

1984

## Counseling American Indian students

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## Counseling American Indian students

### Abstract

American Indians today are in a limbo created by their changing culture. While the traditional ways are still being taught in the home, white middle class values are being taught in school. Another factor contributing to this situation is the distorted image of the Indian which is sometimes projected by white writers and the mass media. The image of the American Indian today is that of a stoic, long-suffering, proud, warlike, lazy, drunken individual on the government dole. Indians have maintained their proud heritage, but they deal daily with their distorted image.

COUNSELING AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Department of Educational Administration  
and Counseling  
University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Master of Arts in Education

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by  
Kathleen Curphy

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## Chapter I

## INTRODUCTION

American Indians today are in a limbo created by their changing culture. While the traditional ways are still being taught in the home, white middle class values are being taught in school. Another factor contributing to this situation is the distorted image of the Indian which is sometimes projected by white writers and the mass media. The image of the American Indian today is that of a stoic, long-suffering, proud, warlike, lazy, drunken individual on the government dole. Indians have maintained their proud heritage, but they deal daily with their distorted image.

Indians must live in their own culture as well as the white man's society. The differences between these two cultures create problems for Indians which they can deal with in basically five different ways: (1) by rejecting the dominant culture, (2) by rejecting their tribal culture, (3) by rejecting both cultures, (4) by remaining suspended between the two cultures, or (5) by participating in both cultures simultaneously (Luftig, 1982). Non-Indian counselors need to help these clients participate easily in both cultures. This is a difficult objective because of the obstacles both counselor and client must overcome.

One of these obstacles is the fact that Indian clients seldom go to non-Indian counselors to solve their personal problems. They take their problems, first, to the family network of parents and grandparents. Next, they talk within the tribal community, and last they turn to the

non-Indian counselor. "Of those who have approached conventional counseling centers, 55% were not motivated to return after the initial interview. This contrasts with the 30% of their non-Indian counterparts" (Sue, Allen & Conaway, 1978, p. 137).

The ethnic differences between counselor and client can be a major barrier in effective counseling. As Carkhuff and Pierce, quoted by Trimble (1981), state: "Counselors and clinicians who are most different from their clients, in race and social class, have the greatest difficulty effecting constructive changes while counselors/clinicians who are the most similar to their helpees in these respects have the greater facility for appropriate helping" (p. 11).

The purpose of this study is to help non-Indian counselors cross the barriers of race and social class to help their Indian clients live with less difficulty in both worlds. By becoming aware of the tribal customs, anthropological history, attitudes, and values of this minority culture, non-Indian counselors will better understand the normal development and special psychological needs of Indian clients. This study will present an overview of generic, culture-based attitudes and values held by American Indians. The implications of these attitudes and values will be discussed as well as techniques that non-Indian counselors can use in counseling Indian clients.

## Chapter 2

## ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Indian children are born into a culture very different from that of white middle class America. Although each tribe varies according to its language and customs, some generic attitudes, values, and problems are common to all.

English is a second language to most Indians (Miller, 1968, p. 496). Usually the language of their tribe is spoken in the home. Their language shapes the way they look at their environment and interpret their world. Its importance is partly related to its close ties to their religion and way of life. Equivalent English words cannot always be found for various Indian words.

Because Indian children speak their own language in the home, they usually know very little English when they enter school. This places them at a disadvantage. In many instances, teachers are not trained to teach English as a second language. In addition, the instructional materials available do not always recognize the special needs of Indian children.

This language barrier presents problems in school. Indian students are often unable to communicate as freely as they would like because of their lack of proficiency in English. It is sometimes difficult for them to understand and learn new words because they lack a background of experiences to which to relate them. In addition, they have few opportunities to hear and practice speaking English outside of school.



The trouble Indians experience with their second language frequently causes them to develop a fear of expressing themselves, when in class or in a group, and a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Attitudes toward school play an important part in how Indian children behave there. Since school is totally unrelated to their way of life, it is seen as having little value. Even though the children are usually quiet, they are often not paying attention. The motivation of self-improvement is not valued. Indian children are generally not success-oriented.

Traditionally, the family has prepared children for their role in life and society. The Indian family, which functions less effectively than it did 100 years ago, prepares its children to live in the tribal society but not in the biracial society of which they will eventually be a part (Hoyt, 1964). Indian children learn their status in their family, but not their status in the white man's society. For children who are half-breeds, the different cultures are even greater. In many instances, if the mother is Indian and the father white, the children are not considered full-blooded Indians and thus are rejected by the tribe. As if this were not enough, they are often rejected by the whites, too, for being Indian. These children do not know where they belong and feel that neither culture wants them. The role of the Indian father, who traditionally has been a hunter and warrior, is another problem area. He has had to become a wage earner in order to feed his family. Male Indians have not adjusted well to this new responsibility to their children.

Indian children are part of an extended family unit, or clan, which is composed of parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles. The clan also includes the aunts' and uncles' children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Members of the clan are all descended from the same ancestors. The extended family furnishes Indian children with many significant people in their lives. Elders are esteemed and are considered sources of wisdom. The extended family imposes strong moral and social obligations and responsibilities, disciplines the children, and raises them when the parents cannot. The clan shares responsibility for the necessities of life, economic decisions, and preparation of and participation in religious rites and ceremonies. The close and binding feelings of these relationships create strong family ties, love, and moral support.

Hospitality and informality normally characterize the relationships between and among family members. Relatives come and go whenever they want, without calling ahead. Some visits are short, others long. Often the guest will leave a gift as a sign of esteem for the host. If family arrive at mealtime, they are naturally invited to stay for the meal.

