotyping of Native Americans in Indiana include alcoholism, gambling, barbaric behavior, and following New Age religion (Tuttle, Terwilliger). It is important to remember that Native Americans are as "individualistic as members of any other group" (Edwards 499), and generalizations are impossible to make.

Alcoholism, a common disease which afflicts many people, is emphasized by movies, media, and even social services as being strongest in the Native American peoples. Many Native Americans are harmed by this generalization (Tuttle). Although it is possible that alcoholism runs heavier in Native American groups, the numbers and region in which one lives makes a difference in affected people. In many minority groups, alcoholism runs high, partially due to the economic and social conditions. It is a stereotype that Native Americans in Indiana are more likely to be alcoholic than any other group (Terwilliger).

Another stereotype is being carried out by recent self-help and new age religion material. Also referred to by some as "the

wanna-be situation", those who claim to know the Native American spirituality and have integrated it into their own work, disturb many Native Americans in Indiana and elsewhere. Many people refer to the Native American spirituality but do not see that there are many differences within tribes, nations, and clans. Also, many people are confused and believe Native American religion to be a series of gods or spirits, and not a respect for the earth (Tuttle).

The last barrier many Native Americans face, in Indiana and elsewhere, is that of misunderstanding by others. This is especially true in the area of employment. Some customs and traditions carried out by various tribes and nations may require days off of work or the equivalent of mainstream Christian holidays. Many times, when ceremonies are being held, it is important for families to participate, even if that participation means traveling or giving up other commitments (Edwards 400), such as work.

Another misunderstanding common in the workplace is that of hair length, especially for men. It is traditional in most Native American cultures for both women and men to wear their hair long. In fact, in some cultures, it is a sign of respect to wear long hair and the hair should only be cut for tragic events in life, such as a death, to show respect as well. For many white or mainstream employers, this is a sign of disrespect or even messiness (Tuttle).

Tribal Versus Government Power

A "...tribe is...a big self-help organization that is designed to help people and meet the psychological, spiritual, and economic needs of its members" (Wilkinson 454).

One example of this ideal comes from Sally Tuttle, a Choctaw, describing her experience at a Hopi hospital. After becoming sick far away from her homeland or family, she checked into the Hopi hospital. She paid \$25 for her visit to a hospital which handled all healthcare (dental, eye, etc.) under one roof. The hospital also billed the Choctaw nation for her visit, although she does not live in the actual Choctaw region and she is not a Hopi (Tuttle).

As mentioned earlier, there is no state recognized tribal identification in Indiana, in fact, there is no policy or procedure in Indiana to get a tribe recognized. The Miami nation is the only group which can even attempt at this procedure due to this being their original territory. If there was just one tribe recognized by the state of Indiana, state funding for Native American organizations could open up and an Indian hospital and similar services would be made possible (Tuttle). Without this official recognition, however, the tribes are powerless to help themselves to the degree which is possible and the self-help system which could be enacted cannot.

Recently, the Miamis did attempt to become officially recognized by the state legislature, but the attempt failed. It appears that there is no definite process for gaining this

recognition. Instead of being granted the tribal recognition, the Miamis were given organization rights. Says Siders of the Miamis, the Miami nation has been "recognized without being recognized" by being incorporated. The Miamis are now a 501.C3 organization, but not as a recognized, identified tribe in Indiana (Siders).

Organizational Power

The largest organization and the only specified service for Native Americans in Indiana is the Indiana American Indian Manpower Council. There are four offices in Indiana, all located in Indianapolis, Evansville, Fort Wayne, and Peru. The mission of the Council is to "provide education, training and employment opportunities for Native American Indians, Alaskans, Hawaiians, South Islanders, and Samoans in Indiana." They provide services such as job training, search, and placements, adult literacy and GED, career counseling and resume classes, and computer education. They are funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Division of Indian and Native American Programs Job Training Partnership Act and also receive some state funds for economic development. In order to be eligible for these services, the client must have been unemployed for at least seven consecutive days and must have a legal document proving Native American lineage. Anyone under-employed or economically disadvantaged is eligible for some of the services (Indiana).

Resource Power

Resources include such things as money, jobs, schools, and housing. Many groups who have higher levels of poverty and unemployment have somehow been allowed less of these resources in the past. According to Walters (24-26), there is a high level of institutional racism leading indirectly into monetary resource shifting. Competition among majority and minority groups for funding often occurs, especially at the state and local levels, and the minority groups oftentimes lose out on needed resources (Walters 26).

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

The following sections, macro and micro practice, as well as recommendations, will discuss the implications of social work and the Native American client. Using information gathered about Native Americans in the community analysis, as well as a more multicultural point of view, applications will be made of social work with Native Americans.

Although there seems to be a much stronger need for macro skills when working with Native Americans, it is important to realize the importance of using both macro and micro level social work in working with this minority population. There is a need for social workers to use both types of practice skills while integrating a strong respect for both the individual and her/ his culture when working with Native American peoples.

The recommendations section of this paper will tie the macro and micro practice sections together to propose solutions to existing problems mentioned in the community analysis. It will be looking at the problems of unemployment, myths, value conflicts, lack of state tribal recognition, poverty, and school dropout rates.

