

Colonial Instillations in American Indian Boarding School Students

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There is a general knowledge about the United States governments' deliberate attempts to destroy American Indian cultures. Our history books tell of American Indian students being locked in week long routines to keep them out of mischief, underfed to break down resistance and being given deadening rounds of simple, repetitious chores bereft of challenges to numb their intelligence, and taught dominant western values and language (Brave Heart & De Bruyn (1998). Possibly, too few people are aware that assimilation of American Indians continues in our country today in multitudinous forms, including Indian boarding school residential environments. The assimilation of American Indians entails the replacement of tribal sets of beliefs and actions directly linked to the beliefs of distinct tribal groups with Western sets of beliefs and actions (Brayboy, 2005).

Currently there are 72 Indian boarding schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, serving over 10,000 students in the United States (Bureau of Indian

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Affairs, 2003). The few educational and psychological articles suggest that many Indian boarding schools have and do engage in assimilating students into mainstream culture at the expense of tribal values. In a national survey by Robinson-Zanfir and Majel-Dixon (1996), 234 American Indian parents representing fifty-five tribes reported that they felt that tribal schools valued Indian children more than Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools and public schools in the areas of: respect, expectations of achievement, and degree to which Indian culture is valued. In narrative comments, participants stressed that boarding schools have not tried to understand Indian communities, culture or learning styles. Lacroix (1994) reported that American Indian girls attending Indian boarding schools related that they suffer from loss of cultural identity and experience their schools as “imposed” systems. Noted historian Joel Spring (2001) decries Anglo-American racism in Indian boarding schools which insidiously replaces tribal cultures with dominant culture. He sites religious intolerance as being particularly prevalent in Indian boarding schools.

There is anecdotal support suggesting that American Indian boarding school attendance may be associated with psychological dysfunction among some students. Counseling American Indian clients in British Columbia, Charles Brasfield (2001) identified a common symptomology among survivors of Indian residential schools, which he calls “residential school syndrome.” The effects include: distressing recollections, recurrent distressing dreams of residential school, a sense of reliving the residential experiences, distress at exposure to cues that resemble residential experiences, avoidance of stimuli associated with residential experience, inability to recall important aspects of residential experience, diminished interest in participating in tribal activities, restrictive range of affect, feelings of detachment, increased arousal particularly when intoxicated, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating, and exaggerated startle response. Symptoms may include deficient knowledge of tribal culture, deficient parenting skills and a tendency to abuse alcohol and drugs.

This study attempts to take into account the interplay of inner psychic conflicts of American Indian boarding school students in Indian boarding school environments; interactions between aspects of the school environment; the broader environment, such as the government and /or the media; and cultural and political beliefs complex process of assimilation that occurs in Indian boarding school residential settings (Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, 1979). There are several elements in this study that mark it as unique. (1) It focuses on boarding school residential practices rather than academic educational practices. (2) It also accepts the risk of attempting to analyze inter-psychic conflicts in the context of cultural, political and social contexts. This is risky because the analysis’ will be tarnished by interpretive Western categories not perfectly shaped to fit American Indian epistemologies and cosmologies. On the other hand, if done in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner, it offers the possibility of shining a light not just on the often invisible schooling consciousness of racism, meritocracy, and other internalized values but also on the inner psychic conflicts that are too often ignored in contemporary Educational Psychology with its empirical emphasis on behavioral operational con-

structs or constructionist approaches with their emphasis' on surface discourse and linguistics. As researchers who worked many years in clinical practice counseling American Indians, the writers of this article have not been convinced that American Indian psychological experiences can be encapsulated by the empirical constructs of Western Psychologies nor do we adhere to the idea that discussion of American Indians' inner psychic worlds is utterly irrelevant though we realize its speculative terminology is culturally biased. Resistance to colonization must occur at the deepest levels of psychic awareness not simply on the behavior or discursive level because the assimilation process is insidious and has reached the deepest levels of the unconscious. The problem is knowing how to use the tools of Critical theories' analytic thought to get at the deepest reaches of the psyches of American Indians to help make explicit the destructive workings of assimilation. (3) This study also takes a historically dynamic approach in its methodology. Both former Indian boarding school students' and current students are included as participants. It is hoped that the utilization of both perspectives will enhance and extend what might have been a more temporal perspective if we had used only one or the other. Hopefully the approach will enrich understandings of long term positive and negative influences of boarding school experiences upon participants' psychological functioning. The former boarding school students' longer period to reflect upon their experiences may add a profundity and objectivity to their boarding school memories and interpretations. On the other hand, former students' recall and interpretations may be affected by faulty memory functioning and interference from more recent experiences. Even with these problems the current researchers believe that the inclusion of former boarding school students offer a historically dynamic perspective to this qualitative inquiry that bursts the bounds of more rigorous spacial-temporal studies that offer less potential for holistic relevance and depth.

