

In the Pause and Listening to the Little People: A Folk Healer's Journey

The Counseling Psychologist
40(1) 93–132
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DOI: 10.1177/0011000011410892
<http://tcp.sagepub.com>



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Abstract

This article employs a qualitative case study approach to describe the views and perspectives of a folk healer (White Bear) regarding spiritual healing. White Bear argues for a mobile, in-the-moment form of diagnosis and a “pause,” in which the mind ceases to tyrannize and the healer is no longer absorbed in his or her emotions. He contends that a healer can benefit from aligning with spirits (he calls them Little People) who can help achieve the necessary states of anonymity and nonjudgment required for healing work. Throughout the study, theoretical and empirical findings in the field of psychology are cited in an effort to support or question rather than validate or invalidate White Bear's mystical wisdom.

Keywords

multiculturalism, content, religion, spirituality, dimensions of diversity, qualitative methodology, psychotherapy, content, race/ethnicity, dimensions of diversity

Psychotherapy has its deepest roots in the Greek idea of healing the soul, a holistic meaning that has been lost in most Western psychotherapies. The Greek word *psychikos*, from which *psychic* is derived, means of the soul or

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spiritual, and the word *therapy* is derived from the Greek word *therapeia*, meaning to cure or heal (Psychic, 2005; Therapy, 2005). If psychotherapy were to again attend to its original root meanings, it could transcend its near exclusive focus on the physical, emotional, and mental and extend itself to the equally important spiritual aspects of the human experience, where new dimensions of the human psyche might be explored.

Throughout history, spiritual teachings and forms of healing practices have developed because of their encounters with different healing practices of other cultures and religions. Western psychology, however, has had limited influence from its encounter with mystical healing practices. A. H. Maslow pioneered some of the earliest research in this area focusing on “peak experiences” (Maslow, 1970), and Carl Jung and his followers have examined esoteric and occult concepts (Jung, 1912/2009; Lachman, 2010). More recently, some mystical influence can be seen in mindfulness practice, a detached awareness of our sensations, thoughts, and feelings (Kornfield, 1993), and Buddhist psychology has been increasingly integrated into mainstream academic and clinical psychology (Ruzek, 2007). Also, transpersonal psychology has studied states of consciousness, biofeedback, the psychophysiology of yoga, and mind-expanding drugs (Grof, 2000).

Yet although some theoretical orientations are more open to spirituality than others, few, if any, have made systematic attempts to integrate folk spiritual wisdom to expand the field of knowledge and possibly even recuperate part of psychotherapy’s original meaning. Mystical perspectives, which are often a part of folk and tribal worldviews, tend to promote what may be a deeper and more fundamental part of the human experience, where a different possibility of consciousness exists. Many healing approaches utilized by common people have proved their effectiveness through their utilization across many generations. Folk spiritual practices also could benefit from incorporating some mainstream psychological practices that have been subjected to empirical investigation since many spiritual folk approaches may not directly address contemporary Western family system problems, addictions, arrested development, low self-esteem, difficulties of love, and childhood traumas (Livingston & Cummings, 2009; Morrison, Clutter, Pritchett, & Demmitt, 2009). All sides should be willing to learn from those with different perspectives.

Researchers report an association between spirituality and perceived health and well-being (Pargament, Magyar, & Murray, 2005; Wortherspoon, 2000), and psychologists have, to a limited extent, considered the importance of the role spirituality plays in multicultural counseling (Richards & Bergin, 2000). Because this study focuses on spiritual healing as described by a folk healer, it may be advantageous to briefly discuss what spirituality is and, later in the

method section, to describe the factors that may have influenced his healing practice. Hill and his colleagues (2000) defined spirituality as thoughts, feelings, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred, that is, those things that are holy, transcendent, and of ultimate value to a person. This definition offers a broad basis that encapsulates the perspectives of the folk healer in this study.

Although folk-healing methods of treatment, which often include spiritual practices, are viewed as legitimate in many minority circles, Vazquez and Gargia-Vazquez (2003) contend that in most instances in our psychology training programs they are either not taken seriously or, worse, not discussed at all. Duran (2006) argued that psychology's bias against spirituality and local networks of treatment is damaging to minority communities. Rivera (1988) and Chung and Lin (1994) conducted studies in which they noted dramatic decreases in the use of folk healers in Hispanic American and Asian American communities and linked the decreases to acculturation. There is evidence that some African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans prefer healers who share their cultural beliefs about the causes of psychological problems and effectively address their issues (Koss-Chioino, 2000).

Although spiritual folk healing is mentioned frequently in counseling literature, there is rarely more than a cursory description. In this study, the researchers seek to celebrate their multicultural world as it draws from Native American, Eastern and Western mysticism, and psychology traditions. Efforts were made to make cross-cultural connections to provide a forum for discussion that might lead to increased assimilation of perennial wisdoms of folk healing by mainstream psychology. The current study attempts to fill these gaps by providing a rich and detailed explanation of a folk healer's wisdom about spiritual healing. Specifically, in this article, researchers investigate how a folk healer enters states of consciousness and works with spirits to diagnose and treat his clients. Efforts were made to contextualize a folk healer's spiritual wisdom in terms of various psychological perspectives and spiritual traditions, primarily Native American.

