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AUTHOR Wetsit, Deborah
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ABSTRACT

Counseling has always been a part of American Indian culture. Only recently has the European American counseling establishment recognized the role of culture in counseling. Developing a historical understanding of American Indians is important to working with American Indian students. It is also important for school counselors to recognize the tremendous diversity among and within American Indian tribes and the impact of acculturation factors and cultural identity issues. The cultural differences between American Indian and European American students are very real and require an awareness of value differences in areas such as time management, goal orientation, group versus individual accomplishments, family orientation, sharing versus materialism, being versus doing, harmony with nature versus mastery over nature, the importance of tradition, humility versus arrogance, and reverence for elders. The implications of some of these primary values are discussed. School counselors must obtain cross-cultural competencies to be effective. The establishment of trust and rapport, avoidance of direct questioning, appropriate counseling styles, involvement with the community or tribe, confidentiality, and dealing with the environmental factors of racism and prejudice are essential elements of a counselor's knowledge base. Contains references in endnotes and a bibliography. (Author/TD)

CHAPTER 8

# Effective Counseling with American Indian Students

DEBORAH WETSIT[1]

American Indians and Alaska Natives are the Indigenous people of this country; yet they remain among the smallest ethnic groups in the United States. Despite interaction with the dominant European American culture for more than 500 years, American Indians continue to maintain their own culturally distinct worldviews. Broadly defined, counseling has always been a part of American Indian cultures, practiced in ways deemed appropriate to respective worldviews. Professional counselors responsible for meeting the needs of American Indian students must find ways to address a variety of contexts effectively. Counseling, as practiced today, is heavily influenced by European American cultural values and practices. To counsel American Indian students effectively, the profession needs to include authentic forms of counseling that are congruent with American Indian cultures.

## Role of Counseling

The field of counseling is reportedly growing in both size and scope.[2] In general, counseling is viewed as a means of helping indi-

viduals, groups, and families solve problems and reach their developmental potential as human beings. A number of theories guide professional counselors, ranging from individual to family systems orientations and from nondirective, person-centered to directive, cognitive-behavioral orientations. Counseling has its origins in education and normative developmental work with people, whereas psychology and psychiatry are oriented more toward the diagnosis and treatment of pathology.

According to the American School Counselor Association, school counseling specifically provides

> Direct services to students, staff and community to facilitate self-understanding, interpersonal relationships, problem-solving and decision-making skills and responsibility in educational, career and avocational development.[3]

Further, school counselors focus upon preventive activities to address situations before they cause problems. Counselors conduct these activities in a variety of settings: counseling contexts (e.g., individual, group, family), classrooms (e.g., instruction, curriculum development, teacher consultation), and community (e.g., disseminating education literature, organizing community forums). School counselors work with students and families through remediation activities and intervention. Other observers point out that the school counselor, while assisting students with social and personal development, has taken on the role of transmitter and developer of multicultural awareness.[4]

Within American Indian cultures, counseling has always played an important role. For example, traditional Native healers have strived to meet the counseling needs of the community and individual. These traditional activities may not be recognized by European American observers as counseling due to differences in approach and process; yet the intent of providing help to individuals, families, or groups is the same. Carolyn Attneave points out that, even today, the presence and responsibilities of traditional healers remain hidden to non-Native counselors. She attributes this hidden existence to the long history of persecution and superstition of European American society. However, counseling persists within Native cultures.[5]

## American Indian Students

**History.** The identity of any group of people is rooted in its history. Joseph E. Trimble and C. Fleming point out that knowing the history of American Indian communities is *essential* to counseling American Indian people effectively. Native people have a history that extends long before their contact with Europeans. However, with regard to cross-cultural understanding between Indians and non-Indians, history began with the first contact between the Europeans who came to this country and the Native people who have always lived here. The relationship between Europeans and American Indians has been rife with misunderstanding from the beginning.[6]

Many European Americans believed it was their destiny and God's plan for them to live here and use the land as they thought best. This concept of *manifest destiny* completely disregarded the Native people who already lived on the land. Contact with previously unknown European diseases decimated the population of Native people. Missionaries sought to convert Native people to Christianity by turning them away from and denigrating Native spiritual beliefs. As interaction between European Americans and Native people increased, the federal government implemented a policy of removing Native people, particularly children, from their cultures. Often this meant not only removing them from their homes but relocating them as far from their homes as possible.