Theory

The guiding theories to be utilized in this study are the Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005) and Critical Theory. Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005) utilizes ideas and emphases' derived from Critical Race Theory, such as the exposition of how the law creates and maintains hierarchical society and how the American Educational system often perpetuates racism, sexism and poverty (Delgado Bernal 2002; Solorzano, 1998) and then supplements it with unique perspectives derived from tribal people's experience of colonization. Brayboy (2005) lists nine tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory.

- (1) Colonization is endemic to society.
- (2) U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
- (3) Indigenous people are placed in state of in-betweenness, in between joint statuses as legal/political and racialized beings, where the larger society is unaware of their multiple statuses.
- (4) Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
- (5) The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when

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examined through an Indigenous lens. (6) Governmental and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation. (7) Tribal ways and perspectives and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups. 8) Stories make up theory and are real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being. 9) And theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change.

Many of the above points will be expanded upon as they will be used to illuminate comments made by participants in this study. To sensitively address the depth psychology aspect of this study, the current researchers will supplement the Tribal Critical Race Theory with the American Indian Post-Colonial Psychology theory (Duran & Duran, 1995) which explores the “soul wound” of tribal people which they believe stems from intergenerational posttrauma incurred from critical events and periods of oppression such as wars, reservation subjugation, boarding schools, relocation, and termination. Duran and Duran (1995) also deconstruct linear temporal and utilitarian perspectives that they feel American Indians have internalized primarily through participating in American educational systems. The American Indian Post-Colonial Psychology theory integrates Western psychological concepts (primarily psycho-analytical and analytical) but re-interprets them in a tribal, political, cultural, and historical context.

Critical theory is founded on the assumption that the cultural, sociological and psychological are interdependent but irreducible which allows for a complex investigation of the influences upon psychological functioning (Morrow & Brown, 1994). Similar to the Tribal Critical Theory, Critical Theory emphasizes the importance of critiquing oppressive social institutions, interpreting the meanings of social life, the historical problems and domination, as well as envisioning the future. They also encourage the creation of theories from the data to promote the transformation of oppressive institutions. Critical Theory has also spawned a plethora of psychological theorists (referred to by Duran and Duran as brothers and sisters) who have helped oppressed people around the world to better understand their psychological experiences. In this paper, the theories of Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Wilhelm Reich and their followers were especially helpful as the researchers attempted to understand participants’ underlying emotional conflicts. The above theorists works concern domination and competitiveness, anxiety related to needs for affection and approval, needs to restrict one’s life to narrow borders, aggression and needs to exploit others, and needs for perfection and unassailability. The use of Tribal Critical Race Theory in combination with Critical Theory facilitates attempts to make analysis relevant and appropriate with American Indians.

Method

Researchers-Interviewers

Researchers-interviewers included two American Indian women, an American Indian man, two White men, and a Mexican-American woman. Four were doctoral students in counseling psychology of which three were licensed professional counselors. One was an assistant professor of counseling and one was a master in Social Work student. The average number of years counseling experience was 10.3. In addition to working as mental health professionals, including years of experience in American Indian Behavioral Health clinics, team members' backgrounds included various professional and personal experiences specifically with Indian boarding and tribal schools, including positions as teachers and school counselors. The researcher-interviewers had no previous relationship with the participants in the study.

Participants

Forty-six participants of varied socio-economic status volunteered for this study in response to newspaper advertisements, fliers, and word of mouth. Thirty former Indian boarding school students of various tribal backgrounds from Oklahoma, California, and Kansas, ranging in age from 18 to 72, with a mean of 45 and sixteen Indian students from various tribal backgrounds currently residing in an Indian boarding school, ranging from 14 to 18, who attended anywhere from two months (only one student had attended less than 6 months) to 8 years.

Procedure

A structured interview guideline was used to conduct the interviews. Information was collected concerning the participants' experiences before entering and during their time in Indian boarding school environments. Questions included: "What was your life like before you went to Indian boarding school?" "What was your first day in boarding school like?" "Who are the people you most remember in boarding school, and why?" "If your dormitory were to magically turn into a person, how might you describe its personality?" "What did you learn from your boarding school experience?"

Throughout the interview each participant was provided with as much time and autonomy to answer the questions as needed. The interviewer was allowed to rephrase or probe as a way to elicit clarification, additional information, detail, or elaboration. Non-directive probing techniques and neutral follow-up questions or comments were used to insure that the interviewer did not influence the response. Follow-up interviews were conducted to allow participants to clarify on points they had made in initial interviews.

