

# Native and Western Worldview Contrasts: A Must-Know in Behavioral Health

***Indian Country Journey to Health teleECHO  
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# Disclosures

The presenter of this continuing medical education activity has indicated that neither they nor their spouse/legally recognized domestic partner has any financial relationships with commercial interests related to the content of this activity.

# Learning Objectives

At the completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe two tenants of Indigenous psychology
- Articulate two ways that clinical training is disconnected with Native way of knowing
- Identify what attitudes are effective in connecting with clients

# Acknowledge the Lummi and Nooksack



Photo courtesy of the Paddle to Lummi Facebook group  
[https://www.facebook.com/people/2019-Paddle-to-Lummi/100054578914562/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/people/2019-Paddle-to-Lummi/100054578914562/?_rdr)

# Presentation: Real people!



<https://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlid=6>

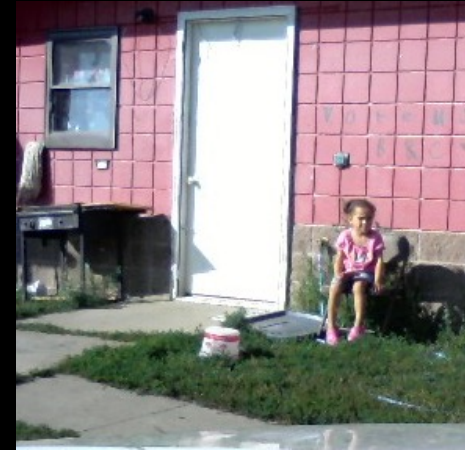


Photo courtesy of Jeff King



<https://pin.it/2TzRmna>



Courtesy of Scott Mason of the Winchester Star  
[https://www.winchesterstar.com/winchester\\_star/local-native-american-family-encourages-people-to-explore-areas-indigenous-history/article\\_d54d1001-9a78-5adb-946f-88c0b72d09f8.html](https://www.winchesterstar.com/winchester_star/local-native-american-family-encourages-people-to-explore-areas-indigenous-history/article_d54d1001-9a78-5adb-946f-88c0b72d09f8.html)

# My grandfather and grandmother



John Jacobs



Nancy Tea



# Mother, family photo



# Introduction

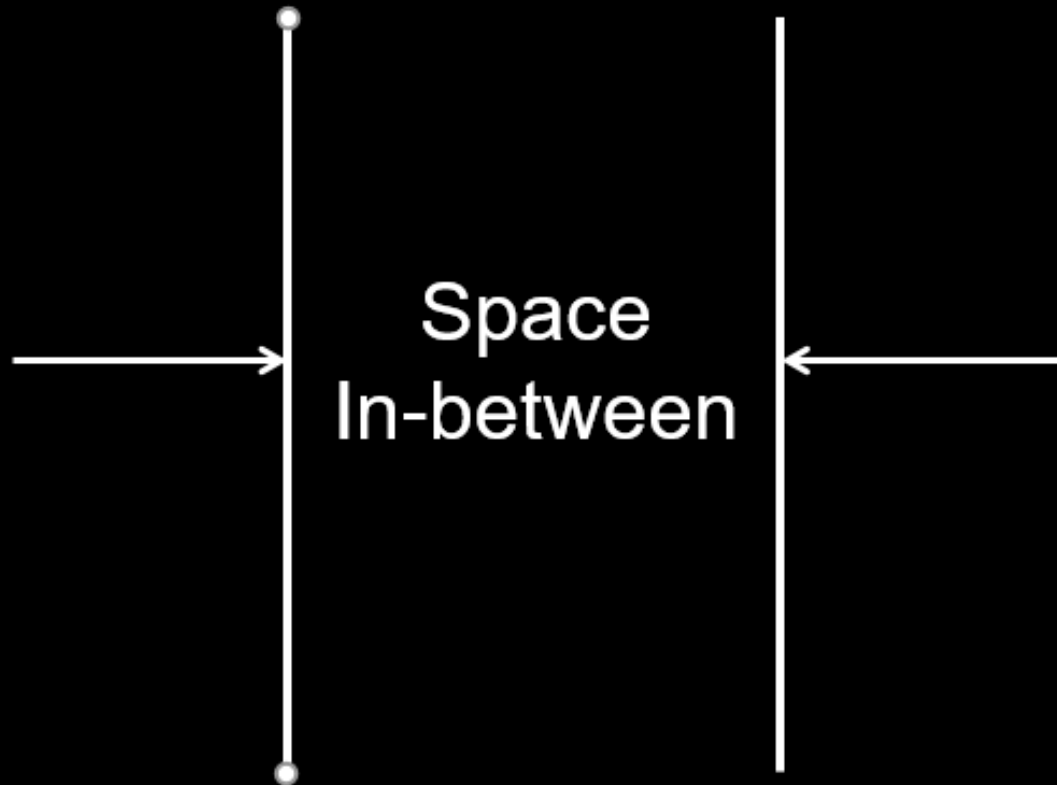
- Clinical psychologist—worked for over 30 years in Indian Country
- Director, Native American Counseling, Denver – 13 years – tribes in CO, AZ, NM, WY, ID, SD
- Clinical Specialist, Casey Family Programs, Indian Child Welfare Division, Broomfield, CO
- Clinical psychologist at Taos-Picuris Health Center (IHS), Taos, NM – 2 years
- Psychology Professor at Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA –15 years
- Psychological evaluations of adult Native Americans who were sexually abused in boarding school (Salish-Kootenai, Blackfoot, Crow, Gros Ventre, Cree, Lakota, Assiniboine, Nakota, Lakota)
- Psychological evaluations and expert witness in child custody evaluations – including ICWA
- Forensic psychological evaluations: pre-sentencing and post-sentencing
- National and international involvement addressing cultural competency in behavioral health