MACRO PRACTICE

The Need

Macro social work, with a focus on community, organizations, and resources and power, is essential in the field. Community, an understanding of a place set within geographic boundaries or of people with special interests and the connections made in networks of organizations. Organizations, in turn, are important in that they may include those active in the delivery of human services as well as political, social, and religious organizations. Relations in inter- and intra-organizations influence how well the organization network functions. Knowledge of resources and the power community members hold it also imperative for macro level social work. The social worker needs knowledge of available services and how to use them before power and resources can be utilized (Devore 241).

In working with Native Americans, social workers must realize that their clients will be coping with socio-cultural factors such as racism, poverty, and victimization as well as the more obvious, direct problems. Realizing this, social workers must be able to practice macro skills. Social work with various culture groups often does not focus on the protection of rights and benefits as much as needed (Washington 106).

The macro practice focuses less on the individual, but in the past there has been more of a need in changing institutional practices to meet human social needs. The focus of social work is often far too individual focused to realize the greater

community need. It is imperative that social workers apply community organizing skills to identify targets for change as well as realizing where the power sources are in order to bring about change (Washington 106).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the "sense of peoplehood experienced by members of the same ethnic group" (Devore 23). Ethnicity is a "functional imperative of society--a means of seeking inclusion in the mainstream of society and of preserving ethnic differences" (Washington 104). Perceptual experiences, shared symbols, oral traditions, feelings, and sentiments help make up these differences (Washington 105). In turn, these experiences affect the external environment of the individual as well as the ethnic group.

Ethnicity has an important place in the social work field. In fact, social workers need to realize that usual practice techniques are not always transferable from one ethnic or minority group to another (Washington 104). Different value orientations from different life-styles and life-chances not only affect human behavior (Washington 105), but connections with community, organizations, and resources. Historical and sociocultural references of client problems are significant in the problem-solving process (Washington 106).

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is the study of the "patterned, socially transmitted life-styles of cultural and social groups". It is a

valuable model for understanding clients whose social development occur outside of society's mainstream. This model may be used to understand the significance of one's ethnicity in its affects on behavior, needs, and competence (Washington 104-05).

The ethnomethodology model involves two basic principles. The first of these principles is that people take for granted the "background features" of their own everyday life. The history, shared symbols, oral traditions, feelings, and sentiments are all taken for granted by their own group, but are not so apparent to those outside the ethnic group. The second basic principle is that ethnic minority groups have a collective conscience of knowledge which helps to make certain groups hold together more than others because of their general knowledge and understanding (Washington 104-06).

An ethnomethodologic approach to social work would include much more macro-type activities from social workers. They would become enablers, planners, brokers, and advocates for the people, as opposed to the more direct practice skill of one-to-one counseling. There would be more a focus on mobilizing the people, and advocating and enlisting others within the community to be active in that manner (Washington 106). Also, those who do take this approach into their practice, will find that they are not as much in the leading roles as they were before (Lewis 497). They will become facilitators and resource persons in this model. There would be more of a focus on changing the dysfunctional institutions, not the individuals who may have become victims of

the institutions (Washington 106).

Roles

Perhaps the biggest concern of a social worker working with Native Americans in Indiana would be of the tribal recognition. A social worker would be involved very little in leading; instead, she/ he may be more involved in advocating and mobilizing the Native American leaders in the community and serving as a resource person. The focus would be on the fact that the state institution has prevented the Miami nation from processing and finding out what is needed to become recognized.

Another large concern of the social worker in Indiana would be of the high poverty, unemployment, and dropout levels. What institutions have failed the individual? The social worker may assist in being a broker or enabler, going into the schools and employment offices, trying to assist in finding out why and to what extent they are failing the Native American population. A social worker may be a planner, working with Native Americans to find out how these institutions can be changed.

The ethnomethodology model may be quite useful for social workers. Although social workers are often in contact with ethnic groups outside of the mainstream (if not identified as one with different ethnic background) they are not often able to integrate this knowledge with any sort of problem-solving. The realization that social work will involve working with those of all backgrounds is quickly learned, but the differences between these groups may not be taken into consideration. Experiences

differ due to societal structure and biases, leading to differing value orientations, which are often overlooked in social work.

MICRO PRACTICE

Preparation

The first step for a social worker preparing to counsel anyone is gathering data. Data includes available materials on the problem, the route to the social worker, and the client's possible perception of the problem from the way others perceive it (Devore 192). This is a typical process for many of those who plan to counsel people, this section will address more specifically preparing to counsel Native Americans.

In preparing to counsel a Native American, it is important to learn as much about that individual's tribe or clan as possible, as well as considering the rural or urban origin. Going into the client's community may help, depending on how concentrated the population is (Thomason 181). It may be helpful to find out if the client's family is more traditional or acculturated. For those Native Americans who do not live on reservations, like those in Indiana, it may be difficult to observe differences between the Native American and her/his neighbors. It is important that while trying to gather information on the Native American's culture, that the client is an individual and may not fall into any description (Thomason 172-73).