Coding

Analysis of the interviews followed a sequence of strategies traditionally identified with the process of data reduction and analysis using qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 1998). The analysis began by independently reviewing the transcripts through multiple readings, taking a microanalytic perspective to identify concepts and generate potential categories to represent participant responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories and themes that existed across interviews, as well as those within the context of specific questions were identified. A series of meetings were then held where identification and discussion of potential concepts, their properties and constructions, and metaphors to realistically represent participants' responses were shared. Over the course of these meetings, initial themes and coding conventions were established, resulting in a process often referred to as "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Having identified the coding conventions, two raters independently returned to the transcripts and coded the responses to the questions. The process of coding and data analysis in qualitative research is one that is fluid and dynamic, and can often result in intuitive modifications regarding the labeling and naming of themes and categories (Criswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore even during the last phases of the coding process when independent coders were involved alternative themes and concepts were documented. Subsequent to independent analysis, the raters held a series of five meetings, and applied procedures consistent with the principle of multiple investigator corroboration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), employing multiple perspectives during analytic interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They reviewed and compared their analyses, held additional discussions, and checked with interviewers when further questions arose. They combined their interpretations and reached consensus regarding how each participant's responses were coded for each question. Initially open coding concepts such as "ways of coping" and "types of colonial installations" were phrases used to describe the psychological experiences the majority of students described.

As the researchers discussed themes and sub-themes, several researchers became increasingly interested in what the researchers interpreted as aspects and processes of assimilation. Identification and introjection were of particular interest because of their usefulness in explaining the deeper psychological processes involved in assimilation. Identification is the unconscious comparison of one's self to others and taking on the perspective of a dominant person or external object (Hall, 1954). McWilliams (1994) elaborates, "Under conditions of fear or abuse, people will try to master their fright and pain by taking on the qualities of their abusers." Introjection furthers the destructive process. It is the unconscious act of absorbing other personalities into one's own, assuming external events as internal (Runes, 1960). McWilliams (1994) writes, "When we lose any of the people whose image we have internalized either by death, separation or rejection...A void comes to dominate our world." During the introjection process, the emptied person accepts the standards and values of the person they identify with by incorporating them into their own thoughts and feelings.

Qualitative Data and Interpretation

Participants' Home and Indian Boarding School Environments and Experiences

Empirical research offers evidence that environmental-cultural influences interact with genetic factors to influence personality (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Participants offered descriptions indicating that they came from homes that may be viewed as poverty stricken and that the majority came from broken nuclear homes. Consider first the Indian boarding school students' perceptions of their home environments and pre-boarding school experiences. The majority, both current and past students, used similar descriptive phrases that suggest they experienced the effects of poverty, abuse and neglect before entering boarding school. "They couldn't afford to keep us," "no soles on our shoes," "no running water," "not able to eat as much as we wanted," "electricity and water was turned off," and "You couldn't lock the doors and the windows were knocked out." "My uncle raped me many times before I was six." "My mother couldn't take care of me because she was always drunk." A recent graduate recalled, "At least, we had the basic things at boarding school, as bad as it was. Before being left at boarding school I moved around a lot. That wasn't bad. I lived with my uncle and aunt. I lived with both grandmothers at one time or another. One was really nice but she died. The other was mean. You couldn't say nothing because all the Indians saw her as a leader in the community. But she didn't care about me, and she wasn't a good person. Before she left me in boarding school she took a baseball bat and shattered the skull of my puppy."

Many psychologists trace the origins of dysfunctional attitudes and behavior to traumatic experiences in early childhood (Bowlby, 1973). This is important to take into account before one assumes that any of the psychological problems of participants in this study can be attributed solely to their experiences in boarding schools. Low economic status and temperamental characteristics interact complexly with variables, such as, relationships to broken homes, an absent father, parental separation, divorce, harsh parental discipline and chaotic family environments, to increase children's risk of eventually developing emotional and behavioral problems (depression and aggression) (O'Conner, Deater-Decker, Fulker, Rutter, & Plomin, 1996; Sameroff & Seifer, 1983). The examples of the pre-boarding school environments and experiences in the above paragraphs demonstrate that participants experienced, not only poverty, but a wide range of challenges, which correlate with emotional and behavioral problems. As suggested in the preceding paragraph, the pre-boarding school environments of many of the participants in this study were deficient in meeting basic nurturance needs and participants readily described themselves in terms of feeling vulnerable and scarred before ever having arrived at boarding schools.

Before proceeding further, it is crucial to contextualize the above graphic examples. One of the worst dis-services done to American Indians has been their

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recurrent portrayal as helpless, innocent, and victimized weaklings in need of a Billy Jack to rescue them. On the other hand, American Indians are also often portrayed as lazy and inebriated. While neither of these stereo-types are true, our participants' descriptions of their pre-boarding school experiences were negative. The researchers speculated about several possibilities for such negative descriptions: (1) A large percentage of students who go to boarding schools may come from dysfunctional families and environments (at least among the participants in this study). (2) Even to this day, the pain of talking about the ones they left behind at home and about their home environment was emotionally overwhelming. The fact that this was the first area talked about could have contributed to not opening up about such sentimental memories. (3) Some boarding school staffs promote the notion that students are better off with them and many highlight negative aspects of students' home life and students absorb this perspective. (4) All of the interviewers were counselors who inadvertently solicited traumatic stories of early childhood. (5) Or any combination of the above. While the researchers acknowledge that the information provided by the students may be influenced by school staffs and/or interviewers, the stories of the participants must be taken seriously. They may be an indicator of the early workings of the powerful destructive forces of colonization in participants pre-boarding school years. The researchers also regularly discussed whether there were differences between how participants opened up to Indian and Non-Indian interviewers. From our finite perspectives, we think participants opened up more slowly to non-Indian interviewers than Indian interviewers but all of the interviews were not only conducted by seasoned therapists but all interviewers also had extensive experience working with Indians so we have confidence that most participants were able to eventually open up to all our interviewers, whether Indian or not. We did note that participants often began interviews with many clichés regarding their boarding schools, using words and phrases, such as: "discipline," "made a grown-up out of me," and "not so bad" and only later in interviews did they begin to contradict these initial comments.