Boarding schools such as Haskell in Lawrence, Kansas, and Carlisle in Pennsylvania taught young Native children about European American culture. The boarding school system implanted negative messages about students' own cultures by forbidding Native languages to be spoken, discouraging contact with families, and teaching a curriculum based exclusively on European American culture. The military model upon which these boarding schools were based did not provide positive, nurturing examples of authority figures nor did it employ positive methods of discipline. The school environment contrasted harshly with the homes from which children as young as five years old had been removed. Native parents were viewed as obstructions to the education of their children. The basic premise of this education system was to remove the *Indian* from the person,

instilling instead the values, practices, and beliefs of European American culture. Vestiges of this philosophy continue today.

**Current status.** Statistically American Indians are an exceptionally young population. The U.S. Bureau of the Census reports the American Indian population increased 38 percent between 1980 and 1990 with a median age of 26, as compared to the overall U.S. median age of 33. American Indian school enrollment was expected to increase by 29 percent between 1985 and 1995. Because a significant portion of this population is, or will be, of childbearing age, continued population growth is anticipated. The number of American Indian students in the formal education system will continue to increase, as will the need to address the counseling demands and concerns of this population.[7]

**Acculturation.** Acculturation is the extent to which an American Indian (or any person from another culture) identifies with the attitudes, behaviors, and values of the dominant culture and vice versa. The mere existence of other cultures increases the potential for and level of acculturation for all people. For American Indians, who have had European American culture imposed upon them, the question is not whether they have acculturated but to what degree. It is also important to acknowledge that cultures, even traditional Native cultures, are never stagnant. This is evidenced by the incorporation of tools or products provided by European American culture in even the most sacred American Indian ceremonies.

Further, the extensive variations among American Indian tribal cultures must be recognized. There are 308 federally recognized tribes in the United States. These tribes can differ amongst one another as much as the English and Italians or the Spanish and Turks differ. Tribes differ in many ways, including languages, beliefs, expectations, gender roles, customs, and ceremonies. Often this cultural diversity within American Indian populations is overlooked by European Americans, many of whom believe in what T. C. Thomason refers to as the "myth of homogeneity."[8]

In addition to using boarding schools for assimilation, the federal government sponsored relocation programs to move tribal citizens to urban areas. Although many participants of the relocation programs returned to their reservation communities, a number of American Indians remained in the cities. Today a limited reservation land

base and high unemployment on reservations also pressure tribal members to move to urban areas. This urban migration is predicted to continue increasing. According to a 1990 census report, 62 percent of American Indians live away from their tribal land bases; therefore, simply living away from the reservation does not mean counselors will not encounter American Indians. Counselors must take care to ascertain the presence of Native students in mainstream schools and not assume erroneously that none attend their school just because they are in an urban setting. Nor can it be assumed that Native students attending an urban school have lost their cultural identities.[9]

Teresa Davis LaFromboise and Kathryn Graff Low point out that "as Indian youth enter school, they often feel stranded between two cultures. Many of them speak an entirely different first language, practice an entirely different religion, and hold different cultural values than the dominant culture."[10] Counselors need to recognize American Indian students experience different levels of acculturation and that they are expected to function in a school system based upon European American culture. Typically the curriculum reflects little American Indian history or culture, and that which is included is from the European American perspective.

## Cross-Cultural Counseling

Since the early 1970s professional awareness of cultural factors and their relevance to the counseling process has increased.[11] This awareness includes a growing realization that expectations for counselor and client roles have been influenced almost exclusively by Western European models and worldviews. While these models have proven effective in working with members of European American society, they have been less effective with other ethnicities. Counselors need to remember that American Indians and other ethnic minorities are socialized to interpret their experiences in the world much differently than the majority culture.