# What to know:

- Worldview
- History
- Acculturation status
- Current Attitudes
  - Distrust
- Self as provider

# Concept of the “Space In-Between”



**Seen**

**Understood**

**Accepted**

**Supported**



# Worldview differences

A Mvskoke medicine man said to me, “The *este hvtke* (White man) and the *este cate* (Red man) live in two totally different existences.”



Sam No-Se Proctor  
Okmulgee, Oklahoma  
1933 - 2017

Photo: <https://wildhunt.org/2012/11/giving-thanks-through-ancient-wisdom.html>

# Worldview implications

- In order to understand the worldview of a traditional tribal member, one must set aside their own worldview. Native clients may be unwilling to open up about their lives if this doesn't take place.
  - Spirituality is an example: “All the men in my life have all died...” (Lakota female)
  - “I can tell you about losing my mother...” (Pueblo female)
  - Resilience is another example: Grandmother taking care of 11 grandchildren. In Lakota way, the goal in life is not happiness, but to live life well. Lakota Sun Dance and sweat lodge—focus on suffering as fostering resilience.



# Western worldview: humans as superior to creation

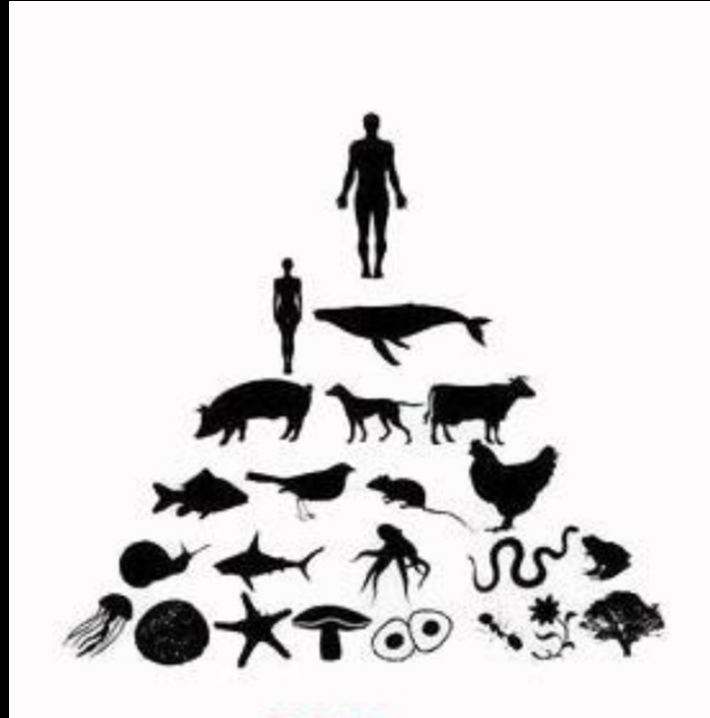


Image from <https://www.bilgiustam.com/antroposantrizm-insanmerkezcilik-nedir/>

# Indigenous worldview: humans as equal to creation



Image from: [http://vedaty.blogspot.com/2014\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://vedaty.blogspot.com/2014_01_01_archive.html)

