COUNSELING AND THERAPY WITH NATIVE AMERICAN INDIANS

A Video presentation by Dr. Teresa LaFromboise, Miami Nation and Stanford University

Videotape Notes and Discussion Topics

INTRODUCTION

1. This tape focuses on three key issues:
   
   Assumptions that Indians hold about psychologists.
   
   Assumptions that psychologists hold about Indians.
   
   The counseling implications of different perspectives.

2. Dr. LaFromboise notes that it is an honor to be at this event. She notes that the ideas are not her my own alone and are the result of the work of many people. She dedicates this work to and Dr. Carolyn Attneave and Dr. Art McDonald, Native American Indian pioneers in psychology.

   Note: It is important here to note that Dr. LaFromboise specifically recognizes her debt to others. Rather than focusing on her individual achievements, she places herself in the historical context of her people.

SOME KEY BACKGROUND FACTS

1. Diversity

   1. There are some 350 Federally recognized tribes in the U.S., but when other groups and Alaskan Natives are considered, the number could be up to 525.

      superimposed title: Diversity—over 500 tribes and nations

   2. 50% of American Indians live in urban areas, the rest in reservations or rural settings. Many move back and forth from setting to setting.

      superimposed title: Half are in urban settings

   3. Cohesion in time of crisis. Groups work together to solve problems and this is an important identifying characteristic. Important because of the history of loss.

      superimposed title: Cohesion in time of crisis

4. Key losses

   Loss of language only 80 languages still spoken today.
   Loss of knowledge of culture.
   Loss of gender roles and role definition
superimposed title: Key cultural losses

2. How Native American Indians might present themselves in a mental health setting

1. Depression, anxiety, adjustment reactions, and alcohol/drug abuse are common ways clients might present issues.

2. Distressed families with issues of child abuse, family violence, and related issues may appear.

superimposed title for all of above: Counseling issues

3. Native American Indians will vary in their commitment to their cultural heritage and acculturation.

Five degrees of “Indianness” have been identified by the Ryan’s to describe where Native American Indians are as they present themselves for therapy. Use these categories carefully as they are unidimensional and do not cover all issues.

1. The traditional person thinks and speaks in their native language, know little English, and probably won’t present themselves in therapy.

superimposed title: 1. Traditional

2. The transitional person speaks both languages at home in the community. For the most part, this individual questions traditional ways of being and also questions the ways of the dominant society.

superimposed title: 2. Transitional

3. The marginal person is defensively Native American Indian and has a difficult time coping with either traditional ways or the dominant society. Caught between two worlds. Oetting and Beauvois point out that the person who has little identification with either culture has problems.

Title: 3. Marginal

4. The assimilated person has abandoned most of traditional society and accepts dominant cultural values.

Title: 4. Assimilated

5. The bicultural person lives effectively between traditional and dominant societies. Instead of a dual loyalty, this person has multiple loyalties and often can select roles that support themselves. They may have a better lifestyle than those who live in only one world.

Title: 5. Bicultural

4. Moving Between Two Worlds

1. Many of us expect to live in a world which permits us to deliver services in a traditional center with specific time slots for clients, interview notes, and office, etc.
2. But, working with Native American Indians may require us to go to the community and consult directly with individuals in their home settings. This would require us to move in and out of the office.

3. The same holds true in the past and present with Native American Indians as they are expected to operate in the Indian way in one setting and in the ways of the dominant culture in another. These worlds collide.

I THINK WE SHOULD keep THE PHOTO WHERE TERESA TALKS ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL NAVAJO WOMAN, BUT IT IS SHORT AND WE CAN JUST CONTINUE. Teresa OKed this deletion

I THINK IT IS OK TO SHOW THE PHOTO OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT MOVING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. IT MAKES THE POINT EXTREMELY WELL. WE DO NEED TO OBTAIN A LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM HER TO SHOW HER OR PERHAPS YOU HAVE THAT ALREADY. Teresa OKed keeping this.

