

PROJECT EAGLE: TECHNIQUES FOR MULTI-FAMILY PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL GROUP THERAPY WITH GIFTED AMERICAN INDIAN ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PARENTS

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Abstract: This article describes Project Eagle, a model for short-term psycho-educational therapy with gifted and talented American Indian adolescents and their parents. Descriptions of Project Eagle's program organization as well as its culturally relevant techniques and activities are provided. The program evaluation includes: participant ratings of the activities, cultural relevance, feelings of being respected, interaction with parents and overall effectiveness of the program. Additional qualitative analysis provides information regarding the program's impact upon participants.

Many American Indian youth feel estranged in their schools (over 80% now attend public schools) and their own communities as they see few future opportunities due to cultural deterioration and limited economic opportunities (Little Eagle, 1993). A report to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs stated American Indians, particularly adolescents, have more serious mental health problems than are reported for all race populations in the United States (Office of Technology Assessment, 1990). The report lists problems such as developmental disabilities, depression, suicide, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse, low self-esteem and alienation, running away, and school dropout as high priority areas.

"Gifted" American Indian adolescents are particularly at risk for underachieving academically and for adjustment problems (Robbins, 1991; Tonemah, 1987). Because gifted American Indian students and their families have unique problems, unique approaches are needed to address their issues. Tonemah (1987) and Torrence (1962) contend there is

imperative need to create specialized programs to help minorities fathom life beyond their disadvantaged environments for identity crystallization. Renzulli (1993) argues that the democratic ideal can only be achieved where education accommodates the full range of individual differences. For American Indian youth, often living in a larger society whose values and customs are at odds with those in their American Indian communities, this personality dynamic becomes ever more important as they struggle to find and hold an identity whose worth is acknowledged (Mitchell & O'Neil, 1998). Psychologists and counselors are frequently called on to address these problems and have done so to varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, our interventions have most often been of a tertiary nature. The logical solution to these and other problems facing American Indian communities rest in proactive rather than reactive efforts.

Some researchers (LaFromboise & Rowe, 1983) have suggested that many psycho-educational skills programs provided to American Indians have been culturally biased (i.e., assertiveness training groups that encourage direct and sustained eye contact, parenting groups that do not acknowledge traditional American Indian parenting techniques). According to LaFromboise and Rowe, these programs have subsequently been unsuccessful because of resistance many American Indians may exhibit toward such forms of outside influences. They argue that "less prescriptive" and more flexible social skills programs are needed. In other words, if we are to adequately address psycho-social problems with American Indian populations, we must begin by focusing on those aspects of personality that help inoculate the individual against such problems rather than the narrower focus on actual problems we now tend to take. The Project Eagle program offers gifted American Indian adolescents and their parents a safe environment to express their feelings and thoughts. It utilizes culturally relevant and appropriate psycho-educational group techniques to promote cultural identity, self-disclosure, processing, altruism, positive parent/child interaction, and leadership skills. This article describes Project Eagle's organization, examples of the activities, the project's overall effectiveness, and offers a list of completed community projects. While we would caution that Project Eagle is not a "cookbook" presentation designed to provide step-by-step guidance to clinicians, it may provide a template for primary prevention efforts with American Indian groups.

Organization

Project Eagle was originated as a three-year leadership program funded by the Office of Indian Education. After those first three years in the early 1990's, several of the Project Eagle facilitators chose to continue to conduct Eagle programs in response to requests made by tribes and schools across the United States. Thousands of adolescents and their

parents across the country have participated in Project Eagle in various formats. Recently, working with gifted American Indian students and their parents in Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota, what we feel to be an ideal format has been painstakingly worked out. In phase one, Eagle participants meet on a fall weekend, four hours on a Friday evening and eight hours on Saturday, for intensive psycho-educational and leadership sessions in the areas of conflict management, communication, problem solving, decision making, leadership theory, and group cohesion. In phase two, individual Eagle families and/or Eagle community groups plan and implement a community/tribal or school project to be completed during the winter months. In phase three, in the spring, Eagle participants convene for another seven-hour, intense psycho-educational and leadership session concluding with an evening of sharing results of projects and special recognition activities.