**Cultural identity.** The vast majority of American Indians has little desire to assimilate into European American culture. The sense of cultural and tribal belonging experienced by American Indians is an extremely important aspect of their identity. Jean S. Phinney and Mary Jane Rotheram define ethnic identity as "one's sense of be-

longing to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership." Some believe this sense of identity begins by age three or four; others believe that even infants can recognize strangers of a different ethnic group. School counselors need to recognize the role of ethnic identity in the development of self-esteem and self-concept. Studies frequently cite the impact of low self-esteem and poor self-concept on dysfunctional behaviors with American Indian students.[12]

Frances Aboud reports that only 15 percent of the studies she reviewed indicate that American Indian children show a preference for their own ethnic group. Native children express a strong preference for European American culture until at least middle childhood. This preference comes at the expense of developing positive attitudes about their own cultural groups. In contrast, Aboud says, "White children typically hold negative attitudes toward other groups from 4 years of age."[13] These findings carry an important message. School counselors must assist teachers, administrators, and students (both Native and non-Native) to develop positive self-esteem and positive cultural self-concepts in students. In addition, all children must be taught to value other cultures. Because the development of cultural identity and attitudes about other cultural groups begins at such an early age, counselors must prepare schools to address these issues from the student's first day of enrollment. People tend to avoid dissimilar groups, and Aboud suggests children react more intensely to dissimilarities because they lack the ability to reconcile different ethnic preferences and reach the conclusion that it is all right for people to be different. School counselors aware of this situation need to work with teachers and other school personnel prior to enrollment and develop strategies to assist children in valuing ethnic and cultural differences.

**Cultural differences**. Many people believe that all values are present in all cultures; however, the priority or emphasis placed on each respective value can vary. For example, a sense of family is valued by all cultures; cultures differ over the degree to which involvement with family takes precedence over other values (e.g., employment, recreation). Individuals or groups within a culture may also place greater emphasis on one particular value than gener-

ally prescribed by the rest of society. It is important to acknowledge this to avoid oversimplifying this discussion.

Values can be described as social guideposts indicating cultural norms for appropriate behavior and revealing what is important, what is expected, and what is desired by a particular society. Their deep-seated nature renders values so much a part of the background they seem almost invisible until confronted with a clashing value. So much of what we consider universal is very culture specific.[14]

American Indian students are likely to subscribe to some distinctly different values from non-Native counselors, especially those students more grounded in their respective Native cultures. Since the counseling setting relies on effective communication and the counselor's ability to "inner-view" the client, the opportunity for misunderstanding heightens when values differ. Behaviors of American Indian students can easily be misinterpreted if the counselor is unaware of such differences. For example, Trimble observes, "Many young Indians are not socialized to expound on inner thoughts and feelings. Thus, reliance on a client's ability to achieve insight would be a mistake."[15]

One of the primary values taught by the formal education system is time management. Teachers and administrators expect students to arrive at school prior to the beginning of classes, turn in all assignments according to a schedule, and think in terms of future orientation. Students receive penalties if they are tardy or if they think and act only in terms of the present. This creates a dichotomy because Native cultures emphasize a natural order of the world in which events happen when they are supposed to happen. For instance, Native ceremonies begin when all have arrived who need or are expected to be there. Contrast this with a mainstream church service or school function that begins punctually at the appointed hour and minute. Native cultures are rooted in the past, and careful attention is paid to the historical nature and ancestral meaning of events and relationships. School counselors must assist schools and Native students in recognizing this difference and find ways to minimize the negative impact on students. Johanna Nel suggests emphasizing to Native students the need to show respect for the teacher by being punctual. But it is also important for counselors to educate teachers and administrators to acknowledge this difference by exercising leniency in their policies.[16]

A second European American value reflected in schools is completion of tasks, or goal orientation. Great importance is placed on accomplishing tasks or mastering skills to reach specific goals within a prescribed time frame. For example, all students are expected to demonstrate mastery of certain mathematical skills by third grade. While this value has fostered many achievements, it often conflicts with Native cultures, which place greater emphasis upon relationships. School counselors aware of this value difference will be able to assist schools and students when it creates conflicts. For example, when faced with the choice between completing a homework assignment or visiting with friends or relatives who stop by, Native culture values the relationship with the guests above other tasks. Counselors need to work with teachers, parents, and students to resolve these types of conflicts, most likely on a case-by-case basis.