I THINK THE PICTURE OF THE TEEPEE AND SF AND THE FOLLOWING ARE COPYRIGHTED. Teresa Oked deleting this.

BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS SHOULD BETeresa Oked keeping this.

Keep IMAGE AND DRESS Teresa Oked keeping this.


THE MOVING BETWEEN WORLDS IS QUITE WELL DONE AND UNDERSTANDABLE WITH THE IMAGES ANYWAY.

VARIous ASSumptions NATIVE AMERICAN INDIANS HOLD TOWARD PSYCHOLOGY

MAJOR TITLE AS WE MOVE TO NEW SECTION OF TAPE

VARIous ASSumptions NATIVE AMERICAN INDIANS HOLD TOWARD PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

(Bruce, this section head will be useful as a break)

1. Concern about lack of connectedness and community. (As our traditional mental health practices focus so much on the individual with little sense of context. In groups which focus on relationship, our individualistic approach to helping is often insensitive.)

2. The Lakota Sioux talk about Ta-un which means “being in a state of well being.” To be in well being, it requires a good deal of introspection to insure that your well-being is connected to others.
3. The Hopi regard well being as a very peaceful person and note the personal discipline it takes to be this type of person. You live according to these values.

4. The universal Native American Indian values identified Joseph Trimble focus on wisdom, kindness, cooperation, poise, responsibility, and a protectiveness of all life forms.

5. The Navajo talk about walking in beauty.

6. Note that all these values focus on the person-in-context and in relationship to others and the environment, a very different focus from that of traditional psychological and counseling values on the individual.

7. Religious values. The person is concerned about entire family, past, present, and future. Also important is relationship to all living beings and those in the spirit world.

   In order to practice this way of life, there are a number of men and women who are traditional healers who encourage people to integrate spirituality and well being.

8. Rituals and ceremonies are important in maintaining a spiritual life (primary prevention) and healing.

9. The universe is seen as a complex balance of spiritual forces and the natural environment. There is a need for respect for this balance. Results in practices and sanctions such as the need for respect, the rule against incest, and other social practices. By respecting the rules, society can work cooperatively.

10. Healers are keepers of the stories in the community. Traditional stories have the function of educating us about how to handle various psychological and behavioral problems.

11. Lakota Sioux focus on ceremonies to help prevent difficulties—vision quest, sweat lodge, and the give-away. Vision quest involves isolation of the person so that he or she can find their role in the community. Sweat lodge to maintain health and energy. Give away is an act of thanksgiving because a person or the family is doing well. This emphasizes the importance of material balance in maintaining the economy of the group.

   **Title: Ceremonies help maintain balance**

12. In seeking help from a healer, the first task is to examine oneself and one’s actions before the meeting. Introspection is required to look at your role in the problem. Who you are as an individual is most important.

13. Role of illness. Illness often suggests you have violated the sanctions of the group. One needs discipline to maintain the cultural values.
Title: Illness caused by violation of cultural values.

14. Individual achievements need to enhance the strength of the community.

15. Problems in the Native American Indian community become the problems of the community. The community or family meets to try to figure out what is going on and bring the individual experiencing the problem back to life of the group.

Title: Individual problems seen as community problems

16. Bartering and sharing of responsibility of property and services are important. Everyone has a role to make things happen. This brings isolated people into the community. May even adopt a troubled person into a new family or clan.

Title: Problem-resolution may involve entire families or communities.

17. Collective treatment strengthens both individual and the group. Troubled people would be encouraged to join groups, community meetings, church meetings. Discussions around the issue rather than the individual would possibly occur. Testimonials, confessions, atonement, or restitution may be part of the therapy. The spirit world may be involved.

Title: Example community therapy strategies

18. The goal is not to enhance the ego, but to transcend the ego and become embedded in community. The self is seen as part of the community. Self-esteem, insight, and the like are ignored.

Superimposed title: Transcending individual difference through community

Title: END PART I.

Questions for discussion.