Indian students have had to adjust to two types of discipline (Troy, 1970). In the more authoritarian school setting, they are expected to conform to certain sets of rules. At home, where they are taught that it is wrong for one man to control or boss another, the environment is more permissive. If they violate the social norms, they may be ridiculed, teased, shamed, or threatened with supernatural figures, but they are not prevented from violating the norms. Indian children are very seldom

punished, and never in front of their peers. They are rarely spanked or scolded at home. If they are disobedient, they are sent to a relative or neighbor who tells them what they are doing wrong. This form of discipline puts the parent in a good light with the child. Indian children are taught to avoid bringing shame on self, family, clan, or tribe. The expected behavioral customs are well understood by the child. The family expects the right behavior. If it is accomplished, they are praised; if not, the child is ridiculed.

This more permissive attitude is reflected in the fact that Indian children are allowed a great deal of freedom and independence at an early age. If they decide to stay home from school, they are allowed to do so because it is their own decision. Individual decisions are highly valued; there is great respect for the individual's freedom and autonomy.

In Indian society, greater stress is laid on cooperation than on competition. When Indian children play a game, they can play for hours with no one winning. They do not care who wins. Although they do compete with each other in some games, cooperation is more important, as is equality among children. If a child is not considered equal, he is ostracized (Von Wie, 1972). Sharing is another important aspect of the life-style of American Indians. "The Indians live a communal type of life" (Miller, 1968, p. 496). Everything belongs to everyone. Indians live in their houses as long as they want to but are not allowed to sell the land. If Indian children like an object that does not belong to them, such as an apple, and take it, they would not consider the act to be stealing, since the concept of individual ownership of

property is foreign to them.

For Indians, religion is taught as an integral part of their way of life. They believe in a supreme being, who is the creator of heaven and earth, and in life after death. Indians believe they have their own personal guardian or spirit and strive for a oneness with each other, nature, and the supreme being. Children are taught respect for all living things. Since the animals and growing things of this earth are believed to have spirits or souls, they are treated with respect and appreciation for the contribution they have made to the Indian life-style. Exploitation is intolerable. The Indian's attachment to the land and reverence for nature is often incomprehensible to whites.

Indians also differ from the dominant culture in the way they view the concept of time (Von Wie, 1972). In their more holistic approach, small units of time lose importance. Past, present, and future are seen as one, and all are equal. Indians live by the sun, moon, and stars, not by a clock and calendar. They consider hurrying a disadvantage because it is not aligned with nature. This is why it is not uncommon for Indians to have many broken-down cars sitting around their houses. Their attitude is that when they have the time and money to fix the cars, they will (Hoyt, 1964). They probably do not spend a great deal of time worrying about it either. It is not unusual for Indians to work when they need the money to buy something or to feed themselves, but then quit when they have had enough. "If an Indian works full time to earn money, he is expected to share his success with friends and family" (Hoyt, 1964, p. 9). Indians live by the rule, "If you take care of me, I'll take care of you."

Status is measured by how much one gives away rather than by how much one has accumulated. This attitude is related to their concept of time; they do not save for the future.

Indians are "taught to attack problems in a manner differently than whites" (Peterson, 1969, p. 74). In the majority culture, one is taught to be aggressive in strange situations. Indians, on the other hand, are taught to stand patiently and wait quietly while they size up the situation and determine what is expected of them. They usually wait for someone else to give them a cue so they can learn what behavior is expected.

Indians generally do not protest in the majority society. They are taught to suffer silently, be it physical or mental pain (Hoyt, 1964). This makes it very difficult for outsiders to know if the Indian understand their ideas or questions. The Indian speaks infrequently, softly, and probably after a long delay. Such passivity may be interpreted as a favorable response, but this is not necessarily the case.

#### Attitudes and Values Specific to the Sac and Fox Tribes of the Mississippi

Each tribe has its own specific tribal customs of which counselors should be aware. Some of the customs of the Sac and Fox tribes are described below to illustrate this point.

When a girl who resides in a Sac and Fox tribe starts menstruating, she is locked up in a room for three days. Curtains or blankets are put

over the windows to prevent the evil spirits from entering. No one is allowed to come into her room; meals are delivered and left at her door. After she is married, she is not allowed to eat the same food she has prepared for her husband during this time or to cook for herself at home. She must use a special drinking cup during her menstrual cycle. If there is a funeral at this time, the woman is allowed to attend, but not to participate (R. Wanatee, personal communication, August 23, 1983).

When there is a death in the clan, all the clan members participate in the rituals. Children must be quiet and are not allowed to laugh, dance, or play. At the Sac and Fox Day School, art, music, and physical education are low-keyed during this period. Often the children will miss school following a death in the clan.

The first night after a death, the whole clan gathers at the deceased member's home to sing their own special songs. The clan members bring squash, corn, or money to the family. The funeral is held at private burial grounds, rather than in a funeral home. The body, not usually professionally embalmed, is placed in a homemade wooden coffin. Friends and relatives file past the casket and put in tobacco leaves. For four days following the funeral, the deceased member's family must provide the evening meal for the pallbearers, without assistance from outside friends or relatives. During these four days all tribal functions and meetings cease.

## Chapter 3

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NON-INDIAN COUNSELOR

Often by the age of six or seven, Indian children have learned not to trust middle class people. This attitude is based on their own harsh experiences and their observations of those around them. The children are told stories by other family members about the white society and are told not to associate with whites. Even though they know the counselor wants to be helpful, they still have fears and hostilities derived from these stories.