Method

Research Design

As the purpose of this study is to understand spiritual folk healers' intricate wisdom about healing and spirituality and to converse freely without being constrained by predetermined prototypes or assumptions, qualitative research

methods were employed. In particular, this study is a single case study including one participant named White Bear.¹ Case study allows researchers to study and explore a complex issue with detailed, in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2000). In an effort to understand and represent the participant's idiosyncratic views on healing and spirituality, the researchers used multiple data sources, including multiple interviews, observations, and participation in the rituals. As several qualitative researchers have noted, using multiple data sources is one of the key characteristics of case study, so that the case is studied in a holistic, context-sensitive, and detailed manner (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Reflexivity

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have noted, the researcher is part of the social world that he or she studies. In other words, intersubjective reality emerges during interactions between the researcher and the participant. Since this case study also incorporates multiple data sources including extensive interactions with the participant, it is especially relevant to identify the nature of the rapport between the researcher and the participant. The major data collector who conducted interviews and observations is a 53-year-old Cherokee/Choctaw male associate professor in psychology. He has participated in hundreds of Native American ceremonies and dances throughout his life and also has periodically participated in spiritual and cultural events with the participant in this study. This preestablished rapport allows the researcher to retain insider (*emic*) perspective, which facilitates the representation of the lived experience of the indigenous people through a dialogue. The insider's view requires rigorous critical self-reflection to avoid potential prejudicial views. To this end, the researcher kept copious notes regarding his own observations and interpretations to reflect on them throughout the study and remain as objective as possible.

Participant

The participant of this study included one male folk healer named White Bear. The study's primary researcher had met him approximately 5 years before the inception of this study. (Because of the interpersonal nature of the data collection and for clarity, the primary researcher will refer to himself in first person for the remainder of this section.) I had heard of White Bear for several years, that he ran a sweat lodge where many people with drinking problems went for healing and that his family, though Choctaw, had long been involved in Sun

Dances with Lakotas. I had attended hundreds of sweat ceremonies at various places and decided to attend White Bear's. Gradually, I began to dance with White Bear's family. For the first 6 months, White Bear was distant from me. Even during this time, I was impressed with White Bear's commitment to his spiritual journey. I typically found him sitting on a boulder with his pipe or sitting alone near the lodge on his acreage. A medicine person I knew told me that he had never met anyone who occupied the spiritual dimension so much of the time as White Bear. Gradually White Bear began to open up to me. He spoke like no one I had ever met, including several other medicine people and several ministers and theologians. I found him to be insightful about psychological health and extraordinarily humorous. Incrementally, White Bear began to share his inner world with me. Almost all of those early conversations were short and broke off suddenly. Then one day White Bear told me that the spirits wanted me to write about our conversations. I told White Bear I would be especially interested in hearing about his ideas related to spiritual healing.

White Bear made it clear that his anonymity was vital for his family's protection; consequently, he limited the demographic information I had originally proposed to disclose in this article. White Bear did disclose that he is in his 50s and that his vocation is a "ditch digger." He has a high school education. He claims to have never read an entire book and has no interest in doing so because the spirits have revealed more than enough for him to consider. Though he has a limited education, he discussed his spiritual experiences in a highly sophisticated fashion.

He and his wife do healing work together on an almost daily basis. His wife and her family have been politically active members in the Choctaw tribe (in both Mississippi and Oklahoma). She is a descendent of a Choctaw chief from the 19th century. She concentrates most of her time in healing work at their home and conducts spirituality workshops around Oklahoma. White Bear is the more domestic of the two. Though he regularly does volunteer work in prisons, he rarely goes to homes to practice healing and prefers time alone. Nonetheless, they both agreed that the "spirits" want White Bear to speak in this interview.

He spoke to me mostly in stories and metaphors, though sometimes in abstract language. For the most part, he seemed to speak out of his personal experiences, but he also mentioned that he simply reports what the spirits teach him and explained that my questions would be answered by the spirits rather than by him. He warned that sometimes he would become loud, which would indicate to me that several spirits were talking to him at the same time, resulting in his "talking over them." He said that at times he would announce which spirit would be speaking.

White Bear is, in many ways, an exemplar of what Ponterotto (2010) describes as a transcendent multicultural personality: Flexible cross-culturally, empathetic with a broad spectrum of people, connected to his own cultural group but open to other cultural perspectives, characterized by self-complexity, and demonstrating an enhanced connectedness to others and to higher beings, White Bear himself neither advocates a specific religion nor promotes any particular spirituality, including any Native American spirituality. He reported that he has had only fragmented conversations about other religions and has no interest in learning about them, but many of his ideas appear on the surface to integrate Eastern philosophies. Most of the influences appear to be Native American. His "calling" to be a healer follows the Choctaw path. One of the Choctaw words for God is *Hashtahli*, which is a compound of *hashi*, which means "sun," and *tahli*, which means "to complete an action" (Swanton, 1931). Early European explorers believed that Choctaws identified the sun with God. Whether they did or not, Choctaws have great reverence for the sun, and White Bear's almost two-decades-long participation in Lakota ceremonies also indicates a reverence for the sun.² He said his initial "calling" as a medicine person came when he was approached to be a healer by the Sun Spirit and Little People (other spirits) when he was in the woods, lying on a boulder by himself. Choctaws tell of how Little People lure children into the woods and offer them three choices: poison herbs, a knife, or medicine herbs. Those who choose the poison herbs are destined for an unhappy life, whereas those who select a knife become warriors. Those who choose the medicine herbs spend the rest of their lives interacting with the Little People, conducting healing in the world. White Bear said that though the predicament of being given the choice was not of his choosing, he freely made the choice to work with the Little People as a healer. Nonetheless, he said that the path has been difficult. The two decades of interaction with spirits has been so psychologically stressful for him that it has almost killed him before, and he knew others who had a similar gift who had gone insane. He said his spiritual experiences are "too intense, too strange for most people."