A third value that often creates conflict in schools relates to group versus individual accomplishments. European American culture places great emphasis on individual accomplishments. Classroom environments reinforce this value by encouraging students to compete with one another to determine which student is the best, via spelling bees, attendance charts, gold stars, letter grades, and so forth. Native cultures value group accomplishments more highly, working together for the common good. Counselors can assist teachers in recognizing the potential for and minimizing value conflict. Phinney and Rotheram report studies of success where multiethnic teams have worked together to complete class assignments in which interdependence is required. A technique recommended in their studies is the "jigsaw" method, which requires interdependence among students, each of whom must learn part of an assignment and teach it to the other group members.[17]

Conflict often arises in school settings over a fourth value, family orientation. Counselors, in particular, need to attain a clear understanding of the value many Native people place on family. European American culture emphasizes the concept of the nuclear family, which consists primarily of a mother, father, and children. Parents are primary care providers and are held responsible for their children's actions, including their accomplishments and mistakes. Laws embodying the European American culture require children to have parental consent until the ages of 16, 18, or 21 depending upon the issue and state of residence.

Within most, if not all, traditional American Indian cultural contexts, the family is far more extended, including grandparents, aunts (who may have the same authority as a child's biological mother), uncles (who may have a role similar to a child's biological father), great-aunts (frequently considered grandmothers), great uncles (frequently considered grandfathers), and cousins (first cousins may have the same role as a child's sibling and thus be considered brothers and sisters). Native family systems also incorporate biologically unrelated family members. For example, one can designate a woman as a sister, and that person will be considered a relative by other family members. This person may be referred to as "my sister, Indian way." These informal adoptees need to be recognized as family members. Whereas the specific nature of such relationships can be confusing to an inexperienced counselor, it is important to realize that it is the *perception* of a relationship that is significant.[18]

The family is of such importance in Native cultures that it is expected to take priority over other values such as recreation, school, or even employment, depending upon the situation. If a student is needed at home to help a sick family member, that takes priority. If a family member is hospitalized, the whole family may stand vigil until they are assured the person is in full recovery. Counselors must recognize the strength of this value and the implications within the school setting in working with American Indian students and families.

This extended family network has other implications in working with American Indian students, adding complexity to identifying a student's primary caretaker. While American Indian families are subject to laws that hold biological parents responsible for their children, from a Native perspective, such responsibility may be shared. The child is the responsibility of the family; thus, a grandparent, aunt, or older sibling may be the primary caretaker. Consequently counselors must be able to identify which members of the family need to be included when working with American Indian students. The perceived relationship among the extended family members is more important than the biological connection.

Most literature on counseling American Indians describes these differences between Native and European American cultural values plus several others, including *sharing* versus *materialism*, *being* versus *doing*, *harmony with nature* versus *mastery over nature*,

*tradition* versus *technology and progress*, *humility* versus *arrogance*, and *reverence for elders*. The ability to recognize these value differences and their deep underlying significance is extremely important for effective cross-cultural counseling. Without this awareness and understanding, counselors will not recognize the meaning of students' behaviors resulting from such values. This lack of understanding can contribute to resistance to counseling processes such as self-disclosure.[19]

While American Indians share many commonalities in their history and general value orientations, it is important to remember there are tribal differences. Tribal specific knowledge cannot be transported from one tribe to another. For example, firsthand knowledge about the Navajo culture cannot be transferred to the Lakota of South Dakota without significant modification. However, a general orientation can provide a foundation from which to build more tribally specific knowledge.[20]