"A majority group member may enter a relationship with an attitude of trusting the other until clear evidence that the person cannot be trusted surfaces: a member of the minority group frequently enters the relationship suspending trust until the person proves he/she is worthy of being trusted" (La Fromboise & Dixon, 1981, p. 135). Establishing trust and the failure to self-disclose are barriers to effective counseling with Indian students who prize trust and understanding more than almost any counselor attribute (La Fromboise & Dixon, 1981). Trustworthy behaviors that the counselor may use effectively are topic consistency, accurate paraphrasing, interest and mood consistency, confidentiality, affirmation of sincere interest through behavioral follow-up, cultural understanding, and mutual sharing of information through self-disclosure (La Fromboise & Dixon, 1981). These behaviors, along with culturally appropriate communication behavior, can be used to help the non-Indian counselor overcome the ethnicity barrier.

Several types of verbal cues can promote distrust and prevent effective counseling. One type of cue is to attempt to show affinity. For example, "I was adopted into \_\_\_\_\_ tribe" (La Fromboise, Dauphinais & Lujan, 1981, p. 89). The Indian grandmother complex also falls into this category: "My grandmother was an Indian princess." These cues cause the Indian to question the counselor's motives. A second type of cue is the use of ethnic stereotypes such as "How," "You People," and "They're acting like a bunch of wild Indians" (La Fromboise et al., 1981, p. 90). Acceptance of responsibility and change is the focus of another type of cue: "Indians are slow to accept cultural change" (La Fromboise et al., 1981, p. 91). Indians would not be here today if they hadn't accepted change. The last type of cue involves denial of ethnic differences. "Oh, I've done that before," "Doesn't everybody?" and "Why are Indians so special?" Indians are different, and if they denounce their difference, they will denounce themselves.

Indian students who attend a school dominated by another culture can be confused by the cultural differences. They may draw into themselves or seek other Indian children for positive reinforcement and identification. Or they may go against tradition and rebel physically or verbally, although this happens more rarely. Sometimes Indian children will begin gradually to assimilate into the dominant culture, but assimilation may never be complete, due to their skin color. Usually they will try to get by and make it through the system, at least on a superficial basis.

Indian students realize they are different and do not fit into the mold of the dominant society. Their low self-image, different value



system, unique culture, and personality characteristics are different from those of their Anglo peers. The values of the white culture, such as planning for the future, competition, challenging the unknown, and rewarding the right responses, are in conflict with the Indians' values of harmony, balance, cooperation, and non-aggression.

The identities of Indian students are complicated by where they stand as members of their family, as members of their clan, and as Indians. They are wrestling with such questions as "Where do I fit in?" "Who am I?" "What models do I copy?" "How do I feel about myself?" and "Is it good to be an Indian?" The difficulty of finding answers to these questions often leads to behavioral, disciplinary, and academic problems for Indian students. Between fourth and seventh grades, they start to fall behind their white peers in academic achievements (Pedigo, 1983). Indian children's self-concept is negatively correlated to their chronological age and number of years in school; that is, older Indian students have lower measured self-concepts than younger ones (Luftig, 1982). Self-concept is closely tied to the children's esteem for their tribe and how clearly the children's identities are developed (Pedigo, 1983). The high risk time for identity development is between fourth and tenth grades.

The low self-concept of Indian children may be due in part to how teachers feel about them. Counselors need to help classroom teachers accept Indian students. Counselors also must be aware that behaviors used as reinforcement should not conflict with the cultural norms of the student. For example, some tribes consider it ill-mannered to praise

oneself. Therefore praise needs to come from teachers, counselors, or someone else; self-praise would be inappropriate.

Evans (1977) lists sixteen ways a counselor can help improve the self-concept of his Indian students:

1. Say something positive to each child.
2. Try to see that each child achieves success in some way each day by offering a variety of activities.
3. Give each child recognition for the effort he makes even though it may not come up to expectations.
4. Make each child feel he belongs.
5. Listen to the child and look at him or look him in the eye when he is talking.
6. Answer the child's question openly honestly, and immediately if possible.
7. Do not embarrass the child, especially in front of others; do not make him question his worth.
8. Compliment the child when possible on neat work, improvement in his work, new clothes or hair style, creative ideas, etc.
9. Encourage the child to be proud of his name, ideas, and work.
10. Do not set goals so high that the chance of failure prevents the child from trying.
11. Help each child gain acceptance from his peers.
12. Promote an atmosphere in which everyone expects some mistakes to occur and tolerates them.
13. Promote an atmosphere in which each individual is respected and accepted for being himself/herself.
14. Use the child's name when speaking to him.
15. Emphasize what a student does right instead of what he does wrong.
16. Treat each child as you would like to be treated. (pp. 54-55)

Poverty is partially responsible for the fact that Indian children are typically poor achievers, have a higher dropout rate, and have a higher rate of physical and mental handicaps than the general population. Poverty is a characteristic condition of Indian life, a condition which naturally affects nutrition and health care.

One physiological fact that needs to be taken into account is the high rate of middle-ear disease (otitis media), which can cause language

and educational problems (Lockhart, 1981). If chronic and untreated, this condition can interfere with the development of auditory perception skills, and language skills, thereby increasing the chances of a child's having learning disabilities. Inadequate medication, hearing, and diet can complicate this situation by hindering a child's recovery and subsequent return to school.