White Bear often refers to the spirits he has contact with as animal spirits. But he explained they are not really animals but wise energy entities. Like other healers, he has also spontaneously created healing rituals that are similar to those practiced by other medicine people. For instance, he conducts purification ceremonies along what many would call tribally specific ways at times, but at other times his rituals are not in conformity to the structure of most Native American purification ceremonies. In this ceremony, often called a "sweat," participants sit in the dark around hot rocks that lie in a shallow hole at the center of a lodge built with willow branches and covered with tarps.

Water is poured on the rocks, creating hot steam. There are typically four rounds of singing and praying in the sweltering heat.³ But sometimes during a sweat White Bear will respond to spirits and lead long, invigorating, “currently unremembered chants,” sing songs similar to Choctaw call songs, speak messages from the spirits, add or subtract rounds, throw water on participants, or perform other surprising, spontaneous healing acts. He says he is more interested in responding to the needs of those who need healing and being in the moment than formulaically repeating rituals. One of the most distinctive rituals he leads is what he calls “Diamond Dancing.” From a vision he had over a series of a few months, he created Diamond Dancing, which includes 16 dances, each representing a different animal entity. During these dances, he sometimes spontaneously embodies a bear, or at least “dances as a bear with a bear spirit” as he described it, making sounds and movements congruent with a bear. Though some of his behaviors and comments, as well as his talking with spirits, might be attributed to a mental illness by some therapists, individuals within his community recognize his gifts and show him great respect, easily differentiating him from individuals with mental illnesses.

White Bear lives on a small tract of land several miles from a small town where he and his wife receive large numbers of people who come for healing from across the United States, Europe, Mexico, and South America. Besides Native Americans, the proportions of Hispanic and Vietnamese Americans are highest among minority populations. Such a large number of people come to them seeking healing that the two can become overwhelmed by the numbers. They run two large sweat lodges for purification every other Saturday evening and lead healing dances every other Sunday. There may be anywhere from 12 to 75 persons in attendance at these ceremonies. Throughout the week, White Bear and his wife receive persons seeking healing. At least once each year, they conduct a fire dance in which they maintain some links to historic tribal ritual but also make a point to recontextualize the fire dance’s relevance and use.

About half of the persons who come for healing report drug and alcohol problems. There is a small core of about 12 persons who attend almost every event and another 15 who attend dances and sweats semiregularly. Most of the core circle members participate in their own tribal ceremonies regularly, and many have sweat lodges at their own residences. Several have been sun dancers for at least a dozen years, and several are regular stomp dancers.⁴ Although many of the activities at White Bear’s grounds are rooted in Native American ritual, White Bear makes it clear that he is not interested in “repeating” existing Native American ritual experience but is more interested in “creation.” Such

creation, he says, may at any time express itself in ways contrary to existing customs to address the contemporary issues and current needs of the people who attend the meetings. Most, but not all, of those who come from outside the circle for healing are largely unfamiliar with indigenous spirituality.

Data Collection

This single case study consists of multiple data sources such as multiple interviews, participant observation, and researcher memos. The multiple data sources gathered allowed for the use of data triangulation (Stake, 2000; Yin, 1984) to provide multifaceted understanding of the case.

Regarding interview data, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the participant 10 times throughout the space of one year. Open-ended interview questions were prepared for each interview to serve as a reference guide. However, the interviewer did not manipulate or reduce the participant's remarks. Instead, he attempted to follow the natural flow of the participant's remarks and attempted to engage in authentic dialogue. Each interview conversation was centered around certain topics such as "spirits," "healing," "energy," "dimensions of reality," "visionary experience," and "creation." Each interview lasted approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Each interview resulted in approximately 10 to 14 pages of transcripts, resulting in a total of 146 pages of transcripts generated.

The researcher also collected participant observation data. Participant observation means that the researcher is involved and socialized into the group under study as a way to collect information about the target phenomenon. Participant observation allows the researcher to better understand the context within which people interact and to capture routine patterns that may not be recognized by the people in the setting. The researcher of this study participated in several ceremonies that the participant led for the purpose of healing including Diamond Dances and sweat lodge ceremonies. Detailed field notes were generated immediately after the participant observation to record descriptions of the setting where the rituals were conducted, description of behaviors and interpersonal dynamics, and direct quotes from the conversations the participant conveyed. The researcher also kept an ongoing memo that served as a secondary data source for this study. All three researchers involved in data analysis used a memoing technique to record insights, thoughts, questions, comments, and interpretations that emerged during data collection and data analysis.

Data Analysis

Researchers employed generic thematic analysis by reducing the extensive text into core themes that reflected the overall context (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). First, the audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then each researcher read and reread each transcript thoroughly. Second, researchers coded significant remarks throughout the transcripts. To enhance trustworthiness of the study, researchers used multiple analysts' triangulation (Patton, 2002). Three researchers independently read each transcript several times, coded the transcript, and then compared the codes. Through ongoing discussions, researchers added, deleted, merged, and modified codes when needed. A high level of agreement (more than 85%) was found among the three researchers, which facilitated the ongoing data analysis and final report.