Selection of Participants

Project Eagle brochures, letters, and application forms are sent to tribes and schools with American Indian populations. Typically school counselors, principals, and tribal leaders receive the information. They are asked to nominate American Indian students, age 13 to 19, with "leadership potential" and to give them an application form. A parent or guardian is required to sign a letter of commitment to participate with their child in the sessions in order for the student to participate. Once Eagle facilitators receive completed nomination and application forms from potential Eagle participants, the nominee is sent an American Indian Gifted and Talented Assessment to complete and return.

The multi-criteria non-standardized American Indian Gifted and Talented Assessment Model (AIGTAM) (Tonemah & Brittain, 1985) assesses exhibited leadership, grade point averages, intelligence scores, standardized achievement test scores, creativity, and critical thinking. School counselors and students fill out this form. Also included in the model is a Tribal-Cultural Checklist designed to assess knowledge and acceptance of traditions and culture. A tribal elder fills out this portion of the AIGTAM. The potential Eagle participants are also asked to write an essay about what qualities they believe good leaders typically exhibit.

Once Project Eagle facilitators receive potential Eagle participant information, a selection committee is chosen, drawing from leaders of various tribes and counselors, to review the AIGTAM's and essays and select those students and their parents who appear most appropriate to participate in the program. There are not rigid cutoff criteria for acceptance into the Eagle program. The AIGTAM has functioned as an excellent screening device, especially the Tribal-Cultural and Leadership Checklists. Some potential Eagle participants may not have participated in any of their

tribal ceremonies or activities. Upon follow up, they often express either that they wish to learn more about their tribal ways or they say that they do not wish to participate in Project Eagle since it attempts to be culturally relevant. Some potential Eagle participants have practically zero leadership attributes checked off on the Leadership Checklist. The selection committee has recommended follow up calls. School counselors often report that the applicants have leadership potential and should be given a chance to participate. Coupled with the other AIGTAM information and the leadership essays, the selection committee determines their acceptance or rejection. Six to ten students and their parents or guardians are selected for each site.

Because the Eagle group is specifically created for gifted American Indian students and participation is selective, pride in being part of the group is generated which contributes to greater group cohesion. Eagle participants begin the project with high expectations, an awareness of what is required, and high motivation to excel. Research suggests that high motivation and high expectation levels upon becoming a part of a group, which is related to the selection process in this instance, is the single best predictor of positive outcome (Foulkes & Anthony, 1957; Taylor, 1961).

Structure

The attainment of a close-knit Eagle community is a gradual process that involves a succession of stages. Implementing a structural framework is crucial to providing participants with stability and a sense of purpose. Though research has not pinpointed the specific components of structure that make it valuable, there is clear evidence that structure provides a more therapeutic ingredient than less directive alternatives (Kinder & Kilmann, 1976). Structure reduces the ambiguity about group sessions so Eagle participants have a better understanding about how they will involve themselves in constructive interactions. Bednar, Melnick, and Kaul (1974) report that "lack of structure in early sessions not only fails to facilitate early group development but actually feeds client distortions, interpersonal fears, and subjective distress, which interferes with group development and contributes to premature client dropouts" (p. 34).

In letters and telephone conversations Eagle facilitators acquaint participants with predetermined goals. These goals include the following: trust, expression of feelings, more effective communication, problem solving, decision-making, listening, honesty, commitment, cooperation, knowledge, visionary outlook, self awareness, and the courage to take risks. Participants also identify their own personal and family goals for their psycho-educational therapy in the Eagle program. Their goals have included better communication, greater emotional connectedness, and building trust.

Eagle group facilitators also explain their facilitative, rather than instructive, roles. A facilitative role helps group members to take responsibility for their actions and learning. Group facilitators are instructed that sharing of experiences, risk-taking, and interpersonal validation among members have the most beneficial impact upon learning and positive group experience (Dies, 1994, p.61). Group facilitators are taught to refrain from asserting their "expert" knowledge, experience, or personal values in words or tone. Such didactic teaching tends to evoke feelings of anxiety and competitiveness and may cause some participants to become overly dependent on group leaders to lead discussions. Instead, group facilitators are to express empathy, flexibility, and spontaneity. Participants are encouraged to learn from their shared experiences and are asked to reflect upon their interactions.