**Cross-cultural competencies.** Derald W. Sue and colleagues identify three areas of competence that a culturally skilled psychologist must possess, which also holds true for related disciplines such as school counseling. These areas include (1) awareness of diversity in beliefs and attitudes (e.g., need to move from being unaware to being aware of personal and other cultural values), (2) knowledge (e.g., need to understand the U.S. sociopolitical system and its impact on other cultural groups), and (3) skills (e.g., ability to interpret and respond to a wide range of verbal and nonverbal communication). Other observers have built on these observations, pointing out the need for counselors to use these competencies in working specifically with American Indians. Cultural knowledge can enable different interpretations of behavioral patterns. For example, Lakota people accept the behavior of "pouting," which allows an individual to go off alone for a time to reflect on his or her own behavior and the behavior of others. If a counselor lacks cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, he or she might interfere with a behavior that has a function within this tribal context.[21]

## Effective Counseling Strategies

**Establishing trust and rapport.** The community's perception of the counseling profession is important. Barbetta Lockhart notes

American Indian populations hold a historical mistrust of mainstream systems. This mistrust can extend to institutions responsible for counseling services and the counselors whom they have trained. Counseling services for American Indians have been provided primarily by public schools, Indian Health Services, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with the vast majority of counselors being of European American descent. LaFromboise and Low remind us that American Indians tend to look first to their extended family to solve problems rather than conventional counseling services, so families need to be included in successful interventions.[22]

Counselors need to recognize and address cultural mistrust at the individual, school, and general system levels. Researchers have found that mistrust of European Americans is a major obstacle in delivery of cross-cultural mental health services and that American Indians seldom look to typical mainstream counseling to improve their lives. It is evident that using these services depends to a great extent on the reputation of past and current counseling programs and the professionals themselves. For example, if the previous school counselor had been well respected in the community, people would anticipate the same types of experiences. If, on the other hand, people have had negative experiences, the next counselor would face the difficult challenge of establishing trust.[23]

Because establishing trust is so essential to the success of counseling relationships, counselors need to know how to go about it in Native communities. A counselor new to the community is an outsider and can expect a high degree of scrutiny by the community. This begins from the moment of first contact with an American Indian community. For example, one counselor recently employed in an American Indian community was approached by a woman she had not previously met. The counselor was shocked to find out that the woman already knew not only that she was a counselor but also what kind of vehicle she drove, her marital status, and other personal information. American Indian reservation communities are quick to share information about anyone who is new to their area, and counselors are not immune from this type of scrutiny. While it is common for clients to make judgments about their counselors, this is especially true in cross-cultural situations. Clients begin sizing up counselors at the point of initial contact by keenly observing the way in which they are greeted, the counselor's manner of dress, the

setting for the session, the manner of introduction (e.g., use of formal title or first name), physical appearance, ethnicity, and so forth. Lockhart cautions that counselors are watched very closely for inconsistencies and incongruencies.[24]

Clear, effective communication is essential for establishing trust and rapport with any client and especially important in cross-cultural settings where communication can be so easily misinterpreted. Geraldine Youngman and Margaret Sadongei recommend approaching the initial session very slowly to allow the student to unfold at his or her own pace. Counselors are also cautioned that the student likely will find self-disclosure inconsistent with tribal traditions. Trimble reports that "many young Indians are not socialized to expound on inner thoughts and feelings." In many Native cultures, the counselor (in traditional cultural terms) is assigned the role of expert. The client presents the problem, whereby it is the responsibility of the healer (e.g., counselor) to diagnose the problem and provide a solution. Direct questioning also may not be acceptable within the American Indian student's culture. Counselors are advised not to push for self-disclosure but to ask students for help in defining the problem in hopes this will foster trust and rapport early in the relationship. Without self-disclosure, counselors must learn to observe carefully and rely on nonverbal communication clues rather than verbal indicators. Thomason recommends the use of humor, self-disclosure by the counselor, and warmth to establish trust.[25]

In greeting an American Indian student, it is important to acknowledge the student's tribal affiliation. The sense of tribal identity can be very important to a more traditional person. This is especially true if more than one tribe is represented in the school population. Equally important is the identification of the student's family system. This can be accomplished by telling the student which family members are known by the counselor based on his or her knowledge of the community (e.g., "Is Henry Standing Elk your cousin?" "Are you related to Molly Begay, who works at the store?") The manner in which this is acknowledged depends upon the counselor's assessment of the client's level of acculturation.