Alcoholism is the major physical and mental health problem among Indians. Some Indian children start drinking by nine years of age. Drinking, a euphoric means of escape, gives temporary relief from economic, social, and personal problems. Peer pressure also plays a fundamental role. Participation in group drinking bouts is considered desirable; if Indian students do not drink with their friends, they are rejecting the sharing and generosity of their peers.

Among the problems that occur frequently in dealing with Indian students are name-calling, poor school attendance, and lack of understanding between teacher and student. In regard to name-calling, counselors can explain on a one-to-one basis that whoever is calling the student a name wants control over that student. Therefore, if the Indian student ignores the name-calling, he will be breaking the control.

Poor school attendance may be due to lack of transportation or to babysitting duties imposed on the student. If counselors are aware of these problems, they can act as a liaison between the school and the student.

Cultural differences can often lead to misunderstandings and poor relations between teacher and student. Simple cultural awareness

activities can help teachers and students understand each other. Appendixes 1 and 2 present examples of such activities. Indian students may use Appendix 1 to explore what it is like to be a white person. The activity in Appendix 2 is aimed at increasing the understanding of white teachers and students.

Counselors can be effective agents to smooth relationships between and among the student, parents, school staff, and administrators. Many parents live in a rural area far from school and have no phone. Counselors can keep the parents informed of their child's progress by letters or home visits. Although they are often caught in the middle between students and teachers, counselors need to be objective and to help teachers become aware of the needs of these special students. A good working relationship with the administration must be maintained so that counselors can participate in the policy making which affects Indian students.

Since Indian clients often will not go to counselors, the latter need to seek out these clients. Contact should be initiated by writing each Indian student an informal note to make the student aware of the counselor's availability. If this doesn't work, the client should be contacted personally. Counselors need to know all about the students: their families, backgrounds, special problems, needs, and aspirations. They must make sure students know how to contact them when necessary. Once contact has been made, students need to be encouraged to communicate and relate to the counselor. Indians may suppress their feelings due to their cultural learning.

Counselors need appropriate training in dealing with Indian students. The tendency to apply the values and attitudes of the dominant society to this minority culture must be avoided. Insisting on the dominant value system can lead to emotional distress and academic problems for students. Counselors who are perceived to be advocates of non-Indian spiritual concepts may be rejected by students. Indian students need to be told that they have the right to believe what they want to believe, that no group or individual has all the right answers. If all attempts fail to help a student, the Indian medicine man could be a source of assistance. Indians see the medicine man as the mediator between the higher being and the Indian; they strongly believe in his curative abilities.

According to Evans (1977, p. 111), "counselors should have four basic attitudes." First is acceptance. Every human being has great worth. Clients should be allowed to be themselves. Second is to be nonjudgmental. Counselors should refrain from judging the guilt or innocence of a person. Third is listening. Indian students need to know that they can say anything and be heard. Counselors should not interrupt or tell them what to do; Indian students need to sort out their feelings and attitudes. The fourth attitude is seeing each person as a unique individual. It should not be assumed that because A, B, and C happened, they will produce the same reaction in every person.

The major goals of counseling should be to develop in Indian students: (a) a positive self-image and a feeling of self-worth; (b) a culture they can live in, derived from both the Indian and American cultures; (c) the developmental skills they have not yet acquired; (d) a

role that fulfills their needs; (e) problem-solving techniques; (f) a communication bridge between them and their white peers; and (g) new behaviors that will help them in their school work, interaction with peers, and their attitude towards education (Peterson, 1969, p. iii).

These goals are not inclusive. Each child is unique and counselors need to evaluate their students and set goals according to their students' needs. Counselors should also look for behavior patterns that distinguish Indian students who are having difficulty adjusting to their cultural environment from those who are emotionally disturbed.

## Chapter 4

## TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH THE INDIAN STUDENT

Counselors need to incorporate positive techniques and methods in working with Indian clients. Encouraging these clients to see the reality of their situation is a difficult task, but if they do not, they will be unable to make valid decisions. Indian clients must learn to take personal responsibility for their own actions and reactions. When they are able to persuade someone else to assume their responsibilities, they are also able to refuse to take the blame in the event of failure. Self-worth and self-image are improved when students are required to do things on their own.

It may take Indian clients five to six sessions to understand the role/function of counselors and to trust and respond to them. Counselors should be careful not to overestimate or underestimate the time element in counseling sessions. Considerable patience will be required to reach the feeling level of Indian clients, who need help in verbalizing their concerns. A loud, assertive, precise manner may cause these students to withdraw. Counselors need to use a flexible, soft voice with an emotional tone which is consistent with that of their Indian clients. Following are some techniques counselors can use to communicate their interest verbally and non-verbally to these students.

Paraphrasing is a technique the counselor can use (Evans, 1977). Paraphrasing has three purposes. The first tells clients you understand them or are trying to. The second takes the client's comments and restates them back to him in a more concise manner. Third, counselors

counselors can check their own perceptions of what their clients are saying, and make sure they understand it. This technique recognizes clients' feelings and emphasizes the cognitive or content aspect of their message. By feeding back what the client has said, the counselor can clarify the content of the message.

Restating what clients have said is another technique counselors can use (Evans, 1977). Counselors restate the client's response, more literally than when paraphrasing, and change the pronouns from "I" to "You." Both the techniques of restating and paraphrasing give the clients information the counselor has received. These techniques encourage clients to examine themselves further and let them know the counselor is interested in them and in what they are saying.