Agenda

Early on, Eagle group facilitators work hard at building trust. This involves an emphasis on playful community building. For example, during "Nice to Meet You, But I Gotta Blaze," participants begin by sitting in a circle. A person, standing in the middle, brings one or two participants to the center and they introduce themselves. The person in the middle asks the person(s) a question, often a humorous one, and then having listened to the response, shouts, "Nice to meet you, but I gotta blaze!" At this point everyone must find another unoccupied chair. The problem is that there is one less chair than there are persons. The person left without a chair begins the game again. Processing involves asking questions such as: "How does laughing affect our mental state of being? What is beneficial or detrimental about laughing at yourself? Describe a time when it was hurtful to laugh at someone. What is or is not unique about Indian humor?" Fun activities allow participants to become acquainted with each other. Though these warm-up activities can result in intimate sharing, they are less likely to do so than the later activities.

Eagle group facilitators prefer to ease into the intimate moments after participants have developed a higher level of trust. For instance, "Accepting the Honor, Aye," which involves direct sharing of feelings between group members is reserved for the second day of therapy. During "Accepting the Honor, Aye," one participant is seated in the center of the other participants. Each participant offers the center person a compliment, but he/she rebuffs each compliment in various ways. After this round, participants discuss how it felt to have their compliments rejected and describe the different types of rejections. Then ways of receiving compliments are discussed. At this point, each participant is consecutively placed in the center to receive kind remarks. Many comment that the

second part of the activity is much like being placed near the fire in peyote meetings to receive blessings from other church members. They have reported that they appreciated the activities similarity to their ceremonies.

The agenda is carefully patterned to interweave highly active activities with more reflective ones. The activities are further designed to help participants experience the full range of their beings (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual). Also, as the program progresses, facilitators gradually relinquish some of the control over the activities in order that participants have greater and greater autonomy in their decision-making. By the end of the first marathon session, participants are planning their community projects on their own. Concrete examples will elucidate these descriptors throughout this paper.

Cultural Identity

Having all the Eagle participants assembled in a circle to begin the Eagle program, the first activity is the Eagle Indian naming ceremony. Each person gives himself/herself a new name to be used during Eagle interactions. A naming ceremony is an important activity amongst most tribes. Most generally, an elder family member or a tribal member gives a name to the infant or youth. The Eagle name is to represent a quality or attribute that the person wants to be able to better express. Once a participant has named the quality, he or she is to identify something in nature that represents that particular quality. The representative, typically an animal, becomes that participant's Eagle name. During the sessions, individuals are addressed by their Eagle name to support their attempts to actualize the quality or attribute. Each person is supported in taking risks, which bring him or her closer to their self-aspiring identity. Labels received at home and school are set-aside for the duration of the sessions. The naming ceremony allows one to step out of the old perceived roles, assume a new identity, and to experiment with neglected potentialities. In one instance, an Eagle parent, who happened to be a medical doctor, named himself Spider "to express his creative side." One young man named himself Deep River to represent his desire to be powerful beneath the surface but to have a calm, relaxing presentation. An exceptionally shy young man of immense size changed his name to "Native American Nightmare" to become "someone to no longer be ignored." Another named herself Gray Squirrel because she felt that she was disorganized but felt she had the potential to "get her stuff together and accomplish something."

The Eagle naming ceremony grounds participants in traditional tribal perceptions that one's personal identity is integrally connected to the whole of life. Brave Buffalo, a 19th century Teton Sioux medicine man said, "I have noticed in my life that all men have a liking for some special animal, tree, plant, or spot of the earth. If men would pay more attention to these

preferences and seek what is best to do in order to make themselves worthy of that toward which they are so attracted, they might have dreams which would purify their lives" (Curtis, 1994, pp. 80-81). Tribal beliefs about interdependence and kinship with creation can facilitate a more global perspective towards problem solving as well as stimulate the imagination. Gifted people of all cultures have often described their creative acts as a simultaneous grasping of whole fields of related details. Holistic perspectives, rather than fragmentary, narrow fields of attention, form the foundation of the Eagle learning process.