The first contact may need to be formal enough that the student knows he or she is being counseled. Thomason recommends counse-

lors take a gentle, noninvasive approach to create an atmosphere of acceptance in which the American Indian student feels comfortable. He also recommends counselors avoid direct questioning.[26]

**Counseling styles.** There is little agreement about which style of counseling is best for American Indian clients. A study involving 50 University of Oklahoma students, half of whom identified themselves as American Indian and half as non-Indian, tested an experimental communication style against a directive style. Experimental style communication was characterized by responses that emphasized approval/reassurance and self-disclosure while avoiding open-ended questions. A directive style of communication was characterized by a high reliance on direct guidance and open question responses while de-emphasizing self-disclosure. The researchers found that American Indian college students prefer experimental counselor communication, while a directive style is preferred by non-Indian students. However, other research advises against using a nondirective (client-centered) counseling approach with American Indians. Alonzo Spang suggests an eclectic or directive counseling approach, which is most effective when based upon the counselor's knowledge of the American Indian culture. LaFromboise and colleagues point out that many Native clients expect a different approach from that used in traditional therapy. These researchers found that Indian adolescents hope the counselor is an expert who can give practical advice about their problems.[27]

A number of researchers strongly recommend group counseling as a preferred counseling style for American Indians as it is more reflective of the cultural worldview of this population. The sense of group, rather than the individual, is highly valued in most American Indian cultures. This is also very consistent with school counseling practices in which group work is used frequently with students. Thomason also recommends family counseling whenever possible.[28]

Another factor school counselors need to consider in developing effective counseling strategies is the need to be involved in the Native community itself. It is important to attend community activities, social events, and tribal ceremonies to the greatest degree possible. Of course, culturally sensitive school counselors should seek out knowledge about the appropriateness of outsider attendance at tribal ceremonies beyond the generally public powwow or other

social dances. In working with European American counselors who live on or near Indian reservations, it is surprising how many counselors have never attended a powwow or have done so only once or twice. To get a true sense of the student's world, it is necessary to experience that world as much as possible. In many Native communities, tribal members have their own names for particular areas of the community, and the only way to find out about these areas is to visit them. Often the only way to understand the importance of tribal activities is to attend them. While school counselors are encouraged to attend Native-oriented activities, they should participate with caution. If possible, approach these occasions from the Native cultural perspective in which unfamiliar situations are observed until there is a reason to be invited to participate.

One school official used the extended family system and the strong respect most Native cultures have for their elders quite effectively. The school library was displaying photographs of many tribal leaders from early history to contemporary times. The school official would take students to a private area of the library to discuss concerns with them. In prefacing his remarks, he would remind the students of their relatives who were leaders of the community and the things they had accomplished. If he needed to instill a sense of pride or commitment, he would wait until the students were ready to hear such a message and then draw upon their relatives' accomplishments to remind them of their places in the community and tribe. This tactic requires an extensive knowledge of a tribe's history and extended family systems.

Overall, the establishment of trust and rapport is an ongoing process that can quickly be destroyed if violated. It is also a process that has strong historic roots with American Indian people, creating additional challenges in cross-cultural situations.

**Confidentiality**. Confidentiality is considered a critical element in establishing trust and rapport in counseling situations. Counselors who struggle to find more effective strategies for working with American Indian students must carefully examine the challenges posed by confidentiality. The professional ethical and legal standards of confidentiality are the same with this population as with other clients. However, the nature of communication patterns and extended family systems creates the need to reflect on this factor in

counseling Native students. Within many traditional Native family systems, communication patterns are quite indirect. For example, if a son is not pleased with his mother's actions, he cannot tell her directly, although he can go to another person such as an aunt. The aunt can then go to the mother to explain the son's concerns. The mother, in turn, can respond to her son through the aunt. While this pattern of communication avoids direct conflict and contributes to the sense of harmony among relationships, it also can confuse the communication process. It is important for school counselors to be aware of this communication pattern and be alert for how they may be drawn into it. For example, if a member of a student's family asks the school counselor whether it would be a good idea for Johnny to attend a particular function, the family member may be seeking a way to express his or her own opinion by saying the counselor said it was a good idea. Counselors must recognize the indirect communication pattern in place and become adept at interpreting it accurately.