Nonetheless, readers should be cognizant that in spite of poverty and other limited resources, thousands of American Indians are living fulfilling lives, drawing from a wealth of traditional values such as generosity, connectedness, patience, harmony, humility, humor and the belief that everything is alive. Many American Indians feel great respect for others regardless of their social status. Also it is not uncommon for American Indians to be raised in several households. Many American Indian uncles, aunts, and grandparents find great pleasure in being responsible and caring for nephews, nieces and grandchildren. American Indian extended families are circles of great strength, providing love and guidance to their children.

Indian Boarding School Environments

Turning to the Indian boarding schools, few interviewees made comments reflecting appreciation for the physical security of their boarding school's environments, while many made negative comments about their boarding schools' physical

and social environments. Former and current students noted that boarding schools provided “regular meals and clean rooms,” electricity, “heating and water,” yet they were also described as places where they remember eating “burned oatmeal” and where the buildings were “plain,” “dismal,” “boxed,” “drab,” “falling down,” “filled with broken appliances,” “thin linens” and “veined with poisonous lead pipes and yellow water.” Several remarks suggested feelings of insecurity in their boarding school environment. One former student said, “If I was at the end of the line, I got what was left, even if it was a teaspoon of food, a half a piece of bread. You couldn’t be sure if you would get enough food even if you were hungry.” A current student said, “I am mixed. You can tell ‘cause I am light. They put books in pillow cases and beat me bad. I would dream of running down the highway to get back to grandma but I could never get there. And I finally just became a loner. I know I will never fit in. Look, I have blond hair.” Current students often expressed appreciation for weight rooms, televisions, (though a considerable number complained that they were “old” and “broken down”) and recreation rooms with pool tables and video games. A current student spoke of a spiritual entity observed by students in her school, “Lots of us have seen this ghost here. She flops around on the floor in the halls at night. Her arms and legs have been cut off at the elbows and knees. We call her “Elbows.”

Anyone who participates in Indian ceremonials such as sweats or who has walked a trail with an elder cannot help but note the differences between what s/he hears about the environment there and what participants expressed about their boarding school environments. The west, north, east and south are endowed with meaning and beauty. A living energy emanates from everything around us. Yet conditions deficient in meeting basic nurturance and security needs, as described above, may cloud the visionary experience and put students at both physical and psychological risk. In the midst of participant descriptions of their boarding school physical and social environments, some students expressed feelings of appreciation, while the majority reported feelings of insecurity, resignation and hopelessness. Maslow (1962, p. 32-40) reports that when basic needs such as safety and food are not sufficiently gratified, trends toward self-actualization of potentials are thwarted. He claims that deficit dissatisfied persons are likely to perceive more concretely. Further, a deficit dissatisfied person will likely perceive issues dichotomously and will be less likely to see how opposites interpenetrate each other. Further, a study conducted by Abramson, Metalsky and Allory (1989) reported a relationship between learned helplessness and ingrained depression.

Permeating this entire paper are the meanings associated with the image of the dismembered ghost. She is the generational accumulation of the debilitating influences of colonization. She is the colonization that has been so complete that she is invisible, even many American Indians not recognizing that she has taken up residence in their abodes (Brayboy, 2004). She is the post-colonial trauma (Duran & Duran, 1996) that does not get resolved in one lifetime but persists, weighing heavily on the minds of the living. She is the devastating policies implemented by

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the government in boarding schools, the slicing knife of assimilation, the shears and the falling black hair, and the remnants of lost native languages.

Identification

Traditional American Indian settings continue to emphasize the importance of elders as the keepers of sacred ways, protectors, mentors, teachers and supporters. Traditional American elders often talk about children being close to the spirit world and carrying the lives of ancestors. Their relationship with children is respectful. Elders are careful to place the emphasis on the relationship rather than domination (Garrett, 2004).

When students are deficit dissatisfied, feelings of vulnerability and unworthiness may predispose them to use identification with institution values as a means of ego protection (Riggs, 1992). Interviewees made comments that the researchers characterized as identification with their boarding schools and its authority figures. A former student commented, "I wasn't nothing until I learned how to do work and take care of matters in the boarding school." One former student stated in regard to one of her matrons, "Boy she is mean. I was scared of that woman. And she had gotten on to me and scolded me and it was for my own good." A current student said about a matron, "I always had love for her but I was scared to show her. I was afraid she would laugh at me. She taught me what was good and sometimes I did good for her." A current student said, "I was just kinda left here when things were impossible at home. I felt so alone. They showed me my room with these other guys, but I really got close to the math teacher. He challenged me." Another current student said, "I learned my tribe didn't have a good reputation. Every time there was a fight they would say it is one of my tribe. They were the ones that like to fight. I knew it was true. I wasn't really proud to be a member of my tribe. I got close to my gang instead."