Erik Erikson, for example:

“Erikson's study of Native American tribes encouraged a lifelong interest in comparative and historically grounded cultural studies. In 1939, he travelled to the Klamath river in Requa, California with the anthropologist A. L. Kroeber to study the salmon-fishing Yurok tribe” (Friedman, 1999).

“Through his observations of these Native American tribes, Erikson became aware of the influence that culture and external events have on behaviour. As a result, he began to place more emphasis on these factors in the development of his theories” (Friedman, 1999).



“His work with the Sioux had shown him how much the mind is influenced by social and historical change.” Coles, R. (1970). *Erik H. Erikson: The growth of his work* (p. 61).

Erikson on the Yurok: “They seem to express the general idea that by being a good warden of his nutritional system and good warden of the river, and by guarding strength and wealth, the Yurok is clean enough to perform the miracle of existence, namely, to eat his salmon and have it for next year, too.” (*Childhood and Society*, p. 86)

# Worldview and ways of knowing

## WESTERN

Hierarchical

Linear

Superior

Empirical

Assertive

Competitive

Ownership

Goal-oriented

## INDIGENOUS

Shared

Holistic

Equal

Multi-sources

Wait to be invited

Cooperative

Part of the whole

Relationship-oriented

Image created by Jeff King

# Western Science

**Observation.** Observation in western science is mainly mathematically based. Observation is most often connected with predictive testing.

**Experimentation.** Observation is complemented by experimentation, which is the "the fast-forwarding" of nature's processes. It is the curiosity seeking aspect of science. "Let us see what will happen if we do such and such if we combine "A" with "X".

**Research.** Disciplined and organized activity to discover, understand and share marks science as a social system.

**Technology.** Technology encompasses the equipment and tools of Western science as well as its embodiment. It serves the role of being the gateway to new knowledge, but it also mediates the relationship between humans and nature.

**Measurement.** Western Science relies mainly on measurement as a basis for confirmation of new knowledge. If something is not subject to measurement, it is not considered scientific.

# Native Science

**Observation.** The Native scientific approach to seeking knowledge is done through long term observation of the total web of relational networks with the intent of maintaining balance and harmony.

**Lived Experience.** The day-to-day experiences of the individual and collective which may be based on knowledge gained through all of the above.

**Search.** The Native view is that all of the universe speaks to us in many ways including through patterns of relationships. We search out these messages for wisdom of how to live well in this world.

**Relationship.** Knowledge can come from "All My Relations"- that is from meaningful connections with all domains of nature.

**Spirituality, dreams and Visions.** Dream reality is part of the overall reality and lived experience. Knowledge can come from dreams and/or visions in that are just as –or more valid than our regular conscious reality.

**Story, song, and ceremony.** Story, song, and ceremony are manifestations of regular patterns in the flux, which are used for knowledge, renewal, and preservation of meaning and culture.



# Typical Indigenous Cultural Worldview-Values

**What is the relationship human beings have to the rest of the world (creation)?**

-Equal, shared power

**What is our relationship to the land?**

-Learners, respectful, family

**What is our basic activity in the world?**

-Being

**What is our relationship to time?**

-Present-oriented

**What is our basis for success?**

-Connection to tribe, community, family, nature

**What is our source of motivation?**

-Our purpose to the tribe, community, and family

**What are the characteristics of a healthy person?**

-Interdependent, knows how to act in relation to others, quiet, respectful

# “The Spiritual Life of Children”

Robert Coles, M.D., in his book, “The Spiritual Life of Children” tells of his meeting a young American Indian (Hopi) girl who explained why he wasn’t getting much response from the tribe to his research. “My grandmother says they [you] live to conquer the sky, and we live to pray to it, and you can’t explain yourself to people who conquer – just pray for them, too.” (Coles, 1992, pp. 25-26).

Coles, Robert. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990.