School counselors must also exercise care in what they communicate within extended family systems. Certainly reiterating the rules of confidentiality on a regular basis helps everyone involved clarify boundaries. While family system theory helps define how relatively nuclear families work, school counselors generally work with far more family members than in a European American cultural system, and as indicated earlier, some of these family members are recognized as such only within the family system. Counselors must find ways to communicate effectively within existing communication patterns and avoid violating their client's right to confidentiality.

The possibility of dual roles in small reservation communities is also a factor in maintaining the students' rights to confidentiality. It is a challenge in any small community where everyone knows everyone else. This will likely create another role for school counselors who try to be visible in the Native community and to attend tribal activities to establish trust and rapport. Again, it is important for counselors to remember they will be scrutinized for what they say and do within the community. Additional caution needs to be exercised to ensure that no information can be attributed back to something the counselor has said, which could be construed as violating students' confidentiality.[29]

**Environmental factors: Racism and prejudice**. Racism and prejudice are realities in the world of American Indians. Counselors need to remember this fact when developing effective counseling strategies. As indicated by previously cited research, counselors can work with the school system and community to help all students recognize the value of ethnic diversity. Counselors should develop group and class exercises to reinforce students' self-esteem and self-worth. Start simply with exercises that create an awareness by students and educators that each person has a culture. One such exercise is to provide all students, teachers, or administrators with drawing materials and ask them to draw their culture within a five- to ten-minute time frame. The results will promote extensive discussion. Value clarification exercises also draw attention to cultural differences and the need to respect diversity without judging others.[30]

Counselors must acknowledge that racism and prejudice exist and must be dealt with by all concerned. Derald and David Sue point out, "Racism is alive, well, and thriving in the United States."[31] Awareness is one step but a more active stance would be more conducive to American Indian students' well-being. Racism ranges from covert, found in institutional forms of racism, to overt biases, expressed at the individual level; this needs to be recognized by school counselors. A review is needed of school policies as well as testing tools used with American Indian students, including standardized counseling instruments and ability or IQ testing (e.g., Iowa Basic Skills Test, ACT, SAT, and so forth).

Charles Ridley's work on the impact of racism in counseling identifies five assumptions:

> (1) racism is reflected in behavior, (2) racist acts can be performed by prejudiced *and* nonprejudiced people [emphasis added], (3) no one ethnic group is responsible for racism, (4) the determination as to a racist act is in the consequences and not the causes of the behavior, and (5) power is the force that is necessary for racism to continue.[32]

School counselors must thoroughly understand racism and prejudice to address them effectively. This is especially true in situations where many people are unaware that their behavior in cross-cultural situations can frequently result in unintentional racism.

## Summary

Counseling has always been a part of American Indian culture. Only recently has the European American counseling establishment recognized the role of culture in counseling. Developing a historical understanding of American Indians is important to working with American Indian students. It is also important for school counselors to recognize the tremendous diversity among and within American Indian tribes and the impact of acculturation factors and cultural identity issues. The cultural differences between American Indian and European American students are very real and require an awareness of value differences and the implications of a few of the primary values described herein. School counselors need to obtain cross-cultural competencies to be effective. The establishment of trust and rapport, counseling styles, confidentiality, and dealing with the environmental factors of racism and prejudice are essential elements of a counselor's knowledge base.

## Notes

1. Deborah Wetsit (Assiniboine) holds a doctorate in counseling (emphasis in cross-cultural counseling), is a former faculty member at the University of Montana, and is the former dean of instruction at Haskell Indian Nations University. She is the distance learning coordinator for the Montana Consortium and works extensively with In-Care Network, Inc.