Play

During Eagle sessions playfulness has proven to be key in breaking down barriers to self-expression and in helping members to feel safe. The naming ceremony is followed by an activity called "Counting Coup," which involves placing participants in groups of about eight. A person in the middle of the circle holds a nerf bat and waits for one of the persons on the perimeter to call the Eagle name of one of the other participants. The person in the middle tries to tap the identified person before he or she is able to call out the Eagle name of another participant. When the person in the center taps another with a nerf bat before he/she calls out another's name, he/she moves to the perimeter, while the person tapped moves to the center. The playful physical contact in "Counting Coup" further diminishes feelings of separation/isolation and helps participants to trust one another. Processing that follows "Counting Coup" often entails the following questions: "How did you feel when someone tapped you with the nerf bat? How much physical space do you typically need? ...Psychological space? What factors allow you to become closer to your parents? ...Children? How much space do you need to become independent? What are examples when parents give their children too much space?"

The inter-member bonding that occurs during this activity is vital for group cohesion, self-disclosure, and collaboration. Hierarchies that exist in everyday social environments are altered through play. Play also helps to loosen participants' linear and structured ways of thinking and problem solving. Handling difficulties playfully, with a touch of humor, and with little fear of dire consequences allows participants to experiment, take more chances, and to dare unusual approaches and solutions.

Processing and Self-Disclosure

Following the Counting Coup activity, shy participants often find themselves laughing and speaking to group members before they think to restrict themselves. In these situations, facilitators may simply use mirroring statements and descriptive remarks to help participants elaborate and

explain themselves. The processing sometimes moves into unpredictable areas. Group facilitators are careful not to regulate discussion too closely, but rather guide the interaction so that all participants' concerns can be appropriately expressed. The best questions are clear, concise, genuine, non-threatening, and open-ended. By non-threatening, it is meant that the questioning does not become interrogating. Traditional American Indians may respond defensively when subjected to extended one way questioning. The great Sioux doctor Wabasha said, "Do not trouble another with many questions about himself; he will tell you what he wishes you to know" (Seton & Seton, 1966, p. 64). Eagle facilitators attempt to be sensitive in their questioning, especially when probing into deep feelings.

In order for in-depth discussions to occur, facilitators must avoid a didactic educational relationship with their group members. Instead, facilitators' questions should help participants describe and elaborate on their interactions, thoughts, and feelings. Later, facilitators may begin to probe with open-ended existential questions.

Profound self-exploration often occurs during "The Medicine Wheel Activity." It begins with participants arranging themselves in a circle and the facilitator placing objects in the center. Participants offer verbal descriptors concerning the objects. Participants may describe a hammer as: a construction tool, brown and silver, a destroyer, my father's work, a swollen finger, power, or a curved object. After each object is described, the participants are asked to classify the descriptions and asked about what might be the sources of the different perspectives. Next, participants are told about the meaning of the different directions according to Storm's (1972, pp. 1-30) explication of the Cheyenne medicine wheel (East: the eagle, spirituality, ability to see the overall meaning or "the big picture;" South: the mouse, mental, ability to pay attention to detail; West: the bear, power, ability to be assertive; and North: the buffalo, generosity, ability to find fulfillment through giving. Every person comes into this world with propensities associated with one of the directions. After this explication of the Cheyenne Medicine Wheel, participants are asked to move to the direction they feel best describes them. Sample questions include: "What are the strengths and weaknesses of expressing yourself primarily from the point of view of a single direction? How can individuals in a given group appreciate each other's propensities and work together productively? What qualities might you work on in yourself to become a more balanced person?"

Silence

The role of silence is a very important part of the processing. A Cherokee proverb says, "Listen or your tongue will make you deaf" (Hifler, 1992, p. 50). Silence allows Eagle participants to reflect and make their

most thoughtful and heartfelt remarks. Initially, some of the Eagle group facilitators felt uncomfortable with the silence that sometimes followed their questions. They would quickly rephrase their questions or rush to answer their own question. These anxious gestures limit the profundity of discussions. Processing improves as group leaders become better at practicing silence following each question and each response. Luther Standing Bear's description of traditional conversation is a good guide. "Conversation was never begun at once, nor in a hurried manner. No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation... a space of silence before talking was done in regard to the rule that, thought comes before speech" (Curtis, 1994, pp. 58-59).