Third, the refined codes were compared, contrasted, and aggregated. Similar patterns were clustered under broader and more abstract categories. The categories were formulated into meanings, and the meanings were developed into themes. During this data analysis process, we reached a point at which the categories and themes were saturated; thus new information found did not provide further insight into the existing categories and themes. As a result, five themes emerged from the data sets.

Fourth, the themes and findings were compiled, summarized, and reported. In the process of reconstructing narratives, researchers extracted direct quotes from the transcript so that they could stay as close to the original data as possible in reporting findings. While analyzing the data, interpretation was made also concurrently. Interpretation is the researcher's efforts to make sense of the data using his or her own experience, perception, and intuition. The goal is to provide neither too much unwarranted personal opinion nor too little truly insightful commentary (Wolcott, 1994). To avoid these pitfalls, several strategies were employed as described in the next step.

As a fifth step, researchers used the member check strategy, deviant case analysis, and peer review to enhance trustworthiness of this study (Patton, 2002). Researchers asked the participant to read and comment on themes and direct quotes. Based on his feedback, researchers revised the initial misrepresentations. In addition, deviant cases that did not fit the five themes were reexamined. Those irregularities allowed researchers to explore regularities and patterns in a more comprehensive way (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Researchers also made their interpretations available for discussion with fellow scholars studying a similar topic and sought their feedback.

Throughout this rigorous process of identifying common patterns and providing valid interpretations, researchers were prepared eventually to summarize the data. A summary of the data is presented below in narrative form, highlighting major themes and interpretations to display the meaning White Bear made of his experiences and perceptions about spirituality and healing.

Results

Limits of Language “in the Pause”

Much is made about the primacy of oral communication over the written word for Native American traditionalists. Historical accounts describe Native Americans’ general confusion regarding the primacy that Euro-Americans placed on written documents such as treaties. The confusion was further exacerbated as conflicts arose when “sacred” written treaties were broken in the name of Manifest Destiny. Furthermore, many Native Americans criticize Western education, which largely emphasizes the written word, for having separated them from their own cultural traditions. Psychotherapy, too, beginning with Freud to the present, has valued talk therapy over written expression. Native Americans and psychologists would agree that the written word is associated with lacking nearness or proximity and lacking temporal presence. Knowing about Native Americans’ preference for oral communication and distrust of written communication may be helpful for therapists working with traditional Native Americans.

Still, making such a superficial comparison about the valuing of oral communications by Native Americans and psychotherapists is only a springboard into deeper understandings. White Bear radically explores the underpinnings as well as the spiritual limitations and possibilities related to oral communication. He said, “We need to get back to hearing each other without talking.” For him, neither the written word nor speech carries full presence. Words themselves are seen as alienating. He continued,

A person can start in his attempts to become momentized by not putting words to their experiences that are overly dramatic. . . . When you are in the pause, there is silence. All information is there. It is like leaving your body. You are no longer your own vessel. It is like being inside a light bulb, and it suddenly gets turned on. I see everything around me and not a single bit of judgment. It is silent of noise.

He suggested that deep healing occurs in the moment when one is no longer encumbered by bodily limitations and is able to experience omniscience,

which no words can express. In the “pause,” one is no longer limited to words that determine meaning and judgment that separates one from experience. Words are judgment about reality and one’s subjective experience of it. They offer an illusion of summing things up in tidy compartments. In the pause, the silence, the instant of momentization, the light gets turned on, and White Bear sees everything. Sometimes White Bear appeared to get frustrated with the researcher’s questions to get clarification of the words he was using. In response to a comment the researcher made about “visionary experience,” White Bear said,

Vision is a word. It is a word that you use to control energy. The spirits are telling me that we keep going over a defined concept. What matters is what you are experiencing right now whether it can be captured in a concept or not. I am to sit down and the categories no longer matter. They say I will be able to help others without speaking or doing anything. Most people try to control energy with ideas and concepts with meanings and definitions. I work not to force words onto the pictures I see.

White Bear repeatedly makes it clear that words do much violence when they are imposed on experience. The awareness alluded to by White Bear cannot adequately be put into words. White Bear became frustrated when he felt prodded to give the right words to explain his visionary experiences. He repeatedly warned the researcher not to mistake concepts for experience. He said words and concepts split life into separate segments that have no reality in themselves. He said use of words may preclude or even exacerbate rather than heal, and for White Bear healing is what his life is about. White Bear stressed a nondualistic direct perception of ultimate reality, whereas words require a separation between the speaker and the experience that keeps one a step away from the pure healing energy of “momentization.”

When the researcher asked him how people are to communicate without words, he said,

Energy is what is supposed to be communicated. Words are just vibrations. Everything is communication with a vibration . . . rocks, hawks. When the Little People [spirits that talk to White Bear] communicate, sometimes they do so through pictures, sometimes vibrations of language. I hear the energy, and it is like it is being filtered through something. I hear the vibration, then I see a picture and feel things. If I grab the pictures, they go away. When I get words, I forget them as fast as I get them usually.