Inferiority and fear were common feelings expressed in the interviews. As suggested above, interviewees often connected these feelings with having felt abandoned, neglected or disrespected by parents and boarding school staff and teachers. Feeling unwanted and having low self-esteem is a precondition for submissiveness and fear of authority (Marcuse, 1964) and may have long lasting detrimental effects such as learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). Vulnerable persons feel a dependency on those who can give or withhold things greatly wanted. They are often beset by ego weakness and they find that narcissistic defenses can aid them to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy and inferiority (Fromm, 1965). Persons may begin to idealize a particular person or group, such as their own tribe or a gang. They may develop hostility toward "out groups" or "off tribes." A pseudo-satisfaction is gained by the idealization of a powerful person or group with which they identify. Such idealization typically lacks any profound critical considerations or autonomous thinking (Fromm, 1965), but the person may develop illusions of control and autonomy (Langer, 1983). Rhodes and Wood (1992) reported that persons with feelings of high self-esteem are more likely to utilize counterarguments in response to repeated persuasive messages

than persons with low and moderate self-esteem. In other cases, true self-awareness is sacrificed for the preservation of one's identity based on pseudo-relatedness akin to conformity. Further, being deficit dissatisfied, intimidated, neglected, abused, and often feeling inferior, many Indian boarding school students are prime targets for assimilation into the "greater" referent power (Moscovici, 1985). Rogers (1975) reported that people living in fearful conditions are more likely to change their values and attitudes to be congruent with norms (Rogers, 1975).

Introjection

a. Euro-American Values and Beliefs

Interviewees made comments that the researchers labeled as introjective remarks. Interviewees made both conscious and unconscious remarks suggesting that they had assumed values which may contradict traditional tribal values and attitudes. A majority of the students complained that there was too little tribal language, history, music, and literature. Former students said: "I knew I was Indian but I was forced to speak English and go to church. You were feeling you were living in two worlds." "My daddy was a road man (a leader in the Native American Church). But in school I learned to be a Catholic." Another student said, "My sister learned everything the boarding school taught us. She never ran away. She makes lots of money now." Current students said: "It is almost never that we do anything here like Indian ways. Maybe someone comes in and does something like a craft sometimes. I think that lots of our stuff doesn't go with school." "I came here practicing our old religion, but now I go to the chapel they have here. You shouldn't mix them now that I am a Christian." Another current student said, "I figure going to boarding school is preparation for the military. I am more independent now. I do my chores and get to places on time."

Many interviewees felt that their tribal cultural values were devalued in their boarding school experience. The de-valued tribal values that underlie the above comments are: tribal language and the tribal and cultural identity associated with being able to speak it; the security that comes with being at ease with your unique tribal ways of being; the use of the hallucinogen peyote as an integral part of your spiritual tradition; the pride of being connected to your heritage; being able to practice a religion unabashed by its seeming esoteric character; living according to natural rhythms rather than in a calculating manner; and appreciating sacred sites not made with bricks and mortar. In contrast, according to student reports some Indian boarding schools appear to teach values of usefulness, conventional beliefs, Christianity, practical knowledge, independence, hierarchy based on social position and responsibility, discipline, and punctuality. Students appear to perceive overt and underlying antagonisms toward tribal cultural ways and values in Indian boarding schools. Not only are American Indian values, ritual, myth and interrelations undermined, calculated schemes have been put in place to assimilate American Indians and to keep them in place (Szasz, 1996). Indian boarding school students

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are expected to work and operate to be on time, alter their beliefs and operate smoothly in a system, which supposedly prepares them for the workforce or life in the military.

b. Regimentation

Many participants commented on their boarding school's regimented conditions. Here are a few quotations from former students. "It was a good experience. It was the most stability I had in my life... because it was structured." "You get up by a bell. You came in by a bell. You did everything by a bell. That is what I remember." "I went to the army after boarding school and I think I was pretty prepared. I am like that. I like having things in order and on time and keeping things the same. I've always been that way." Current students said: "With the dorms there is always detail, mopping, vacuuming, cleaning the bathroom, the rumpus area. We rotate. I hate it. I think it is fair." Another said, "I have lots of problems and this is getting me ready for the army. I am talking to the recruiters. Here I am doing things like they do."

The majority of former and current students expressed an appreciation for the regimentation, orderliness and the practical knowledge they learn in Indian boarding schools. They felt that their home lives were chaotic and directionless and boarding school experiences gave them a needed structure, personal responsibility and knowledge. They spoke of feeling pride and having feelings of worth for doing tasks efficiently and effectively. They learn how to take care of many aspects of their lives which they could not do before attending Indian boarding school and this "know how" gives them a sense of independence. One gets the sense that students believed that they were able to release energy in a focused way when they voluntarily submitted to work that required discipline. Students' voluntary submission to discipline may build ego strength and accompanying virtues such as dependability, honesty, the power to co-operate and develop impartial attitudes.