Studies have reported that extended wait time during processing in classrooms has improved topic related questioning from students (Samiroden, 1983) and academic achievement (Pond, 1987). Experiences in Project Eagle suggest that extended wait time during exchanges contributes to increased emotional and cognitive expressiveness. The use of silence/wait time taps into highly revered traditional American Indian forms of communication. These forms of communication are adhered to in tribal religious ceremonies and in the every day communications of many tribal people.

"Putting yourself into Someone Else's Moccasins" is an activity that emphasizes silence. Parents and their children are put in pairs. First, the parents are given instruction sheets that give examples of how to interrupt, rudely disagree, and change the subject during a conversation. The children are not allowed to know what is on the sheets. The children are told to lead a conversation about their favorite sport for two minutes. The parents foil the conversation as they follow the instructions on the sheet given them. After the interaction, the children are asked to identify the unproductive communication behaviors of their parents. Next, children are given a list of non-verbal behaviors that inhibit conversation. The children exhibit these behaviors in a two-minute conversation in which their parents talk about their favorite places to visit. Parents then identify their children's non-productive behaviors. Discussion follows concerning behaviors, questions, and comments that empower others to express their thoughts and feelings.

Lastly, participants are asked to think about their family histories. Children are asked to talk to their parents about what they know regarding their grandparents and great grandparents, and to make comparisons with their own lives. The parents are to utilize the productive listening characteristics that were just discussed. Participants are asked to reflect in silence for five minutes before beginning. Once the children are finished speaking to their listening parents, the roles are reversed. Approximately, seven minutes are allowed for each exchange. Processing questions that

follow include: "How was the silence helpful or not helpful in gathering your thoughts to speak? What did your partner do to empower you to speak your thoughts? How are the stories about your ancestors alive in you today?"

Cognitive Processing

When participants respond to questions with surface responses, facilitators sensitively probe for more thoughtful ideas and values. Sometimes participants are encouraged, through selective questioning, to consider how the knowledge they are gaining applies to the "outside world." For instance, "Teepee Productions" is an Eagle leadership activity that facilitates discussions about everyday situations. Facilitators hand out materials to make paper teepees in groups of four or five. Without preparation, groups are instructed to make as many teepees as possible in two minutes. One of the facilitators serves as a playfully harsh quality controller who, at the end of the two minutes, rejects poorly constructed teepees. During Phase II, groups are given two minutes to plan and organize before beginning another two minutes of construction. During Phase III, groups are handicapped at the last second by union strikes, break down of technology (scissors), or by employees coming to work late. Phase IV consists of groups given colored paper and markers in addition to their regular supplies and having five minutes to create one quality teepee as a group. In Phase V groups advertise their quality teepee for sale to the other participants. Discussions revolve around group interactions such as expressing how someone may not have contributed their share of the workload. Leadership and adaptation are recurrent themes in the processing of this activity. Another common discussion revolves around the conflict between many American Indian values and capitalism.

Affective Expressiveness

Shedding tears are common experiences for Eagle participants. Once emotions are expressed and discussed, Eagle participants usually say they appreciate the experience. Catharsis is highly valued by most people in groups. A Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles' (1973) study showed it to be ranked by participants as third among important events that occur during sessions (though aggressive negative ventilation was associated with negative outcome). Eagle facilitators try to help participants ventilate their feelings fully and offer validation. Emotion helps to make experiences worth remembering, contributes to motivation, and gives participants a more fully human experience that is absent from merely cognitive experiences

(Lieberman et al., 1973). In fact, many participants have commented on the similarity of emotional expression they experience during Eagle marathon sessions, sweats, and peyote meetings.

"Gifts of the Four Directions" is an activity, that allows parents and adolescents to express their feelings for each other. The facilitator gives participants paper plates, on which they draw four quadrants, spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. Participants are to find pictures in magazines that represent their partner's strengths in each quadrant. Later, while positioned across the circle from each other, they are to address their partners directly and explain their collage. This is typically a very emotional time of exchange. During later processing participants often express they are appreciative and surprised by the comments their partners make.