Older Native Americans often speak of remembering people who spoke with animals and other things in nature. Native American stories are filled with contentions that American Indians used to speak with nature directly. White Bear describes direct unmediated experiences in which he understands communication vibrations from multitudinal aspects of reality when he is momentized, not attempting to limit or control them. He clarifies,

It is better to not talk about these experiences if you are going to control them. We cannot be fixated on the woo-ee of these experiences. Be grateful for the experience happening right now. I am not trying to belittle talking about them. But you are to let go.

When the researcher asked him if he thought he could use words without limiting reality, he said,

No, but I can get closer during prayer. I experience directly the changing reality we live in time and space. I find I can never give the same word to describe anything I had described with a word a moment before because it is no longer what it was.

White Bear's comments about "words" are a challenge to psychotherapy. He suggests that our using verbal language may be at the core of our problems as human beings, alienating us from direct experience. He is not the first to say this. Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, bemoans "words, words, words" as the primary source of concealment and associates them with madness. From the moment people open their mouths, they are displaced from experience, and words only contaminate what they describe with falseness. Lacan (1966) introduced psychology to the "floating signifier," which suggests that psychological distortions are at the very source of how people misinterpret their experiences with words. Lacan suggests that psychopathology may be intrinsic to people as language beings. He specifically considers schizophrenia in the context of alienation associated with inherent language distortions and generalizes that people all partake in the "vulgarity" of words no matter how articulate they are. White Bear, too, believes that when people think they encapsulate reality with words, they are suffering from mental illness. Those who forget word limitations may identify with their mental constructs instead of the awareness behind them and may be quick to judge others according to their illusory opinions.

When asked about why he used words at all to talk about his perceptions, White Bear said,

Words and concepts are beautiful in their own way. Each concept can create the space for the next better concept. But we keep boxing ourselves in with ideas instead of letting them go. Right now I am trying to connect myself more to words so I can express them to people who are at the point of needing word meanings so they can begin to move into the moment for healing.

He felt it was his purpose to help heal people, and speaking words was necessary at this time to help move people to the next state of being. Still, he constantly reminded the interviewer of the restrictive economy of words to describe experience. White Bear was ambivalent about the “talking cure.” Words are both poison and remedy, he said. Words are the dangerous drug that he believed could eventually lead to healing. But for words to affect cure, people must let go of the meanings they believe they have garnished from words, lest they block creation, the ongoing pure energy that cannot be encapsulated (Derrida, 1997).

In summary, White Bear reminds people that health is about realizing divine immanence in everything. In time and space, this entails realizing the gifts in all experiences and in all that people first perceive as “other.” Psychotherapy utilizes talk to address alienation, but White Bear suggests that talking is part of the problem because words are inherently alienating acts. Words only re-create and describe the direct momentized perception and healing experience. Though they are necessary social concessions, they should not be viewed as a replacement for in-the-moment energy and reality.

Four-by-Four Vision of Diagnosis

Before discussing White Bear’s views on healing, considering his visionary diagnostic perspective would be beneficial. When asked about the underlying issues that cause tension and stress in people, White Bear said,

You psychologists would do better if you focused on people’s gifts. It would start you off in a nonjudgmental way, and it would help you see you are part of the same energy that they are. It is easiest to do this if you will be in the moment with the people who come to you.

Here White Bear teaches that when psychologists focus on psychodiagnosis, they alienate themselves from their clients. Through traditional psychodiagnosis, they construct a static, encapsulated entity, but White Bear contends that people are always embedded in a process of intersubjectivity. Healing

intersubjectivity occurs when their intuitions are at liberty and their perceptions are open to their clients' gifts. White Bear focuses on the moment-to-moment participation in the intersubjective world with the client.

White Bear described the nature of being human. According to him, "spirits" have, so far, shown him not simply the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions but also 128 dimensions of being human. He said that if all the energy flowing through these dimensions were blocked, a person would die. Unfortunately, he briefly discussed only a few of these dimensions with the researcher. He explained that he considers all the dimensions when he makes a diagnosis of the problems people present to him. He added,

The dimensions are really not separate, and none of them are any higher than another. You see when you are in the moment and are not judging. All the dimensions are all in each other. Somebody may think a person is simply emotionally unbalanced, but you have to consider the mental element and so on. Spirits taught me that there are four aspects to the physical: physical/physical, physical/mental, physical/emotional, and physical/spiritual, and so on. The spirits taught me to think in terms of each dimension in terms of its four aspects, but they are really a unity. Spirits just divide it down to help humans in their need to understand. When you are momentized, you are sensitized to 360-degree reality. I am able to see the emotional for instance, as it is held in the mental or how the physical is held in the emotional.

Again, White Bear reminds those in the psychological community that the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual simultaneously interact. White Bear believes that if a healer ignores the unity of the self at the outset, he or she begins the healing process with a less than adequate diagnostic and healing perspective. Only when they know of the unitary nature of reality are they able to break things down into the four-by-four perspective that gives them a detailed apprehension of the problem. Then, White Bear utilizes a panoramic awareness of the whole person as he diagnoses problems. He considers their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions and their interactions. He suggests that one must be present in the moment to see these interacting dimensions as a whole. He contends that sometimes the one dimension can influence another dimension of the self. A healer must be mobile in his or her perspective taking about the ill person's condition, scanning each dimension in terms of its four aspects. This holistic approach has been verified in psycho-neuroimmunology as it has demonstrated how unexpressed emotion may cause changes in the nervous system, which can result in lower resistance to disease (Siegel, 1999).

