Native American Psychology
I. Jacob Perea, “Introductory Comments on Native American Psychology”.

A. Terminology
- Indian - Name given to indigenous inhabitants of the America’s by European explorers 500 years ago.
- Native American - More recent term reflecting the presence of the indigenous inhabitants dating back to pre-Columbian history (e.g., the arrival of Columbus)
- (Hall). Preferred Term American Indian.
  - Issue: many people consider themselves Native Americans, but would not really fit into the category of “American Indian”
  - E.g. Hispanics and Natives of South and Central America, Inuit People of Canada and Alaska.
• **B. Unique Status**
  
  – Native Americans are the only group who’s membership has declined through history. 500 years ago, pop = 10 -12 million. Today = 2 million.
    • There are approximately 350 different tribes in the U.S. and 596 band in the First Nations of Canada.
    • In U.S. 60% live in urban area and 40% in rural areas.

  – Native Americans are defined by political status and not purely racial/ethnic status (unlike all other minority groups).
    • 9 different definitions of Native Americans.
    • U.S. Gov. only accepts people with 1/4 blood of a recognized tribe as native American (in an effort minimize the number of people who qualify for special status and resources).
– Only ethnic group with their own set of laws, treaties (over 600), and national government separate from the U.S. government. They are separate from other Americans. Reservations have denied them access to our cultures wealth, but have protected them to some degree from attempts to destroy their culture.

– While most minority/ethnic groups have struggled to gain a place in the melting pot, Native Americans have struggled to avoid losing their culture and to maintain their land, water, traditions, and equal rights.

– There are more differences between the groups than there are similarities. When considering Native American mental health issues, one must consider the specific tribal/band customs of the group one is working with.

  • e.g
  • Apache = body is an empty vessel after death
  • Lakota = body is sacred after death
  • Navajo = there is no afterlife
II. History

A. Pre-Columbian

• Societies of Varying complexity
  – Mound builders of Midwest
    • Kahokia, IL
    • The Serpent Mounds of Southern Ohio
  – Organized Democratic Government
    • The league of the Iroquois
    • Had a formal “written” constitution
B. History of Treaties

• Colonial Times
  – Treaties with British royalty (1768) were never enforced.

• Post Revolution
  – Ordinance for the Regulation of Indian Affairs
  – 1787 Northwest Ordinance
    • promised that no Indian land would be taken without Indian consent.
  – 1790 Indian Nonintercourse Acts
    • Indian land transactions that occur without congressional approval are void. Never enforced. As colonies expanded, federal government was powerless against the states.
  – 1830 Indian Removal Act - Trail of tears
    • moved Native Americans Mostly Cherokee to the west (Oklahoma)
  – 1850's Gold rush brings whites west.
    • US government begins military based extermination campaign. Followed by forced treaties, 52 in 4 year period.
• Late 1800 - 1960's - Assimilation dominated government policy.
  – Assimilation = cultural genocide. Efforts to destroy language, traditions, laws, dress, religion, and occupations.

• 3 Major Methods

• 1. Federal franchising on Indian lands to Christian denominations.
  • Reservations assigned to one denomination in order to more fully indoctrinate the inhabitants. Traditional ceremonies were banned (sun dance, ghost dance).

• 2. Forced education with Anglo-education agenda.
  • Deliberate attempt to disrupt traditional child rearing practices.
  • Children forced to live in boarding schools
    – Taught that their native culture was immoral.
    – Forced to speak only English
  • Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 ended this practice.
    – Placed control of Native-American in the hands of Native-Americans
    – Regan Administration and BIA have significantly weakened this control.
• 3. Federal Efforts to break up Indian land
  – 1887 Indians had 138 million acres of land. today less than 50 million.
  – 1887 Allotment Act (Daws Act)
    • Took control of land out of tribal hand and gave it to individuals. Land held in government trust until owner could prove they were “competent” owners (e.g. farmers). Much of the land was declared “excess” and sold to non-native people.
  – 1936 Indian Reorganization Act ended further attempts at allotment but did not undo previous land break-up.
B. History of Treaties Continued

- WWII - 1961 = The Termination Period.
  - Federal government terminated the tribal status of more than 100 tribes, their land was liquidated and the inhabitants were forcibly removed. (Recently some tribes have had their tribal status returned)

- 1960's U.S. policy placed greater emphasis on tribal-self determination.

- 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act
  - Gave Indians new school, health, and law enforcement programs administered by the tribes. BIA still has veto power over government contracts and limits self-determination.

- 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act
  - Gave indigenous U.S. people the right to practice their traditional religions. Giving access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonies and rituals.
  - However, this act has not prevented the development (e.g., ski resorts and Corps of Engineers flooding) of sacred sites or the continued archeological excavations of Native American burial sites.
A. History of Health and contact with whites. 80% of Indians of the Pacific Northwest were killed by European diseases.

• Lewis & Clark reported that 90% of the inhabitants on the Columbia River were killed from disease.

• Parallel with AIDS epidemic in the Gay community during 70's and 80's.
  – In both instances; Church and government identified elements of sexual behavior and gender orientations as “bad” and “deviant”. Illness was punishment for sinful behavior.

• Such rapid loss of life had lasting impacts on the extended family network that Native American families relied on.
B. Impact on Native American Health Care Today

1. History with U.S. government has made Native Americans suspicious of any bureaucracy, including utilization of Healthcare resources.
   
   – Further such facilities are difficult to reach and understaffed
2. Little is known about the national statics for Native Americans

- a. It is difficult to track native Americans
  - 9 different definitions of Native Americans.
  - U.S. gov only accepts 1/4 blood of a recognized tribe as native American (in an effort minimize the number of people who qualify for special status and resources).

- b. 1.6 million Native Americans: 60% in urban area and 40% in rural areas. Many urban dwellers do not report their Native American status on medical reports.

- c. Many tribes do not use paternal surnames, but rather give individual names which may change through ones life. Making tracking even more difficult.

- d. IHS = Indian Health Services. The CDC (center for disease control) relied totally on IHS reports to track AIDS among Native Americans, but the IHS was only able to report statistics for individuals who lived on or near reservations that used their facilities (40% of the population) and had no way of measuring for other individuals.
3. Estimated that the incidence of AIDS among Native Americans is 4 times greater than the current statistics reflect.

4. as of 1989, All the data that we have on Native Americans for AIDS are questionable, all data have been based on 64 Native American Individuals that have been identified nationally by the CDC. A minimum of 100,000 individuals would be needed to make any statistically meaningful inferences about AIDS among Native Americans.

5. A 1985 study of Gonorrhea among Native Americans and Alaskan Natives showed that the incidence rates among these groups far exceeded the rates seen in other populations (2 times higher for Native Americans and five times higher for Alaskan Natives). This data may indicate the scope of the problem that is faced with AIDS.
C. Cultural Factors that influence the transmission STD’s

1. Intravenous Drug use is not given the attention that is need
   - substance abuse problems are generally viewed as alcohol problems among Native Americans, though IV drug use is increasing in this population.
   - Fire Water Myth

2. Many Native American have very different views regarding sexuality, making it difficult to classify sexual behaviors.
   - Many groups include a 3rd gender, Berdache, who are neither male nor female (at least not considered to be by the community). These people were often medicine men of sorts.
     - They may sleep with men who’s wives are pregnant or who have died. Also they may sleep with women who have lost their husbands.
     - Men who sleep with these Berdache do not consider themselves to be gay.
   - Native American do not generally distinguish between straight and gay relations. The primary obligation is to the extended family. Once those obligations are met, other relationships are of little concern to the community.