Altruism

Yalom contends, "Many patients are immersed in a morbid self-absorption, which takes the form of obsessive introspection or a teeth grinding effort to actualize oneself" (1985, pp. 14-15). For traditional American Indians giving is central to what it means to be a human being. Mato-Kuwapi said, "If I have these and kept back the best no one would believe I was in earnest. I must give something that I really value to show that my whole being goes with the lesser gifts; therefore I promise to give my body" (Seton & Seton, 1966, p. 36). Chiefs of many tribes have been the "poorest" tribal members in terms of material goods because they gave everything they had to their people. In each of the Project Eagle phases giving is encouraged. Eagle community projects (to be discussed later) are contextualized as acts that can help to define who we are.

The last activity of the two sessions is crucial in bringing closure to the twelve hours of activities. At the end of the first marathon session, a group leader facilitates the "Dream Catcher Ceremony." The facilitator begins by explaining that some traditional American Indians capture their dreams by first thinking through their day regressively and then praying for the cleansing power of a dream before falling to sleep. Then the facilitator regressively recounts the high points of the session, relating them to the specific Eagle activities engaged in. Having gone through every activity, he/she then states a dream or goal of his or hers, making sure the goal entails both a personal and altruistic aspiration. Still holding on to the yarn, the facilitator then casts the dream in the material form of a ball of red yarn (the color red is associated with medicine for many tribes) to someone he or she feels can offer verbal support. The catcher responds by stating qualities he/she has observed in the caster, which will enable him or her to achieve the dream. The process continues until the yarn, held by everyone, forms what looks something like a dream catcher. The facilitator briefly comments on the participants' relatedness and then offers a Navajo beauty blessing.

The culminating Eagle activity on the last day is a "Give Away." At the first Eagle session individual Eagle members are asked to begin making something that will be exchanged several months later at the Eagle Indian Give Away. During the last session, each set of partners stand in the center circle of the other Eagle participants. They are to speak directly to their partner (in second person) when offering them the gift. Once a participant has made his/her presentation and the partner has made some honorable gesture of acceptance, the roles are reversed. Like in many Indian ceremonies, the other participants remain silently respectful during the exchange. Then the partners turn toward their participant audiences who respond with "haw" (a respectful Kiowa gesture acknowledging that what has happened is good and honorable).

Parents/Guardians and Children and Values

Eagle parents (including "substitute" parents such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, and older siblings) almost unanimously agreed, during Eagle discussions, that modeling was the primary form of influence used to guide their children. The primary form of discipline mentioned was noninterference and allowing their children to learn from their own mistakes. A traditional grandmother said that nothing affected her grandson's behavior more than when she simply ignored him. Others expressed that talking about appropriate attitudes and outlooks during ceremonies was a way they attempted to influence young persons' lives. Unfortunately, many American Indian adolescents live far away from ceremonial grounds and do not have the historical structures they had in past generations to guide them in their search for personal values.

The "Talking Feather Activity" helps parents and adolescents to openly discuss values. Group members are divided into their Eagle partner pairs. They are told to write down what they feel are their family's favorite proverbs, slogans, words of advice, and admonitions. Next adolescents, while holding Talking Feathers, read and elaborate upon their family's slogans while their parents listen. Then the parents are given a Talking Feather and they respond to their children's remarks. The process is then reversed. After the total group gathers back into a circle, they process questions like: "How similar or different were the values named by partners? What values are shared by different families? How are values passed along effectively?"

Case Example

An anecdote typifies what happened in some of the relationships over the course of the program. A brilliant but alienated 10th grade boy and his father were having great difficulty communicating with each other. When

the students and parents were separated during an activity, the father expressed to the other parents that he was frustrated with his son. He was concerned that his son was absorbed in "unusual subjects" such as "science fiction, computers, and science projects." Why could he not play sports like his brother, he wondered? Other parents made him aware that some of their children also had interests similar to his son's and that they were supporting them in these interests.

Meanwhile the son was talking to other students about his interests and problems. He had spoken very little during the first four or five hours of the first marathon session but had laughed a lot and seemed to enjoy himself. Grouped only with other adolescents, he risked talking, though hesitantly. He said he had dropped out of a communications class because he was afraid of speaking to groups. Here with other gifted students he found that he had much in common, including computer programming and science fiction reading. Several mentioned that they had invented things. He casually mentioned that he knew how to make explosives and that he had killed a cat. The rest of the group probed and challenged him. One boy with whom he had become somewhat acquainted earlier confronted him about his "cruel act." The adolescent appeared disarmed and listened without becoming defensive. The friendly interaction potentially relieved his inner anguish. The challenges may have connected him more with social mores.