When asked to further explain the spiritual sight he uses when diagnosing problems, White Bear explained,

Most people think I see things backwards. I see things most of the time from a no-time and no-place perspective, while most people see from a time and space perspective. It is like people studying the black hole. I spend most of the time, not all the time, looking at the black hole from within.

First, White Bear indicates that he views the problems from within a trance state, which he calls a no-time no-space state of consciousness. He tells us that most people look at reality from a detached objective perspective, whereas he experiences it from the inside. But he goes further than describing a merely subjective perspective. He explains,

Inside the black hole, I see energy literally. This includes seeing spirits. I would not be able to see it if I looked at you as having stopped, if I judged you. Once you open your eyes and see the gifts in all things, you will see the energy. And you don't stop with the gift. You keep on wondering. All pure energy in time and space comes from no-time and no-space. I am aware I am in that energy, and I am aware of spirits every hour of the day.

White Bear talks about deep, subjective, meditative experiences that he sees or experiences in an objective manner. He argues that interior states of being (such as being judgmental) affect the objectivity and expansiveness of one's capacity for subjective spiritual perception. White Bear further appears to have realized that he is not contained within matter but only connected to it and can move in and out of material and spiritual realities. Spirits emerge in his field of awareness as he experiences the immediacy of the moment.

One of the most profound gifts White Bear offers is his integrated psychospiritual way of perceiving. To begin with, White Bear claims to be able to directly perceive psychological illnesses when he is in the state he calls "momentization." He sees the whole person, yet he also says that the spirits have broken down the whole into pieces for those who are lodged primarily in time and space. White Bear elaborated,

I saw a person recently who was angry but couldn't admit it to himself. He wanted to think of himself as a person who had attained a life of anonymity (understanding other's good or bad opinions of me are none

of my business), but he had not gotten past the naïveté of thinking others will treat him kind if he treats them kindly. So he hid his anger in the mental dimension so he could keep his mental image of himself. I saw the energy blocked. He couldn't let it go, and he was getting sick.

Psychotherapists would instantly see the similarity of the "hiding" in this story with the defense mechanism of denial. Still, one cannot help but appreciate White Bear's attempt to understand mental illness from a comprehensive search. The story illustrates the way he begins a process of relating different dimensions to each other and relates it back to his notion of health.

Another interesting aspect of White Bear's way of diagnosing involves discussing trauma as it has been passed from one generation to the next. The interviewer initially thought White Bear was talking about either historical trauma or reincarnation. He explained,

Of course, you have to keep the history of a group of people in your mind whether they are Indians or not. You already know that. And I don't know about reincarnations. The Little People [spirits] have never talked to me about that. What they show me is how deep pain is passed through the mothers and grandmothers to us. The little girl who was singing so loud in the lodge last Saturday had what the parents called Tourette's. The spirits told me that the great-grandmother had been raped. She began blocking energy and it continued all her life until she died. The little girl's grandmother and her mother are carrying that trauma in the form of control. The little girl with Tourette's is the healer. That control is breaking out for all of them through her. She is healing all of them by making the blocking so obvious so she can really deal with it and release it. They will all be healed . . . even great-grandma who has gone on.

Some of the latest research supports White Bear's remarks. Obissier (2006), Brave Heart (2004), and Charney and Nestler (2009) have continued the investigations of Squire, Knowlton, and Musen's (1993) studies accumulating support that genes are preprogrammed, experience dependent, and affected by ancestors' traumas, which directly influences how neurons create new synaptic connections. These biological propensities can create characteristic experiences. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, pp. 466-467) acknowledges "a heritable component to the transmission of Posttraumatic Stress

Disorder. . . . A history of depression in first-degree relatives has been related to an increased vulnerability to developing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” White Bear expands the scientific reports to argue that trauma is passed through the maternal line and emphasizes that healing can be accomplished not only for the carrier but also for previous generations, which coincides with many tribal beliefs that time (past, present, and future) is unified and continuous (Trimble & Gonzalez, 2008).

To briefly summarize, White Bear breaks down a unitary human reality into four interdependent dimensions: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. He then offers us a mobile way of conceptualizing. As White Bear interacts with a person who has come for healing, he fluidly moves in and out of time and space and no-time and no-space; the resident strengths and deficits of the person; one dimension after another, seeing associations and combinations between dimensions; and fractal and unitary experiences. He reveals that a person’s true condition can be perceived only when the psychologist or healer no longer sees them as opaque but rather sees through them, having relaxed judgments, hostility, suspicious fears, and mental conceptualizations. White Bear also looks at a person’s health in the context of the ancestry on his or her maternal side. White Bear’s comments supplement what writers already have written about tribal notions of interdependence and historic trauma.

Blocking Energy and Its Link to Illness

White Bear said that energy can be blocked in any dimension, but in these interviews he spent most of his time talking about blockages in the cognitive and emotional dimensions. He also spoke at length about blockages that result from thinking and speaking judgmentally. First, he was asked about illness in general. White Bear said,

A child is living in no-time and no-space. . . . A child’s creativity just goes on and on . . . creating games and doing this, and then he or she gets abused. All of us get abused in no-time and no-space because we are dealing with parents who are constantly trying to hold onto good and bad experiences, control them . . . even the finest parents. The abuse results in the child creating time and space as a protection. The child was sitting. The child was viewing creation not trying to control it. We can get back to no-time and no-space. Maybe by talking about this we can begin to rejoin it and sit and observe creation rather than blocking it and imprisoning ourselves and being hypervigilant.