Photo from: <https://www.harlemfamilyinstitute.org/hfi-history.php>

When the late Vine Deloria, Jr., a respected American Indian scholar, was asked during an interview about the fundamental difference between the Western and indigenous ways of knowing, he replied: "I think the primary difference is that Indians experience and relate to a living universe, whereas Western people--especially scientists--reduce all things, living or not, to objects."

~(Deloria, 2000) Lakota

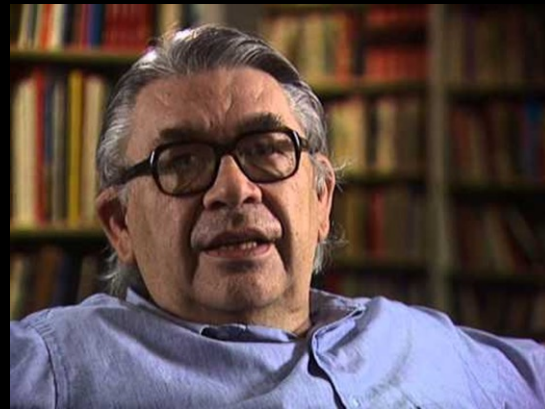


Photo from: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/aH2tKUusg9g/hqdefault.jpg>

Derrick Jensen, "Where The Buffalo Go: How Science Ignores the Living World-An Interview with Vine Deloria," *The Sun Magazine*, July 2000, 5-8.

Western science, following Roger Bacon, believed man could force nature to reveal its secrets; the Sioux simply petitioned nature for friendship."  
—Vine Deloria, Jr.

# Indigenous Scientific Values



“For the present, the indigenous way of seeing things like traditional Indians is...incongruent with the linear world [of science]. The linear mind looks for cause and effect, and the Indian mind seeks to comprehend relationships.” (Fixico, 2003, p. 8) -Seminole-Muscogee

Fixico, D. L. (2003). *The American Indian mind in a linear world: American Indian studies and traditional knowledge*. Routledge.

Photo from: <https://sustainability-innovation.asu.edu/person/donald-fixico/>

# Scholars explain worldview differences

## Western European Approaches

Research ‘through imperial eyes’ describes an approach that assumes Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings. It is an approach to indigenous peoples which still conveys a sense of innate superiority and an overabundance of desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous people—spiritually, intellectually, socially and economically.”

~*Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngati Awa/Ngati Porou)*

Smith, L. T. (2007). Research through imperial eyes. In, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Ed Books, Ltd.





# Scholars explain worldview differences

## Western European Approaches

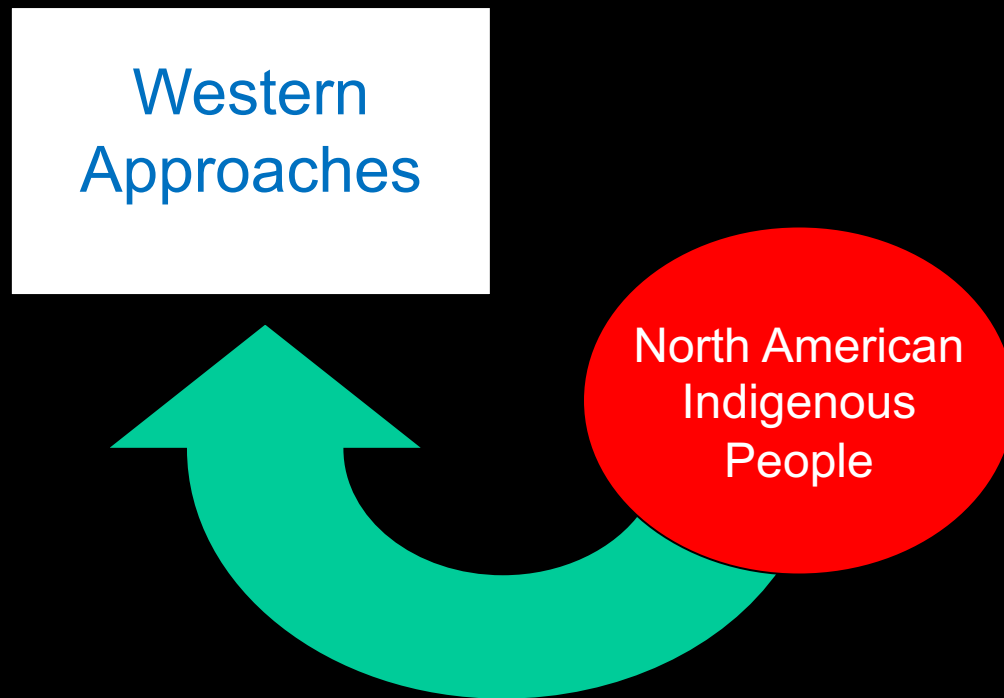
It is [an approach] which is imbued with an ‘attitude’ and a ‘spirit’ [or energy] which assumes a certain ownership of the entire world, and which has established systems and forms of governance which embed that attitude in institutional practices. These practices determine what counts as legitimate research and who count as legitimate researchers. They tell us whether our research is “valid.”

~Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngati Awa/Ngati Porou)

Smith, L. T. (2007). Research through imperial eyes. In, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Ed Books, Ltd.



# Dynamics of Western approaches and Indigenous peoples



~TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE LARGELY IGNORED



## Example:

### EBP conference in Santa Fe, NM– with Tribal Behavioral Health centers around the Southwest

#### Submission Checklist

Before an intervention is submitted during the open submission period, each item on the checklist should be carefully considered.

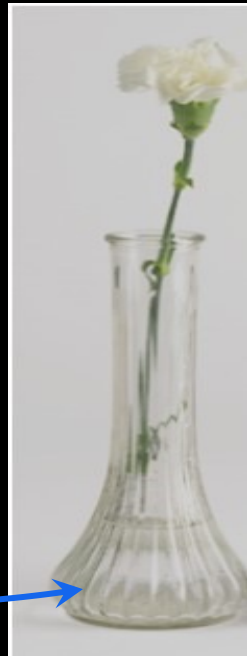
- My intervention has been evaluated in at least one quasi-experimental or experimental study that resulted in
  - at least one positive behavioral outcome in mental health, mental disorders, substance abuse, or substance abuse disorders ( $p \leq .05$ )
  - an article published in a peer-reviewed journal or other professional publication OR a comprehensive evaluation report
- The following areas have been considered for the above study or studies:
  - measures have documented psychometrics on reliability and validity;
  - intervention fidelity has been ensured and documented adequately for the needs of my intervention;
  - methods for addressing missing data and attrition were sufficiently sophisticated for the needs of my data;
  - potential confounding variables were fully explored, identified, and addressed;
  - statistical analyses were sufficiently sophisticated for the needs of my data.
- An implementation manual has been developed for use outside of the research setting.
- I have considered and developed a plan for addressing requests for training, including
  - identifying appropriate trainers;
  - if appropriate, developing a comprehensive training curriculum.
- I have considered and developed a plan for addressing the support needs of new implementation sites, including
  - designating appropriate individuals to respond to implementer requests for materials and questions throughout the implementation process;
  - if appropriate, creating a comprehensive technical assistance, coaching, or consultation system, with fees clearly defined.
- I have considered and developed a plan for ensuring that new sites will be able to
  - implement my intervention with fidelity;
  - monitor outcomes.
- My intervention does not qualify for automatic exclusion, as defined by the current *Federal Register* notice.
- I have seen the Principal Form and do not anticipate any issues with completing and Submitting this form if my intervention is accepted.

# Participant responses:

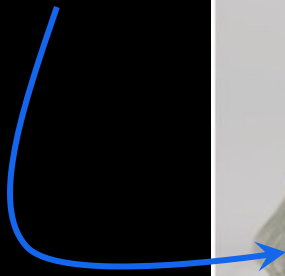
- Concern about measuring Native programs in a “Western” scientific framework
- Need for cultural sensitivity towards the approaches and traditions of Indian Country, which are not scientifically measured.
- Formal evaluation is in conflict with cultural traditions, and it feels like judgment
- Healing and traditional methods are seen as incompatible with “Western” scientific methods, and it is inappropriate to test them in that way.
- For Native cultures and their ecological programs, outcomes are not seen as discrete, rather they are interconnected as a holistic continuum.
- Discrete IOM categories (Universal, Selected and Indicated) don’t necessarily apply in Indian Country since there may be a large overlap due to a high incidence rate for items like alcoholism. Need more local evaluators, or evaluators who can take adequate time to familiarize themselves with the community before embarking on evaluation. Concern over the compatibility of EBP with Native programs How can you reconcile the evidence-based process of EBP with the historical wisdom of the community? Trust is a two-way street; if Native populations are being urged to consider “Western” scientific standards of research, then EBP should be more open to qualitative research exploring the Native oral traditions.