When the parents and students reconvened, they engaged in "Strained Relations," an activity that requires partners to pull each other across a line while tugging a fragile string. The father and son repeatedly snapped the string, both too stubborn to allow the other to pull him across the line and consequently bring them together. They were given another string. As they stood toe to toe, the last partners to not have negotiated a compromise, they began to openly discuss their power struggles. Repressed anger erupted. Facilitators, seeing them becoming aggressive, attempted to help them return to stability by paraphrasing what they had said. They also asked caring persons in the group to comment on the situation. The two were challenged about what values and interests they each held which threatened to snap the fragile link that bound them. Both engaged in genuine dialogue with each other about what they wanted from each other and about respect for each other's freedoms. Later that day, they planned community projects together.

During the winter months, the two carried out more than one community project. The son found himself doing carpentry work with his father to help an elderly woman add a room onto her house. Then they collected food for the needy. The father too found himself giving in. He encouraged his son to attend a prestigious math and science academy.

By the spring, their relationship had changed dramatically. The father led Eagle students in a round dance, his son holding his hand. Then at the Give-Away, the boy told everyone how his father loved the land and

then displayed an enormous make-believe land deed of the state of Montana to give to his father. The father shed tears before giving his son his gift. He pulled out a beautiful Talking Feather he had secretly made for his son. He told his son that he had been guilty of not listening to him. From then on whenever his son had something he really had to say he would need only to hold the feather up for silence and listening ears.

Community Projects

Eagle community projects have been astounding. Here are just a few examples. An Arizona Eagle group collected cans and held raffles to raise money for trees, drew out a detailed plan concerning where and how they would be planted and executed the plan. A New Mexico group worked to create an Indian club at their high school, even enlisting a lawyer when they ran into obstacles. They were able to recruit 40 Indian club members. An Oklahoma group organized and supervised a large scale Choctaw fair, replete with story telling, a blowgun competition, and workshops in bead work, Choctaw language, pottery making, stick ball, and traditional dancing. They also made cornmeal and manhaha for attendees. Another Oklahoma group gathered 1,000,000 pennies for the homeless in their city. A South Dakota Eagle group became Eagle facilitators and conducted workshops for grade school students and their parents. Other Eagle projects included: conducting a workshop to raise awareness of child abuse in their community, initiating and participating in tutorial programs in their schools, and conducting a community cleanup and creating a welcome sign for their reservation.

Program Evaluation

Over the past two years, all American Indian adolescent participants who completed the original Project Eagle program have completed Eagle site-evaluations. They filled them out at the end of the second marathon session. The evaluation contained demographic questions and evaluative questions that consisted of ranking questions and open-ended questions. Sixty-eight site evaluation forms were collected. Eight participants participated in the first Eagle session but not the second, and consequently did not complete the site-evaluation forms. Most likely they did not attend because of travel problems and conflicts in schedules.

Demographic characteristics indicated that more females than males participated in the program. Thirty-nine females and 27 males participated. Participants reported that 61 mothers or female guardians and 26 fathers or male guardians acted as their Eagle partners. Only 9 grandparents participated, probably a result of the program advertisement that stated parental involvement was required. Age range for students was

from 13 to 19 years of age with most participants in the 15-16-17 year old age group.

Quantitative results of the site evaluations were based on responses to a five-point scale. Five was the highest score possible and one the lowest. The following consists of the questions and the total mean responses.

1. I would rate my interaction with my parent/guardian during Project Eagle as: 4.727
2. I would rate the Eagle activities as: 4.831
3. I felt I was respected as an individual: 4.878
4. I felt accepted in Project Eagle: 4.905
5. I became a more effective leader: 4.597
6. I felt the Eagle activities were related to American Indian culture: 4.800
7. Overall, I rate the Eagle sessions: 4.943

In response to open-ended questions the following information was gathered. Eagle participants reported that what they appreciated most about the Eagle session was that they:

1. Bonded me with my parent.
2. Allowed me to share my feelings.
3. Helped me to feel proud of being American Indian.
4. Improved my self-esteem.
5. Helped me to become a better leader.