Young children experience life as an unfolding present, letting go of experiences almost as soon as they have them, playing creatively in the eternal now. White Bear calls any bestowing of anxiety about the past or future child abuse. "Abused" children internalize time, breaking it into past and future, experiencing hypervigilance, thinking thereby that they are guarding themselves against uncontrollable events that may intrude into their lives (McGaugh, 1992). People do not live in tomorrow, yet they pretend to be a part of it. They misuse their lives, feeling and acting fretfully and worrying. Time, one's thoughts about the past or the future, becomes intricately connected with who one thinks one is. One's entire psychological experience is bound up in resentment and anxiety about the future and the past, though a person can never live in it. Consequently, White Bear claims, when people try to control their lives, they block unfolding creative energy that is always flowing into them.

White Bear spoke about cognitive blocking two different times. First he said,

Leaving things alone is wisdom. I think of spontaneity, creativity. . . . Being in the moment and with the energy, I begin to have experiences of purity. . . . Many people have their senses tied to their controlling ego. They judge nature and their experiences before they experience them. Experience rather than judge with your head . . . that is what health is.

White Bear then threw the researcher a curve. "It is a paradox. This is silly talk about the intellect. Thinking about how thinking blocks us is the only way to reverse that. It can get us a step closer, but it will never get us there." People internalize concepts and categorize experience to the point of clouding direct experience and losing spontaneity. Living so calculatingly, they lose their capacity for pure perceptions and authentic feelings.

White Bear is clear in his message that those who think they can utilize their minds as the primary tool to see clearly and attain spiritual healing are mistaken. The awareness he sees as paramount is related to experience rather than interpretation, theory, and speculation. The point is to utilize one's mind for discernment but to be careful not to allow it to be a tyrant. Certainly people are not to think that all opinions are worthless. But healing comes when a person is open and responsive to the world and receptive of the flickering of a flame, the beauty of music, the shades of colors, and the fascinating elements of another person's personality. White Bear suggests that people tend to put things they perceive in line with what they think rather than in reality. Instead

of experiencing things, persons, and experiences, their minds too often separate them from what is real. Their perceptions are framed by conventional knowledge and reasoning. But White Bear values direct experience and intuitive wisdom. Still, he adds that his comments do not mean that the intellect is not vital to the experience he alludes to. The mind can help clear the way for direct experience if it is not put on a pedestal. It is also important to develop one's ideas as one grows spiritually so that one's words are more commensurate with one's developing spiritual life.

White Bear next offered an unforgettable image to summarize the above ideas. He said,

You know how a skunk carries on and wobbles. It looks like pure energy, like creation taking place. Its movement is like energy forming. There is something about viewing things as threatening that keeps us out of the now. We are already in the now; we just have to realize it. We don't have to get Alzheimer's to experience it. Being in the flow of energy as it flows brings unity with this life and healing. Would you look at the skunk and think it stinks or that it might spray you, or would you see pure energy?

The use of intellect is vital to a person's health and protection, but it is not the primary tool to be used to attain psychological and spiritual healing. The whole person must be involved, not just interpretation, theory, and speculation. Being healthy is more complex than understanding on a cognitive level or seeing reality through the lenses of one's concepts. A skunk is not a disgusting smell. Seeing reality through generalizations keeps a person from experiencing pure energy. White Bear is more interested in a direct vision of the moment, actual awareness, now. Not only memory but also expectation can keep one from experiencing the health that is associated with the eternal now. White Bear says, "Once you think you figure things out and decide on a belief, you get out of the natural."

White Bear argues that emotion is a powerful dimension that provides energy for change, but he is careful to qualify his positive assertions. He says,

I make a distinction between emotion and e-motion. A person may see a tree and feel emotion. You may cry about it. But you may not be getting the spirit aspect. You can experience the spirit or energy of the tree, its motion. You may cry either way, but emotion controls energy. When someone tries to capture it, it blocks energy. This is desire for things to be a certain way. Now being connected, the whole way of being is

e-motion. The point is to experience the spirit as it moves through me, not my idea of how things should be or feel.

White Bear says that one's emotional sensitivity can connect one with nature. Feelings and emotions are not a problem when one does not deny the dynamic spirit aspect of them. E-motion, emotion with the spirit aspect, allows one's feelings to be fluid expressions that change and morph. White Bear associates emotion, in contrast to e-motion, with trying to block or capture the energy and feelings for one's own use. The point is to be aware of one's feelings, rather than being totally absorbed in them, allowing this connecting energy to run through a person naturally.

White Bear elaborated further,

Experience your feelings, but to be absorbed simply with feeling, that's when you are separated from life. The spirit, the unifying dimension, is taken out. Feel as a whole person. You have seen people who have an emotional body. They are almost completely emotional. They are locked into emotional states. Everything they experience in the physical dimension goes through the emotions. Those people who think they are going to heal someone by just working on the emotions may be helping the person live apart from their whole selves.