2. See Gladding, *Counseling* and Peterson and Nisenholz, *Orientation to Counseling.*

3. American School Counselor Association, *School Counselor and Comprehensive Counseling*, 1.

4. See Gladding, *Counseling* and Gibson, Mitchell, and Basile, *Counseling in the Elementary School.*

5. See Attneave, "American Indians."

6. See Trimble and Fleming, "Providing Counseling Services."

7. See Palsano, *We the . . . First Americans* and Lee, "School Counseling."

8. Thomason, "Counseling Native American Students," 109.

9. See Hillabrant and others, "Native American Education."

10. LaFromboise and Low, "American Indian Children," 119.

11. See Draguns, "Dilemmas and Choices"; Atkinson, Morten, and Sue, *Counseling American Minorities*; and Sue and Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Different.*

12. Phinney and Rotheram, "Children's Ethnic Socialization," 13. See also Aboud, "Development of Ethnic Self-Identification"; Katz, "Developmental and Social Processes"; Youngman and Sadongei, "Counseling the American Indian Child"; Trimble, "A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach"; and Nel, "Preventing School Failure: The Native American Child."

13. Aboud, "Development of Ethnic Self-Identification," 45.

14. See Samovar and Porter, *Communication Between Cultures.*

15. Trimble, "Value Differentials" (1976), 204. See also Peterson and Nisenholz, *Orientation to Counseling.*

16. See Nel, "Preventing School Failure."

17. See Phinney and Rotheram, "Children's Ethnic Socialization."

18. Tafoya's "Coyote's Eyes" provides an excellent overview of Native family systems in comparison to European American family systems.

19. See Zintz, *Education Across Cultures*; Bryde, *Indian Students and Guidance*; Trimble, "Value Differentials" (1976); LaFromboise, Trimble, and Mohatt, "Counseling Interventions"; Trimble and Fleming, "Providing Counseling"; LaFromboise and Low, "American Indian Children"; and Herring, "Counseling Native American Youth."

20. See Attneave, "American Indians."

21. Derald Wing Sue and others, "Cross-Cultural Counseling Competencies," 45-52. See also Herring, "Counseling Native American Youth"; LaFromboise, Trimble, and Mohatt, "Counseling Interventions"; Trimble and Fleming, "Providing Counseling"; Trimble, "Value Differentials" (1976); Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*; Atkinson, Morten, and Sue, *Counseling American Minorities;* Samovar and Porter, *Communication Between Cultures;* and Attneave, "American Indians."

22. See Lockhart, "Historic Distrust"; LaFromboise and Low, "American Indian Children"; and Everett, Proctor, and Cartmell, "Providing Psychological Services."

23. See LaFromboise, "American Indian Mental Health Policy" and Wetsit, "Counseling Preferences."

24. See Lewis and Ho, "Social Work" and Lockhart, "Historic Distrust."

25. Youngman and Sadongei, "Counseling the American Indian Child," 273-77; Trimble, "Value Differentials" (1976), 204. See also Lockhart, "Historic Distrust"; LaFromboise, Trimble, and Mohatt, "Counseling Interventions"; LaFromboise and Low, "American Indian Children"; and Thomason, "Counseling Native American Students."

26. See Lockhart, "Historic Distrust" and Thomason, "Counseling Native American Students."

27. See Dauphinais, Dauphinais, and Rowe, "Effects of Race"; Spang, "Counseling the American Indian"; and LaFromboise, Trimble, and Mohatt, "Counseling Interventions."

28. See Attneave, "American Indians"; Lewis and Ho, "Social Work"; Dufrene and Coleman, "Counseling Native Americans"; and Thomason, "Counseling Native American Students."

29. Davis and Ritchie, "Confidentiality."

30. See Aboud, "Development of Ethnic Self-Identification" and Katz, "Developmental and Social Processes."

31. Sue and Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Different*, 4.

32. Ridley, "Racism in Counseling," 57-58.

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