Differences

One of the most common differences that a counselor will see between different cultural groups is that of value orientations. Lifestyles and chances contribute to the value system of all

people (Washington 105). As discussed earlier, ethnicity contributes to this value orientation and must be taken into consideration in working with Native Americans. One aspect of this particular area is unique in that Native Americans may actually be in need of a therapy environment which is not value-free, but is actually value-based and unique to the individual. This is an unusual request of social workers in that a value-free environment is usually preferred. It seems that, again, respecting the individual, the Native American needs someone who will define the problem in the context of the particular group's value network (LaFromboise et al 150). As pointed out in the community analysis, the importance of the extended family (perhaps including tribal affiliations), the spirituality and the controversial mascot and grave desecration issues surrounding it, are all a part of the potential value network which a Native American may belong to.

Another cultural difference which a counselor may encounter often in work with Native Americans is that of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Verbally, it has been noted that many Native American people respond well to the use of humor and teasing oneself during interviewing (Edwards 502). Nonverbally, it has been suggested that in working with many tribes, the clients do not respond well to intense eye contact (Edwards 502), a loud voice, touching beyond a handshake, and an aggressive handshake (Thomason 181). It is again, important above all else to respect the individual and realize that no two people are

alike, even within the same tribe or clan.

Another important cultural counseling difference which often applies directly to working with Native Americans is in the area of home and family. It is part of a social worker's training to gather information on the family to try and get a wholistic picture of the problem, but this may not be appropriate in working with many Native Americans. Going to the home of the client may show more committment to the client than just asking, but it may be seen as quite rude to invite oneself. An invitation is usually necessary when wanting to visit a Native American's home (Thomason 182). Also, it is inappropriate oftentimes, to request information on a deceased person or to even speak that person's name. Using terms such as sister or father may be appropriate for some, but again, it is wise to avoid speaking about the dead person in many Native American cultures (Edwards 501).

Problems

According to a number of surveys, services available to Native American clients are underused. There may be any number of reasons for this underuse; perhaps the potential clients do not realize that the service exists (Trimble 127). However, there has been a controversy for a long time over the issue of white counselors and Native American clients. There are conflicting studies, many of which concluded that Native Americans would prefer to be counseled by other Native Americans (Thomason 176). It has been suggested that it is not the ethnic

background of the counselor, but the approach which is flawed (Trimble 127). The conventional counseling approach may be inadequate for the needs of many Native Americans, but there are also a few common problems which may be preventable by the counselor herself, especially if that counselor is non-Native American.

Perhaps one of the biggest problems that face the non-Native counselor and the Native American client is subtle oppression. This subtle oppression is usually from the well-intentioned social worker who is "trying to help" the Native American. A patronizing attitude shown by lowering expectations of the clients and over-interest or obsession with the Native American's culture undermine the empathy, trustworthiness, and respect for the client (LaFromboise et al 149).

Another problem which can hinder the counselor-client relationship involves mistrust. This is a problem many times for the white counselor, who, historically, has had a reputation for not being trustworthy. The client may have seen, whether from early history or recent dealings, that not all counselors seem to have the client's interest at heart (Thomason 175). Depending on the area in which one is working, this may become a serious problem. It is not very unusual for Native American clients to have heard negative perceptions and expectations from relatives, friends, and even referral services (LaFromboise et al 149). This problem is one to keep in mind, the social worker may need to work extra hard at establishing trust from the beginning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps the largest role a social worker should play when working with Native Americans is that of educator. In such problems as unemployment, myths, and value conflicts, a social worker may need to educate to change the problem institutions, as suggested in the ethnomethodologic approach. In the problem of high unemployment rates, for instance, institutions such as employment offices and individual employers, may be to blame. The public, however, may be the target of education for social workers in the problems of myths and value conflicts. In this process, the social worker will need to prepare for the individual's case by examining the culture and priority values of the client.

In helping to solve the pressing problem of lack of state tribal recognition, the social worker may take on an advocate or activist role. It appears that no process exists in the problem institution of the government in order for the Miamis to become a recognized tribe. There may be a need for a social worker to mobilize community activists or become a representative for the issue in upcoming legislative action. Again, it is important to recognize that the community may already have their own leaders, but may or may not have the resources to change the problem institution.

Social workers may become enablers when attempting to

bring about change in problem institutions lending to the poverty problem. The welfare departments or other government agencies may be the possible problem institutions. It is possible that the problems may be in various agencies' lack of sensitivity or knowledge of the needs specific to the Native American and her/ his nation, tribe, or clan. Basic communication skills or even misperceptions on the part of agency workers may be overcome by enabling or empowering Native American clients to demand their rights or become assertive in accessing services available to them. This will, again, involve the social worker gaining relevant cultural information from the client in an appropriate manner.

The high dropout rate among Native Americans in Indiana is a puzzle, but a social worker may, by becoming a planner, be able to find out what the problem is. The school, as a possible problem institution, may become part of this problem-solving process with the Native American. The social worker would become a planning agent, assisting in the contacts and the process of getting the Native American back into the school system.

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