Counselors should demonstrate good attending behaviors to show that they are interested in clients and respect them as people (Evans, 1977). There are three characteristics of good attending behavior. First, counselors should be physically relaxed and have an open, natural posture; they will be better listeners and pay better attention if they are comfortable. Second, counselors should maintain eye contact whenever possible. They should not stare, which could make clients uncomfortable, but should use varied eye contact. Third, counselors' must stay on the topic the client is discussing. Comments and questions should be directed to their client's topic.

Restating and paraphrasing reiterate what the client is saying on the surface, but counselors also need to elicit more information about the



underlying feelings of their clients. Responding to feelings clarifies the feelings experienced during certain situations or events. Sometimes these emotions, feelings, or perceptions have caused clients to feel bad about the event. Counselors can say "Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_" or "What is going on inside you?" If the client said, "The teacher kept watching me" the counselor's response could be, "You felt pretty uncomfortable with the teacher always watching you." Here counselors are asking for more information on how their clients feel and are responding to those feelings.

Paraphrasing and restating are less threatening than responding to feelings. Indians are taught not to reveal their feelings, especially to strangers. Counselors need to establish a nonthreatening relationship with Indians so that these clients will reveal their feelings.

Counselors need to remember that silence should not be feared in the counseling session, that it can be a sign of respect rather than non-understanding. Indian clients are taught to be passive in their reactions to a new situation. This passivity may make counselors feel forced into asking yes/no questions. The way in which a question is framed is important. Counselors should be careful to ask positive questions. Negative questions can be misinterpreted by Indian clients.

Questioning can be an effective tool which enables counselors to obtain necessary information (Evans, 1977). Several types of question may be used, and each may have a different effect on the Indian client.

Questions used in counseling can be classified as discovery or controlling. In other words, clients may have maximum freedom or limited

freedom in their responses as a result of the wording of the question asked.

A discovery question, which does not imply its own answer, gives clients freedom in answering. Clients can give a variety of responses. The discovery question can start with words such as "what", "how", "would", and "could". For example, "What were the feelings you had when the teacher sent you out of the room?" Clients could answer this question in a number of ways. A discovery question allows the widest range of responses.

In contrast, a controlling question implies its own answer. The question is worded in such a way that clients can only agree or disagree, that is, give a yes or no answer or a short reply. For example, "Did you feel mad when your teacher sent you out of the room?" Questions such as these can start with "do", "is", "are", or "have".

The inquiry statement is an indirect form of questioning which counselors can use to get more complete information. This statement implies a question. "For example, "Many students have some feelings when they are sent out of the room." When this type of statement is written, it is punctuated with a period, not a question mark, even though it implies a question. The implied question is, "What were you feeling when you were sent out of the room?" Inquiry statements can aim at a limited response or be more open-ended. As with questions, they can be classified as controlling or discovery.

Not all types of questions used in counseling will fall into these four categories. Examples of each of the four types of questions are given below (Evans, 1977).

1. Discovery Question: "What do you see as some of your major interests?"
2. Discovery Inquiry Statement: "I would like to hear about some of your interests."
3. Controlling Question: "Do you like to work outdoors?"
4. Controlling Inquiry Statement: "Many people with interests similar to yours like to work outdoors." (p. 130)

Questions require clients to produce information. Too many controlling questions however, may make clients feel they are on-the-spot and may cause them to react defensively. Discovery questions, which are less threatening, will make clients feel more at ease. It is important to remember that different types of questions will have different effects on clients. Counselors should choose their questions with care.

Dauphinais, Dauphinais, and Rowe (1981) found that of the three approaches to counseling, the facilitative-communication style, the direct style, and the experimental style, the facilitative style was the least effective. They concluded that this could have enormous implications because the facilitative style is the most commonly used in training counselors today. The results of this study showed no significant differences between directive and experimental styles. The study also concluded that non-Indian counselors could increase their effectiveness if they were taught a different style of communicating verbally to the Indian student.

The students in the Dauphinais study who preferred the experimental method thought it was more effective because counselors related their own experiences in the counseling sessions. The counselors modeled self-disclosure and gave alternative modes of action by saying, "This is the way I experienced this. . ." or "I know of others who did it this way." Indian clients were then free to choose the preferred action or response they wanted to give.

With the experimental style, counselors ask fewer questions than with the directive style. When a response is needed, they may say in an indirect manner, "This is how I. . ." or "Let's think about. . ." This style is still relatively young, and more specific verbal response patterns need to be developed for counselors.

Rational Emotive Therapy could be a beneficial technique in counseling Indian clients (Ellis and Grieger, 1977). This type of therapy, which is based on the principle that people feel the way they think, deals with the here and now, not the past. According to Rational Emotive Therapy, children acquire a belief system in early childhood while they learn to speak by imitating the speech of others. As a child grows older, the child "begins to incorporate a sub-language - the meaning of the facts in his environment" (Ellis and Grieger, 1977, p. 369). This sub-language, or belief system, is influenced by adults and other significant people in the environment. If these people think rationally, then the children will think rationally. If the significant people have irrational belief systems, then the children will learn to think this

way, too, by observing them.

Ellis and Grieger (1977) explain how the belief system can effect feelings and behavior: "'A' an activating event or experience happens. The resulting emotional or behavioral consequence is 'C.' Usually it is assumed that 'A' causes 'C,' but 'A' does not cause 'C.' 'B' does. 'B' is what the client believes about 'A.' 'B' can make him feel happy, sad, depressed, etc. at point 'C.' How a person states his belief to himself (self-statements) at 'B' will determine how he feels or acts at point 'C.' These beliefs can be disputed at point 'D' by a rational statement" (p. 6).