1. Given what you’ve observed thus far, what one thing stands out for you about this tape? Share this with a neighbor.

2. How do Native American Indian values differ from those typically taught in counseling and therapy courses?

3. The community is seen as responsible for the mental health of its members. Contrast this with traditional mental health values.

4. The give-away or Potlatch is a method of wealth sharing and celebration. Compare and contrast this with the approach to material goods in the dominant culture.

5. What does the tape thus far suggest to you as ways you might want to change your practice, not only with Native American Indians, but also with African Americans, and other groups. What does it say to the European-American population?
ASSUMPTIONS PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN PEOPLE

MAJOR TITLE: ASSUMPTIONS PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN PEOPLE

1. Psychologists have studied Native American Indians and have failed to note the importance of community and interventions taken to the group have focused on the dominant culture’s worldview. Fail to note the coping strategies of Native American Indians.

    superimposed title: General failure of psychology to understand or help

2. Psychology emphasizes the importance of being value free even though people’s problems involve values. Psychology fails to consider spiritual values.

    superimposed title: Failure to consider spirituality

3. Value neutrality leads to counselors being considered not trustworthy or agents of the dominant culture.

    superimposed title: Counselors may not be trusted

4. Dualities in psychology present a problem with ideas of individualism and personal agency. This is effective to the privileged class, but does little for many others. This dualism leads to a sense of alienation.

    superimposed title: Problems in dualism

5. Traditional individualistic ideas say little to traditional Native American Indian people. Mental health itself is a dualism.

6. Guild issue—psychology has difficulty accepting paraprofessional or community workers, although they clearly are important to Native American Indians.

7. Prevention as conceptualized by psychology misses the collaborative flavor of Native American Indians. Prevention activities of psychologists are often naïve.

    superimposed title: Prevention difficulties

8. Eclecticism or combining different forms of treatment is difficult for psychology whereas traditional healing can be very useful when combined with many psychological techniques.

Discussion questions for part II.

1. Dr. LaFromboise has presented a challenging view of traditional training in mental health. What is your immediate reaction and feeling about her presentation? Share it with a neighbor.

2. How would you meet some of the challenges presented here?
Can you take the earlier parts of the videotape and think of ways in which you might want to change your own practice.

3. How are other cultural groups such as Asian-American, African-American, and Latina/os related to the ideas presented here?

4. Can you imagine some ways in which European-Americans, particularly those who identify with various ethnic groups, might benefit form the ideas expressed by Dr. LaFromboise?

5. Spiritual issues are usually ignored in counseling and therapy. How to you react to Dr. LaFromboise’s suggestion that they become central in working with Native American Indians?

THE COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

MAJOR TITLE: THE COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

1. Native American Indians may be reluctant to enter into professional helping relationships. They will likely go first to family or spiritual leader or community leader. Nonetheless, there are increasing numbers of Native American Indians who seek professional helping services.

2. Location of traditional mental health centers shape the nature of practice. Urban centers are often located near Native American Indian people’s living areas. If there are Native American Indian therapists in the center, the Native American Indian population may seek help in reclaiming their cultural identity.

3. Native American Indians on the reservation who move back and forth between two worlds may be seeking information on city life and related issues.

4. Village clinics on the reservation are often offering tribal specific kinds of services.

5. There is also a need to access the traditional healing system. An important part of Lakota Sioux treatment in the early phases is to determine whether or not the client will also want to see a traditional healer. Some clients profit from a combined approach.

superimposed title: Traditional healers can compliment mental health services

6. In rural areas, there may be a real concern about confidentiality or stigma and they may travel hundreds of miles to seek another center.

7. It is vital to respect spiritual issues in counseling and therapy. Indians clients in any category might present issues around spirituality. It is important to be open about this issue and be willing to talk about these issues.

superimposed title: Spirituality—an important issue for helping

8. There is a concern about issues of bias and worry about mental health workers not respecting or moving them away from ways of Native American Indian being.
Distrust also results from the history of genocide and racism in the dominant society. Forming a relationship may be difficult for a non Native American Indian.