On the other hand, interviewees made remarks suggesting that in giving up their spontaneous functioning they tended to become more inflexible and excessive in their scrupulosity. The subtle danger of a life of regimentation and an emphasis on practical knowledge is that persons become so accustomed to the recurrence of the same things that they react automatically and critical thinking goes unexercised. Bornstein and D'Agostino (1992) report that messages given repeatedly, especially if subliminal, increase the likelihood that it will be accepted regardless of the messages validity. Living continually in confines of such regimentation reinforces a frame of mind. Finally there is no need for thought. The sheer volume of repetitions produce set responses and eventually negates critical thought. The student eventually quits struggling against the system's regiment. He does not have to think or worry what is to be done. In such a regimented environment, critical thinking and autonomous thinking are eroded. While it is true that students' chaotic experience is being structured by subjecting them to highly organized regimens, and many mundane tasks require little thought, there is the possibility that free expression and spontaneity as well as traditional American Indian lifestyles are

being progressively undermined in the process. The rationality of values, ends, and possible attitudes toward life are gradually reified into objectifications. Rigid, overly structured environments may promote rigid cognitive styles (Shapiro, 1965). Wilhelm Reich (1933) wrote that a repressive and regimented environment works to crystallize reactions into defensive character formations. Repetition reinforces recognition and then acceptance of the seemingly inescapable.

c. Obsessive Cognitive Style

Participants were asked, "If you were to describe the boarding school you attended as if it were a person, how would you describe it?" The majority of the interviewees, both former and current, described their schools as male, military, often as "white." A few students described it as an "apple" (looking Indian on the outside but whose inner life is white). Former boarding school students said: "Because I am older and I see the benefit of them being strict on us, because I am the same way, you know. Now I am glad I learned those things because it did me good. My matron worried over a speck of dust...I hear someone crying...". The interviewer asked, "You mean around here?" "Sometimes I just know when they are hurting. My old girlfriends in school." Another said, "I found I am a perfectionist and that is not a good thing; it is a character defect. I slack up on my son because I get down on him a little too much I guess. I don't want to be a perfectionist if that is going to cause disappointment." Two current students made the following representative comments. "I am responsible. I know when jobs are supposed to be done and how to do them." Another said, "Everything has a time. Time to eat. Time to do homework. Time to get up. Everything. I have adjusted to it, though. I hope I am answering these questions right for you."

One may think of people in the military as living regimented lives. Shapiro (1965) suggests that persons who assume the obsessive cognitive style are at risk of being intellectually dogmatic and lacking flexibility. They may also be overly concerned about technical details. The style of living that is likely to emerge from the internalization of a highly regimented environment is an over concern with cleanliness, moralistic attitudes, and an intensity of activity (Shapiro, 1965). The obsessive-compulsive cognitive style that Shapiro describes should not be viewed as synonymous with the disorders of the same name though it certainly shares affinities as suggested by the descriptions above.

Psychosocial stress clearly exacerbates the expression of the associated Obsession Compulsive Disorder (Carter et al., 1995). Interviewees described living with continuous worry and tension and some made comments to suggest that perfectionism had invaded other areas of their life, such as being over controlling with fellow students, children or employees. Environments that strongly emphasize repetition and regimentation may enhance pre-dispositions to irrational compulsive responses. Children's schemas and interpersonal strategies are created through reinforcement of family and peers and once established subsequent approaches to experience get hard wired into a "feed forward mechanism" (Mahoney, 1974). Maladaptive

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schemas, such as the obsessive-compulsive cognitive style, may be perpetuated by social structures and dynamics (Liotti, 1992). While most of the interviewees did not demonstrate symptoms that epitomize the obsessive cognitive style, some did, as is suggested in the examples above, and they also associated the style with their training and experiences at boarding school. They described themselves as pressing forward to fulfill duties and carry out insignificant details not considering how the work figured into promoting joy or meaning in their lives. For some participants, their regimented environments were presupposed. The style of living that is likely to emerge from the internalization of a highly regimented environment such as the boarding school environment is an over concern with cleanliness, moralistic attitudes, and an intensity of activity. If the style is introjected, obsessiveness results, and according to Shapiro (1965), there will be a loss of affective mobility and range and the person will find themselves unable to let go of an anticipation of what “should” be done.

d. Moralistic Attitudes

Interviewees made remarks that suggested moralistic perspectives, which may reflect a rigid, conservative and fundamentalist perspective. A former student said about her matron, “I liked her because she was strict because I really never liked to do anything wrong. I always got along with them because they liked me. I walked the straight and narrow. She rubbed off. I see her now with my kids.” Another said, “Now I got to have my things just so...When my daughter was there it had gone down. The cleanliness and the way the girls dressed. There used to be a dress code. I see the benefit of strictness because I am that way. They are slouchy and sexy now. I am glad I learned the right way because it did me good.” A current student said, “I told my girlfriend that we wouldn’t be having no lovey-dovey stuff going on. That is dirty. You know PDA, there is not public display of affection here. That stuff is for when you are married.” Another current student said, “I work hard and don’t have patience for those who don’t. I can’t stand dirty lazy people. They won’t be nothing.”