Di Giuseppe (1977) describes a study which used behavioral principles to establish appropriate self-statements in children, a procedure which could be used with Indian clients. In the first step, children describe the activating event "A" and its emotional consequences. The counselor points out that it is the children's thoughts that are upsetting them. Next the counselor and children role-play the event, with the counselors playing the part of the children and the children playing the other persons who are upsetting them. The counselor then uses rational self-statements and appropriate behavior at the point in the incident when the children become upset. This can be done several times, after which children and counselors can reverse roles, with the children playing themselves. The children say the rational self-statements at point "B" following "A." After this scene, either social or material reinforcements should be used to encourage clients to say the rational

self-statements. Once this procedure has been well established, the verbal responses of the self-statements can be gradually reduced to nothing. Eventually, the clients will make these self-statements autonomously.

Like Rational Emotive Therapy, Reality Therapy is also present-oriented, which makes it a particularly good technique to use in working with Indians (Farlow, 1971). Students are forced to make a value judgement concerning their present behavior and to make a commitment to change it, if they feel it needs changing. If the counselors are truly involved with the students, the students will try to keep their commitment.

Group counseling with Indian children is preferred over individual counseling because they are free of the limitations of the classroom and are free to interact with their peers. "Many studies have emphasized the importance of a peer group to the adolescent; the concept of group counseling capitalizes on this peer identification" (Dinkmeyer, 1968, p. 298). Attitudes, values, and behavior problems can be solved through peer groups.

Indian students need directive counseling with structure.

Much of the modern counseling influenced by Carl Rogers expects the client to verbalize his feelings. Encouraged nondirectly by the counselor, the client solves the problem just by talking them out. An Indian, on the contrary, does not verbalize in an effort to solve his problems. More typically, an Indian will withdraw and, aided by the advice he has received, will work out his own decisions alone and within himself. (Bryce, 1971, p. 21)

Indian students will be the silent members of the group. This type of behavior does not help the group process. Several techniques can be employed to provide needed structure for directive counseling and to help draw out Indian clients.

1. Behavior modification may be employed to encourage participation. The counselor may keep a tally sheet marking down each time the student makes a response. After so many responses, the student will receive a reward. (Clark, 1971, p. 286)
2. The counselor may tape each session and then have each student, one at a time, review it. With the help of the counselor, the student may tape his reactions to the session and present them before the group. This offers the student a chance to become personally involved with the counselor and his group by discussing his reactions. If this is done tactfully, the Indian student will feel his opinion does count. (Clark, 1971, p. 286)
3. The counselor needs to teach his counselees to be more spontaneous in their responses. Another technique he/she can use is desensitization. In a very relaxed atmosphere, the counselor can ask them questions that they easily understand and answer comfortably. Step by step, he builds their confidence and reinforces their answers in a positive way. The counselor will direct the familiar questions until they learn to interact with each other and provide some of their own direction. (Dimick and Huff, 1970, p. 77)

If counselors use empathy and nonverbal cues, they may find the opportune time to draw out their silent members. To facilitate the group process, counselors should be nonjudgmental, nonthreatening, and nonpunitive. They should not let the discussion wander aimlessly but direct it toward evaluation of values, decision-making, and problem-solving techniques. At each session the counselor should take a different seat in order to have the opportunity to sit by all group members.

Such group processes as role-playing and sociodrama can also help Indian clients to verbalize. These techniques are defined below.

Role-playing enables clients to convey feelings and information otherwise difficult to communicate, to disclose feelings they may not have admitted harboring, to experiment with and practice new ways to behave, to assume and to experiment with new developmental roles, to obtain feedback with reference to specific behaviors, and to see themselves as others see them. (Ohlsen, 1970, p. 150)

Sociodrama permits the clients to view the real-life drama or situation as spectators. It is similar to roleplaying, but the clients do not participate. The rationale is that they can gain insight and meaningful experiences watching others act. (Dimick and Huff, 1970, p. 161)

The classroom meetings described by William Glasser (1969) may be used as another structured approach. Through these meetings, Indian students may learn to freely discuss their problems and may find out that their peers have some of the same problems they have. Self-esteem, social responsibility, and problem-solving techniques can grow from such meetings.

Small-group counseling can be used effectively in learning how to handle stress, become more assertive, develop leadership qualities, solve problems, redesign social roles, and develop support systems. The small counseling group is an ideal setting for learning coping skills. The coping skills approach does not require a correct or incorrect behavior; it is culturally neutral. Students or counselors can choose the desired behavior to be acquired through the learning process, such as assertiveness. Emphasis is placed on the specific situation. Counselors help students acquire new behaviors such as eye contact, the timing of



verbal responses, loudness of voice, and content of messages. A variety of coping models can be provided through role-playing, formal and informal modeling, and video-taping.

Jeanne A. Smith (1980) presents some helpful suggestions for becoming a more effective reservation teacher. Some or all of these can be used by the non-Indian counselor.

Live in a community where you teach. Know your students by learning not only about their culture and history, but by getting to know their families. Attend community functions such as pow-wows and give-aways. Don't be afraid to ask Indian people you know to help you introduce elements of their culture and language into your classroom. Make your classroom look like it is on the reservation, not in \_\_\_\_\_ . Learn to listen. Don't be afraid to care. If your students know you care, they will work very hard in your class when you ask them to. Laugh, relax and slow down! (p. 59)

Likewise, the checklist below is worth the consideration of counselors preparing to work with minority students (Lockhart, 1981).