# Western and Native American Approaches

Western approach



Techniques,  
strategies,  
theories



Western  
Worldview

Western theories, etc.,  
in order to be useful and  
not colonizing, need to be  
anchored in the indigenous  
worldview—not a  
Western one.

Native American



Relationship



Indigenous  
worldview



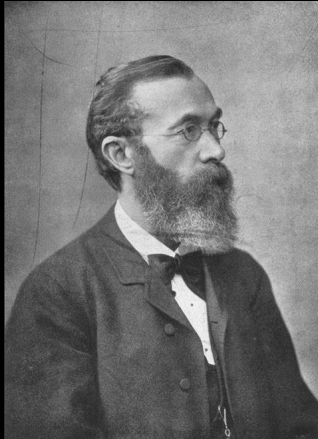
# The power of story:

Pueblo elder told me this...

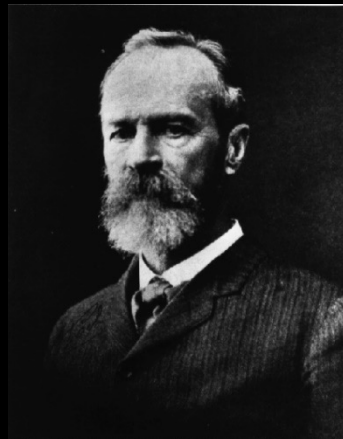
- When the elders get together to make decisions
- Will start out with the story of how they came to be as a people
- "My grandmother told it to me this way..."
- "My grandfather told me the story this way..."
- The stories would line up...
- Not only that, but they contained the meaning within the story
  
- The story has held the tribe together and preserved the meaning of who they are as a people
  
- In order to preserve the meaning, you must live in relationship with your community, you must participate in the deer dance, have the koshares make fun of you, participate in "the doings" or you would not experience the meaning of the story.
  
- You must show up...each one showing up for the other has preserved the culture for hundreds of years.



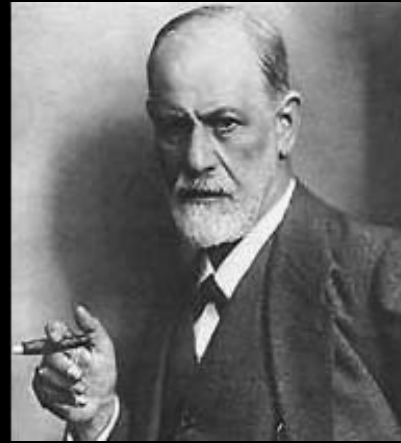
# Where did our theories of psychology originate?



Wilhelm Wundt -  
father of  
psychology



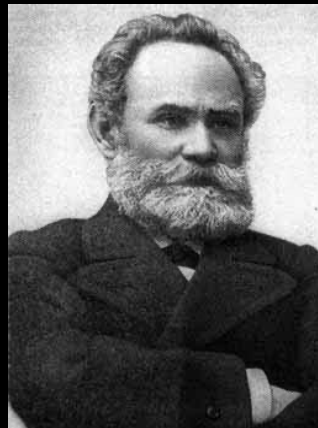
William James -  
father of American  
psychology



Sigmund Freud



Carl Jung



Ivan Pavlov



Abraham Maslow



Carl Rogers



B. F. Skinner

## Another example:

“We want to develop EBT’s [Evidence Based Treatments] for individuals of diverse ethnicities and cultures, not only within our country or continent but for diverse peoples of the world.”  
(Kazdin, 2008, p. 208)

Kazdin, A. (2008). Evidence-based treatments and delivery of psychological services: Shifting our emphases to increase impact. *Psychological services, 5*(3), 201-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012573>





There are three major implications to this statement that reflect this sense of Western scientific superiority:

1. “We” implies Western scientists;
2. “develop EBT’s ..” implies that non-served cultures have not developed effective practices; and,
3. implies that these countries and cultures have not been actively involved in addressing the psychological needs of their people over time.