Few would argue that adolescents are without need of moral guidance. Fairly black and white moral perspectives may be appropriately taught to young adolescents for whom it is congruent with their moral development (Kohlberg, 1978). But in later adolescence rigid self-righteousness may represent a premature closure to moral development and may hamper interactions with others, especially when they attempt to impose narrow views on others. In contrast, Garrett (2004) describes how traditional American Indian adolescents go through challenging initiation ceremonies, learn to walk in beauty, acknowledge that every person must experience life differently, and attain wellness in harmony of body, mind, and spirit. Unwellness occurs within unnatural conditions and results in imbalance in the person and the community. Dutton (1995) and Motz, (2001) suggest that persons who have been “victimized” are often preoccupied with what is “right” and assume a “self-righteous stance.” Some of the comments of interviewees express feelings of moral superiority, sexual prudery, intellectual rigidity, and inflexibility. Shapiro (1965)

discusses children who are initially highly impressionistic, affectively expressive and open-minded who upon entering into puberty are molded by authorities into proper and close-minded adolescents and adults. Shapiro (1965) describes this cognitive style as consisting in a feeling that an “overseer sits behind and issues commands, directives, and reminders” (p. 123).

Protest

Many interviewees claimed to have engaged in either individual or collective resistance to what they viewed as oppressive boarding school environments. Former students said, “The worst thing was not having enough clothes. The bigger kids would steal your clothes. I had to fight for my clothes. I would run around in the same underwear for four days. We broke down the doors to the commissary where the counselors would pull down tee shirts and underwear. We all got ten licks. Anyway we decided to breakout. One night some of us broke into the office and stole forty dollars. We got out of town and found out where a pow wow was and we went. They caught us and beat us. One of the little ones shit they beat him so hard. I was one of the ones that yelled at them and then they beat me.” Another said, “She (a matron who had recently died) kinda liked you. Come over here and put your head on my lap. I didn’t know if I should cry and I didn’t know what to do. It is kind of like love. You didn’t really know how to handle hard times. Do you let everything go? We just went ahead and cried.” Current students said: “There is this teacher who says, now this isn’t in your history books. He would say it in a humorous way, like, Indians were already here. He talked to us real good.” In regard to a 72-hour “isolation” punishment, one current student said, “They are holding you against your own will. It gets people to snap. They can’t get fresh air. They tell you you have a window. I said back, ‘How would you feel if they were telling you where to go and what to do all the time. They say isolation works. They do it in the army and people start behaving, but I’m not.”

Some resign themselves to the oppressive situations and even lose their ability to see the situation as oppressive, while others remain lucid and hold to some kind of hope and sometimes resist. In the moments of protest described above, individual transcendence and new forms of supportive relations emerged to lend dignity and fresh images of what was possible. Students acted with an awareness of the contradictions in the boarding school system. They dared to anticipate a better life not for inspection of the authorities. They dared to surge into forbidden quarters. They found a power to conceive of a different world and reacted to the dissonance in their lives that they associated with the incessant concentration on cleanliness, artificial organization of spaces, efficiency and oppression. In the acts of rebellion, students transcended the shackles of a history of personal and cultural oppression that had disempowered them and found sacred places on a loving lap or at a pow wow. In these moments they embodied their ideal individual and tribal selves, not always in a reasonable calculated way but in a muscular, even orgiastic way. Having been repressed for so long, with fists clenched or with embraces, they

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were able to stand face to face with lies and oppression, transforming repressed hate and anger into redeeming action. To many readers the seeming chaos in some of the above descriptions may arouse fear, but many oppressed people may see in the rebellions against bullying, poverty, disenfranchisement and colonization, a release in a cleansing action that restored self-respect and ancestral pride.

Discussion

The majority of interviewees described repressive climates, consisting of constraint, confinement, obsessive cleanliness, feelings of fear and restraint, which contrasts with the natural rhythms emphasized historically in traditional American Indian environments. They engaged in reductive confirmative tasks and household chores that prepared them for regimented occupations. They reported carrying out “duties” which sometimes included unnecessary attention to details that may have absorbed energy, spontaneity, exuberance, and play. They described their lives filled with arbitrary routines and chores, pettiness, conventionality and banality. They may have unconsciously identified with persons and groups who they perceived as powerful and/or nurturing, and they may have introjected non-tribal values, beliefs, and assumptions as well as harsh prohibitions, which may act as hidden accusers of their lives. According to many of our interviewees, it appears that Indian boarding schools have and are still at work “civilizing” Indian children and dissolving tribal ways.