To improve the Eagle sessions, some remarked that they preferred different locations for the Eagle sessions and that there should be more sessions (most were conducted in libraries in school settings). They said they chose to participate in Project Eagle for the opportunity to interact with a parent. A few also said that they wanted to learn about leadership. One third responded that no opportunities were offered in their schools to participate in American Indian programs. They reported that they would be most likely to apply what they learned in Project Eagle at school and home. They reported their participation in Project Eagle would positively affect their academic performance. They said their communication with their Eagle partner would be positively affected having participated in Project Eagle. They reported that their participation in Project Eagle helped to build greater self-confidence and helped them to feel more connected with their American Indian identity.

Conclusion

The site evaluations suggest that Project Eagle provided an environment where participants felt accepted and safe and consequently felt comfortable to explore themselves and their relationships with their parents. Project Eagle's success may be related to four Project Eagle emphases: symbols, play, parental involvement, and social responsibility. American Indians, and possibly all people, need symbols to probe the

depths of their beings. The sacred circle is referred to throughout the program. Many of the activities are reflections of ideas and yearnings that are embodied in symbols utilized in American Indian ceremonies to raise participants beyond the mundane to a realm of the sacred. Symbols act upon Eagle participants, pulling them into inner realms where they typically dare not go. The symbols and the activities echo tribal histories and traditions, which give American Indian people pride in their cultural identities. Second, Eagle activities are fun. People like to experience the ecstasy of life. Parents and adolescents returned to innocence as they played with each other. The play itself, even without the processing, helps adolescents to work on the ever-unfinished business of having fulfilling relationships with their parents. Coupled with mature reflection, play can result in more profound and healthy bonding. Third, parental involvement helps to focus adolescents. Parents initiate discussion about many integral issues and problems that might be avoided in strictly adolescent groups. Certainly energy is always expended in making sure parents do not dominate the group discussions, but Eagle facilitators are encouraged to use their remarks to open space for adolescents to talk. Fourth, the program emphasizes social responsibility. Eagle participants do not merely report that the program has influenced them, they also carry out community projects. They experience the power and joy that comes with giving.

Alternative Settings for Project Eagle

Project Eagle has been utilized in countless settings throughout the United States. The groups have included: American Indian First Offenders programs, Upward Bound, racially integrated gifted programs, programs for the mentally retarded, Alcohol Anonymous groups, Science and Computer programs, church youth groups, Indian Church retreats, Students into College, American Indians into Psychology, Alternative School Group Counseling, Life Skills, Job Corps, American Indian Nurses, American Indian business employees, Johnson O'Malley programs, and many others. Though Project Eagle is designed for American Indian groups, it has been utilized in multi-race and cultural, African-American, East Indian, and White groups. In most of the above groups, the Eagle format was altered to meet the unique needs of the particular group.

Considerations for Alternative Approaches

Different problems have emerged as we have strayed from our original organization. For instance, Project Eagle's format has at times been altered to one-hour sessions over the course of fifteen weeks. This approach can and has been very effective, but has at times been beset with problems. For example, it is difficult for families or even individuals to

attend all the sessions, due often to transportation problems and conflicts in schedules. Also, in most cases that we have observed, this segmented approach lacks the profundity of the marathon session approach. We suspect that the sustained duration of the marathon sessions probably has a way of breaking down resistances that can be built back up when there are weeklong breaks between hour-long sessions. Some organizations request that we conduct Eagle sessions without parents. It is our belief that without parent participation the growth achieved by adolescents is more likely to be undermined when participants return to their home environments. Also, sometimes we have conducted Eagle activities with younger participants. We quickly learned that the duration for group processing in these groups had to be shortened. Lastly, when using Eagle activities with non-Indian groups, the activities and processing should be altered in order to be relevant for the particular group's unique needs.

Future Research

Though Project Eagle aims for a holistic impact upon our participants, data gathered suggests that future research may focus on the program's impact on participants' self-esteem, self-concept, cultural connectedness, communication, conflict management, and family interactions. Pre and post measures could be utilized. Follow up data concerning the effects upon academic performance could also be useful.

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