1. Have I become as knowledgeable of and sensitive to the cultures of the children as possible?
2. Have I recognized that there are different behavioral norms, depending on cultures/traditions, and that these norms may conflict with my personal views?
3. Have I attempted to utilize non-standrad counseling techniques when appropriate--that is, techniques geared toward the individual student and his culture, rather than "textbook techniques"?
4. Do I make myself available to students, parents, and community members?
5. Am I respectful of traditional Indian healing and "counseling"?
6. Am I aware of and able to deal with the issues of Indian youth that may seem based on ethnic differences?
7. Am I helpful to staff members who need assistance in understanding the behaviors of the Indian children?
8. Have I recognized my personal cultural biases which may interfere with my work with the children and been able to discard them, or at least set them aside, so the counseling relationship and my work with the students do not suffer? (p. 39)

## Chapter 5

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

American Indian clients are caught between the traditional ways of past and the dominant white culture of today. The traditional ways teach that no one is better than anyone else and that all should be treated the same. For many Indian children, English is their second language, one which they only begin to learn when they enter school, and they lack the concept training necessary to master English. Their own language is very important to their religion and way of life.

Indian children belong to an extended family or clan, whose members cooperatively raise the children. Many things are owned jointly by all. By white middle class standards, the homes of these families would be considered permissive. Indian parents do not appear to work at controlling their children and individual freedom is highly prized.

Religion is taught as an integral part of the Indian way of life, with the emphasis on harmony with nature as opposed to dominance over it. Harmony is also an important element in the Indians' holistic approach to the concept of time, in which past, present, and future are seen as one.

The contrast between Indian society and white middle class society becomes evident in the schools. White middle class children are encouraged to be aggressive within the rules and to strive for excellence in school. Freedom of expression is valued, and they are urged to speak out. Generally, Indian children see school as unrelated to their way of

life and therefore of little value. They are taught to speak when they have something to say, but otherwise to be silent.

Trust is very important element in the counseling relationship. It takes time for Indian students to trust the non-Indian counselor, and trust will not be automatic. Counselors can build trust by incorporating specific behaviors and avoiding certain verbal cues.

The academic performance and behavioral problems of Indian clients are affected by their self-concept, self-esteem, and identity. Indian children start to fall behind their white peers between fourth and seventh grades. The poverty conditions in which many Indians live are partly responsible for this and for many physical problems as well. Alcoholism and peer pressure also affect their attitudes toward school. Poor school attendance may be due to a number of factors, such as health problems, poor attitude, and lack of transportation.

It should be stressed that counselors need to work with parents, faculty, staff, and administration to ensure the best educational and counseling programs for Indian clients. Appropriate training can help counselors become more effective. Counselors should try to develop in their clients a positive self-image and a culture (derived from both worlds) in which Indians can live comfortably.

Positive techniques and skills need to be incorporated into the style of counseling. Counselors can use skills such as restating, paraphrasing, responding to feelings, questioning, and attending behavior to enhance the counseling relationship. Of the three styles of counseling, the least

effective has been found to be the facilitative style. Directive or experimental styles are preferred. Role-playing a specific situation can help Indian children learn new behaviors and reactions. Small-group counseling is an effective means of teaching coping skills to Indian students.

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## Appendix I

## WHAT IS A WHITE PERSON?

## A FANTASY EXPLORING STEREOTYPES

PURPOSE:

A self-awareness exercise through which Indians can explore their feeling and personal beliefs of what white people are like and what it's like to be a white person.

DESIGN:

Exercise can be administered at a local setting. It is ideally suited to accommodate a small group from 10-20 persons, in order to facilitate group interaction and discussion. It is also ideally suited to Indian students who are exploring their feelings about white people.

WHO CAN ADMINISTER:

A resource person of Indian descent or a person with experience in dealing with Indians.

PROCEDURE:

The facilitator sets the stage by explaining how stereotypes often interfere with communication between people of differing ethnic or racial backgrounds. The facilitator needs to impress upon the program participants that this is not an exercise in which the participants knowledge of or beliefs about white people are being evaluated. Rather the participants need to be assured that the exercise is a growth process in which they themselves will explore their own feelings about white people.

After setting the stage for the purpose and goals of the exercise, the facilitator should proceed to administer the exercise, which is the fantasy of being white. It is helpful to have the lights turned low and to play classical music in the background. The participants should be instructed at this point to get into a comfortable position and close their eyes to get into the fantasy. The participants should be allowed approximately a minute to clear their minds of other thought processes which might interfere with their attention during the fantasy.

When the facilitator ascertains that the participants are prepared, the facilitator should proceed with the fantasy. The facilitator needs to allow adequate time for the participants to move through the fantasy slowly and completely. (Approximately 15 minutes will be adequate to talk the participants through the fantasy.) Upon completion, the facilitator

should instruct the participants to complete their fantasy and to come back to the group when they're ready.

GROUP INTERACTIONS AND DISCUSSION:

The facilitator should separate the participants into small groups of two or three persons per group. The small groups are for the purpose of participants sharing their fantasies with one another.

The facilitator should then bring the participants back to the larger group. Helpful questions for the large group to address would be as follows:

1. Is being white different from being Indian?
2. Did participants experience feelings as white persons which can be seen to be similar to the feelings of Indians? i.e., Do human feelings cross cultural lines? Are we all human beings under the skin?, etc.
3. Were the individual fantasies different from one another? If so, can we infer that just as the fantasies are different so are white persons different from one another? Thus stereotypes are simply that and can't be adequate or accurate in viewing individual persons, be they white or Indian.

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--In a moment you are going to be born.

--You are being born to a white mother and father, thus making you a white baby.