Some Indian boarding schools are places where it appears that: (1) western ideology impinges upon American Indian boarding school students’ cognitions, suppressing both traditional American Indian belief systems and critical thought; (2) specific cognitive styles, which are defensive in nature may be favored; (3) relations, as they are reflected by the larger boarding school system, may interfere with cohesive interaction among students; (4) and some of the acts of rebellion against inner and external bonds may be characterized as self, cultural and social affirmations.

Stages of Assimilation

The assimilation of American Indian students may be a progressive process that entails the following stages: (1) Many students may have feelings of worthlessness and helplessness when they enter the Indian boarding school environment. (2) These students may identify with persons and associations who they deem as powerful and/or as potentially meeting nurturance needs. (3) They may unconsciously introject those persons’ or associations’ values. (4) They may also accommodate themselves to the environment or rebel against or engage in a combination of the two. (5) The oppression they may have internalized may result in on-going unresolved emotional issues and have ongoing negative ramifications in relationships with others.

Almost all participants believed that Indian boarding schools are “better” than they were 25 years ago. There is a broader recognition of diversity, more compassion for students, more of an openness to talk about problems in the Indian boarding school environments, and more intelligence and sensitivity about how to guide

rather than punish students. Because of constant and dedicated efforts by boarding school staffs, teachers, administrators, students and concerned others over decades, virtually every area of Indian boarding schools is improved. Unfortunately as this study suggests there is a lot more to be done, especially in regard to the unobtrusive ghosts of identification and introjection of foreign values and beliefs which are directly connected to colonization. Instead of focusing on overt forms of oppression, it is the covert and invisible instillations that express themselves in unresolved internal conflicts that this paper tried to illuminate. On the other hand, the positive traces that might be fore-grounded in the construction of a better boarding school experience were linked by research participants to the kindnesses and generosity of fellow students, matrons, counselors and teachers, and to organized work, which enabled students to focus their energy and intentionalize their activity.

Recommendations

There is no magic wand to wave to bring about the perfect Indian boarding school. Changes must grow out of what is already established. Persons who have gone to school in these situations may be the most adept people to consult about bringing about changes in regard to what they want to attain and the circumstances that make change possible. They are already dealing with the problems. This study looked at past and current student understandings and attitudes about the boarding school situation. The next step is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of people who are working with the students. When a more profound insight and understanding are gained, new methods and strategies should be developed. But it is vital that the windows of perception are cleansed so that the invisible aspects of colonization are revealed.

The current researchers, some who have worked in Indian boarding schools, humbly offer the following recommendations. Indian boarding schools require resources and technical assistance that would reduce the level of oppression and inequality that presently exists. Indian boarding schools should not “hold to Euro-American educational standards,” but rather create living conditions, achievement standards, standards regarding teaching approaches, curriculums, and goals congruent with tribal values. The living conditions and educational foundations of Indian boarding schools must be re-built with a profound awareness of the clashing epistemologies between traditional and/or “modern” tribal ideas and non-tribal ideas to combat the instillation of non-tribal values, moralistic attitudes, mundane regimentation, and linear, obsessive cognitive styles. Periodic interviews with students might be conducted to influence decisions made by administrators about their school. Culturally relevant school counseling programs must be given priority and low student to counselor ratio is imperative. Counseling with both former and current Indian boarding school students should take into account profound needs for security and possible low self and tribal esteem. The counselor should consider defenses as protective fortresses against onslaughts of past and present distress. Individual career assessment and counseling should be a requirement for every high

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school student. Various role models such as elders should be brought in regularly to talk with small groups. Counselors should familiarize themselves with culturally relevant therapeutic techniques: cognitive strategies (Montgomery, Milville, Winterowd, Jeffries, & Bateson, 2000); Dream Catcher Meditation, Robbins, 2001) Use of American Indian stories in therapy, Robbins, 2002) American Indian Multi-family group therapy techniques (Robbins, 2002). A class should be required of all students where safe discussions about similarities among tribal beliefs, customs and struggles in order to directly address the problem of lateral oppression among students.

Limitations of Study and Recommendations for Future Studies

The totality of forces acting upon an individual personality complicates any clear connection. There is not a continuous flow back and forth from inner and outer worlds. The diversity found in students' reactions to similar social conditions complicates and refutes any postulate that would suggest identity formation as a pure reflection of social conditions. Still, themes in interviews appear to reflect boarding school environmental situations and dominant ideologies, but this contention remains under-researched. It is difficult to sift out the influence of psychological trait variables.

A culturally appropriate quantitative study could possibly control for confounding variables and assess the connections between feelings of worthlessness and a tendency to identify with underlying values of Indian boarding school systems. Care would be necessary in choosing instruments that are culturally sensitive. A study that looks at the relation between mental health and voluntary submission to different categories of work may also be helpful for Indian boarding school planning. But stories, which American Indians value so much and which offer variation, are not the data that quantitative studies value (Brayboy, 2005). Further, such empirical studies do not often place as much emphasis on making changes in oppressive institutions.

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