This is all well-intentioned, yet extremely dangerous, as it relegates all other ways of knowing to an inferior status and ignores thousands of years by which ideas from other cultures and countries successfully and effectively engaged in indigenous, non-western healing practices.



# What happened in the “space-in-between?”

Clearly, this has created an imbalance of power:

- disrupts authentic communication
- creates a superior-inferior dynamic
- damages the well-being of the “inferior”
- bolsters the status of the “superior”
- creates **distrust**
- subtly undermines the status of the “inferior” culture
- effects colonization (unawares)





## Carlisle Indian boarding school

Wounded Yellow Robe, Henry Standing Bear and Timber Yellow Robe before and after their Pennsylvania boarding school gave them “proper” clothes and haircuts. (photo: NAA INV 00606600 courtesy National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

## Tuskegee men in syphilis study



File:Tuskegee-syphilis-experiment-test-subjects.gif  
From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

# Acculturation, well-being, & substance abuse among American Indian across urban, small town, and reservation settings

Measures:

- Cultural identity
- Substance abuse
- Psychological distress

Healthy= low rates of substance abuse and psychological distress

Unhealthy= high rates of substance abuse and psychological distress

Acculturative status: Do you identify with?

		<u>WHITE CULTURE</u>	
		YES	NO
<u>OWN CULTURE</u>	YES	Bicultural	Traditional
	NO	Assimilation	De-cultural

	<u>urban</u>	<u>small town</u>	<u>reservation</u>	
healthy	bicultural	bicultural	traditional	culture connection
	traditional	traditional	bicultural	
unhealthy	decultural	decultural	decultural	lack of culture connection
	assimilated	assimilated	assimilated	

## More examples:

### WHITE

Communication	Direct/Assertive
Communication	Spoken
Punctuality	Time-oriented
Eye contact	Look in eyes
Affect	Expressive
Handshake	Firm
Pointing	Index finger

### NATIVE

Indirect/wait for invitation
“Read the air”
Event-oriented
Avoid direct eye-contact
Stoic
Light
Chin or lips

# Culturally-congruent counseling is first and foremost an attitude.

- To be truly culturally-congruent we must become familiar with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
- We must disentangle ourselves from the existing dominant narratives and seek to understand from an Indigenous perspective.
- We need to examine our own relationship to space and time.



Artist: Buffalo Gouge  
Redstick Gallery/ Mcn Redstick

## Things to consider:

- What kind of energy do we exhibit in the space we inhabit and in our relationships?
- We need to examine our relationship to power, examine whether we truly listen to the voices of our people.
- In all our counseling we must be reversing the effects of colonization.



Image from: <https://pin.it/3vM7Prs>

Artist: Buffalo Gouge  
Redstick Gallery/ Men Redstick



# Engaging Native people and their families in healing through relationships

## Conclusion

- Be familiar with the space-in-between
- Recognize that there is a huge disconnect between our training and what traditional Native clients need
- Do the work on yourself



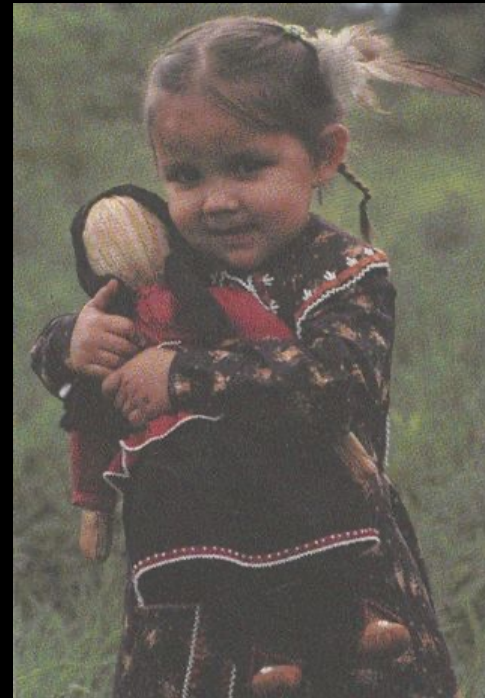
# Mvto! (Thank you.)



Photo from: <https://spurgeons.org/support-us/>



Courtesy photo: Jeff King



Courtesy photo: Ethleen Iron Cloud Two Dogs



## REFERENCES

- Coles, R. (1990). *The spiritual life of children*. Houghton- Mifflin.
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