--You have now been born and your parents have given you a name.

--What is your name? What do you look like?

--Picture the surroundings you've been born into:

--Where does your family live?

--Do you have brothers and sisters?

--You are now in the process of growing up and will experience your childhood up to the age of six.

--Your childhood is filled with pastimes and activities; what are they?

--What are some of the foods you eat?

--Who looks after you?

--What is your mother's name?

--What is your mother's occupation?

--What does your mother look like physically?

--How does your mother feel about you?

--How do you feel about your mother?

--What is your father's name?

--What is your father's occupation?

--What does your father look like physically?

--How does your father feel about you?

- How do you feel about your father?
- Now that you're 6 years old, you're beginning elementary school.
  - How do you feel about school?
  - How does your family feel about school?
- Progress through 8th grade and take time to notice what kinds of outside activities you have from the school setting.
- Now you're in high school.
  - How do you dress?
  - What do you do when you're not in classes?
- Progress through high school until graduation.
- Now you've finished high school and have decided to go to college.
- You arrive at college where the enrollment of 6,000 students includes only 36 Indian students.
- How do your classmates and teachers respond to Indian students?
  - How do you respond to Indian students?
  - What do you do on weekends and evenings when classes are finished?
- After you graduate from college you decide to go to work on the reservation.
  - How do you feel about going to the reservation?
- How do the Indian people respond to you?
  - How do you respond to Indian people?
  - Do you date Indian people?
  - Would you consider marrying an Indian person?
  - Where do you work on the reservation?
  - Do you plan to spend your whole life on the reservation?

## Appendix II

## WHAT IS AN INDIAN?

## A FANTASY EXPLORING STEREOTYPE

PURPOSE:

A self awareness exercise through which non-Indians can explore their feelings and personal beliefs of what Indians are like and what it's like to be an Indian.

DESIGN:

Exercise can be administered at a local setting. It is ideally suited to accommodate a small group from 10-20 persons, in order to facilitate group interaction and discussion.

WHO CAN ADMINISTER:

A resource person of Indian descent or a person with experience in dealing with Indian people.

PROCEDURE:

The facilitator sets the stage by explaining how stereotypes often interfere with communication between people of differing ethnic or racial backgrounds. The facilitator needs to impress upon the program participants that this is not an exercise in which the participants knowledge of or beliefs about Indians are being evaluated. Rather the participants need to be assured that the exercise is a growth process in which they themselves will explore their own feelings about Indian people.

After setting the stage for the purpose and goals of the exercise, the facilitator should proceed to administer the exercise, which is the fantasy of being Indian. It is helpful to have the lights turned low and to play music of Indians singing in the background. The participants should be instructed at this point to get into a comfortable position and close their eyes in order to get into the fantasy.

When the facilitator ascertains that the participants are prepared, the facilitator should proceed with the fantasy. The facilitator needs to allow adequate time for the participants to move through the fantasy slowly and completely. (Approximately 15 minutes will be adequate to talk the participants through the fantasy.) Upon completion, the facilitator should instruct the participants to complete their fantasy and to come back to the group when they're ready.

GROUP INTERACTION AND DISCUSSION:

The facilitator should separate the participants into small groups of two or three persons per group. The small groups are for the purpose of participants sharing their fantasies with one another.

The facilitator should bring the participants back to the larger group. Helpful questions for the large group to address would be as follows:

1. Is being Indian different from being non-Indian?
2. Did participants experience feelings as Indians which can be seen to be similar to the feelings of non-Indians? That is, do human feelings cross cultural lines? Are we all human beings under the skin? etc.
3. Were the individual fantasies different from one another? If so, can we infer that just as the fantasies are different, so are Indian persons different from one another? Thus, stereotypes are simply that and can't be adequate or accurate in viewing individual persons, be they Indian or non-Indian.

\*\*\*\*\*

--In a moment you are going to be born.

--You are being born to an Indian mother and father, thus making you an Indian baby.

--You have now been born and your parents have given you a name.

--What is your name? What do you look like?

--Picture the surroundings you've been born into:

--Where does your family live?

--Do you have brothers and sisters?

--You are now in the process of growing up and will experience your childhood up to the age of six.

--Your childhood is filled with pastimes and activities; what are they?

--What are some of the foods you eat?

--Who looks after you?

--What is your mother's name?

--What is your mother's occupation?

--What does your mother look like physically?

--How does your mother feel about you?

--How do you feel about your mother?

--What is your father's name?

--What is your father's occupation?

--What does your father look like physically?

--How does your father feel about you?

--How do you feel about your father?

- Now that you're 6 years old, you're beginning elementary school.
  - How do you feel about your school?
  - How does your family feel about school?
- Progress through the 8th grade and take time to notice what kinds of outside activities you have from the school setting.
  
- Now you're in high school.
  - How do you dress?
  - What do you do when you're not in class?
- Progress through high school until graduation.
  
- Now you've finished high school and have decided to go to college.
- You arrive at college where the enrollment of 6,000 students includes only 36 Indian students.
- How do your classmates and teachers respond to you?
  - How do you respond to them?
  - How are you doing academically?
  - What do you do on weekends and evenings when classes are finished?
  
- I want you to take a few minutes and live out some points in your life.
  - Decide whether or not you finish college.
  - What is your occupation?
  - Decide whether or not you marry.
  - If you do marry, do you marry an Indian or non-Indian?
  - What kind of person are you?
  - What do you look like?
  - Are you pleased or displeased with your life?
  - Do you have children? If so, what do you want for them out of life?