**superimposed title: Distrust an issue**

9. Traditional ways of communicating can influence the therapy process. Native American Indians have great respect for the spoken word because of the oral tradition. But, words can be used to hurt, threaten, and frighten and conceal information. Care in the use of words is important. Indians are taught not to speak loosely and to have a purpose in what is said. Native American Indians may talk about the setting and context and circumstances surrounding an event in detail. Counselors sometimes get impatient with this and want the clients to get to the point.

**Title: Crucial communication issues (show this one early in the discussion of this point)**

Native American Indian rhetoric is like the spokes on a wheel and out of respect for the listener the main point may be left implicit.

**MAJOR TITLE OVER WHOLE SCREEN: Native American Indian rhetoric is like the spokes on a wheel and out of respect for the listener the main point may be left implicit.**

**Bruce, I think this is very important and we need to give the point extra emphasis so be sure that students have the chance to read the whole statement before moving on. Show this after Dr. L. makes her point verbally so that we reinforce it visually.**

10. Use of disclaimers. The Native American Indian person may present themselves as humble and be cautious about talking, even though they present a well thought out opinion.

11. Importance of non-interference. Advice and suggestion are considered incredibly meddling. If we respect the individual, we don’t interfere in their life.

**superimposed title: Advice considered meddling**

12. Rarely will the Native American Indian client ask for help. It will be done indirectly thus giving the other person freedom to pick up on it or not. 13. Gentle probes of the client test the limits of the relationship.

13. The client-centered approach was found less effective that a more culturally experimental approach. Much relies on asking the person seeking help questions and then providing examples of how other people have solved similar issues.

**titles: Client-centered approach less effective**

**Culture-experimental style appropriate**

Asking lots of personal questions is less effective. Native American Indians will talk when ready.

14. How important is it for the helper to be Native American Indian? Bennett and Rowe found that young Native American Indian women need a matched helper. Ethnicity important for males, but
not the gender. As people become less focused on Indianness, being a Native American Indian helper is less important. At the college level, it is important that the helper have similar attitudes and values to the helper. Adults would prefer a more educated, older helper. Important for helpers to be self-aware.

15. Native American Indian time is “when the time is right.” An extended session may be required, be flexible about time. The Hopi, for example, have no word for time. Many feminist therapy ideas have been found to be useful with Native American Indians, but the emphasis on boundary maintenance in terms of time limits is not appropriate.

   superimposed title: Time considerations

16. Be aware that the idea that a person may not accomplish a goal may not be so important to Native American Indians. A sense of emergence may be enough. There is a need to structure a shared understanding of the counseling process.

   superimposed title: Attitudes toward goals

17. Individual may mark time by events which represent a continuous flow of events. Given this flow, change processes may be construed differently. The counselor thus can revisit old issues during the session. Follow-up visits important.

18. Termination may be different with Native American Indians. Eventing may be helpful. The loss of relationship with the helper may be an issue. Thus, planning for termination may take three sessions or more. The therapy door should be left open. It is OK to continue the relationship between the helper and client after therapy such as attending a wedding or graduation. The therapist may be honored by a gift at such a ceremony. The gift should be received and is a special case in ethical practice.

   superimposed title: Termination

CONCLUSION

   MAJOR TITLE: CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Discussion questions

   1. The model of helping presented by Dr. LaFromboise suggests the need for all of us to move out of the office and more into the community. What are your personal reactions to this?

   2. Discuss how relationships are similar and how they are different in working with Native American Indian clients.

   3. List in your own words some specifics of helping which you will recall and use in the future. Compare your list with that of your class or group.

   4. Discuss diversity and variation among Native American Indians. Relate this discussion to other groups in the U.S. and Canada.
5. How does your training and experience as a therapist or counselor relate to this tape? What implications does it have for your future work?

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2—People cited is OK as is.
3—Rest of titles OK
4—But add final title

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