Feelings arise and pass as if they had a life of their own. People tend to cling to or push certain feelings away. White Bear says that people should notice the continuous changes in feelings they experience, but to let them go. Furthermore, persons ruled by their passions are divorced from the cognitive dimensions of who they are. Emotional catharsis without insight is seen as an aimless alienated experience.

White Bear discussed the importance of feelings. "Without feelings we are not living a life that is even connected to the reality we are in." When the researcher asked how a therapist might help a client keep them in motion, he said,

Just have them to think about the gift of the emotion and the experience they are having. Sometimes a person holds onto an emotion because it gives him a sense of who he is. Others will judge an emotion they feel even while they are feeling it. There is no need to judge it. Just feel it. Think about its gift, and let it go.

Again White Bear said that feelings put people in relation to the world. He said that if people can experience feelings holistically, they can combine with

thought to help them change with circumstances that occur in their lives. Instead of judging themselves for feelings such as anger or sadness and hurriedly trying to recenter themselves, White Bear tells them to pause and be with their feelings and listen to what they have to say to us. They can help us to heal, connect, and change. The point is to put their attention on the old painful emotions, without judging them, so they can naturally cease condemning themselves. If they judge emotions, the emotions will turn against them, or worse, they will cut themselves off from their aliveness and the gifts they have to offer. At one point in the interview, the researcher mentioned he had a client who said that when he was young, he was so angry at his father that he wanted to kill him. White Bear interrupted, "It would not be helpful to shame him for having these feelings, but to consider the gift in the e-motion." For White Bear, people must feel everything or else the world loses its sense, and they miss out on many of life's gifts. Hatred, anger, and jealousy contain the potentials for healing. Even strong negative feelings can be transformed into wisdom and compassion.

White Bear offered one other story about emotional blocking.

There is nothing wrong with emotion. It is just that we often connect with something that might have been let go of in the past. The problem is that this kind of connecting with past abuse lacks wondering about the gift of the experience. It has no motion. . . . A woman came to me with cancer. The Little People told me that when she was six she was molested. She got stuck with certain attitudes about men. Even when her friend had an affair with another man, she blamed the husband. All the men she met she viewed through this emotional and mental aspect of the man who had raped her. Men were cancerous. It would have been one thing if she had taken the attitude that she should be careful around certain men, but now thirty years later, she is still feeling and seeing cancer. The ego created a box with no room for forgiveness, which would have let the energy flow again. She got cancer because she could not allow herself to experience the present moment.

For White Bear, being stuck in one's attitudes and emotions stops the flow of energy. White Bear contended that harboring hatred amounts to retaining toxins in the body. Until "letting go" is accomplished, this woman blocks the constant flow of energy, and healing does not occur. She clings to toxic pictures. The pictures repeatedly return and bring worry, self-pity, and stagnation. When a person dwells on any experience, whether in the form of rumination about what others have done or how they have been disappointed, he or she blocks the flow of energy. The person puts the experience in his or her small,

ego-protecting worlds. The energy comes in, but it is trapped. In contrast to the woman described above, White Bear says that a person can take away something positive from the most painful experience.

Stages of Spiritual Healing

When asked about the process of spiritual healing, White Bear first said it was “not a process but simply realizing life is as it is.” When pushed further, he reluctantly offered four stages of spiritual healing:

Recognize, accept, let go, it is none of my business. The spirits taught me to associate the physical with recognition, the mental with acceptance, the emotional with letting go, and the spiritual with none-of-my-business awareness. If you can recognize your problem in the physical, you can switch or put it into the spiritual in order to get unstuck, that is, to move the energy. The problem will move only when it is in the spiritual, none-of-my-business energy. Put your problems, illnesses into the realm of pure creation rather than just worrying about them. Living in the moment, in no-time no-space heals. Give the problem to the spirits and go about doing what you need to do. . . . If you put the mental in the none-of-my-business dimension, you begin to see visions through acceptance. You are no longer controlling the thinking process.

To attempt a paraphrase, White Bear seems to be saying that healing involves pausing to be aware of one’s physical being in time and space. People can recognize their “suchness,” their unique condition in relation to the concrete surroundings, their self-imposed reality of worries related to the past and future. Then they can accept the conditions of their particular situation and the thoughts and feelings that run through their minds, but without judging them. Next, people need to let go of the thoughts and feelings they have assumed to be the contents of who they are. Last, White Bear says, to be healed, people need to put their problems and illnesses in no-time and no-space or in what he calls here “none of my business.” People become healthy when they are in the eternal now, a qualitative state of presence. The true source of health is when our body awareness, emotions, and mind are fully engaged in the immediate surround. In this present, they are flexible, holistically engaged, and focused. Healing happens when they experience an easiness. White Bear added that if people put the mental, which normally engages incessantly with

likes and dislikes and self versus others, in the spiritual dimension, which engages the gifts of everything, they will have visionary experiences.

When asked to elaborate on his idea of putting things in “none of my business” for healing purposes, White Bear said, “We expect some kind of outcome. We recognize and then move toward putting our expectations into no-time and no-space. But instead, people create their own acceptance of the reality they recognize, their own letting go, and their own “none of my business.” As long as people have to take control, there is not healing.” He explained that healing takes place when people cease their controlling obsessions, not seeking any expectation, but rather being open and nonjudgmental toward every part of life as it comes.

Pressing again, the researcher asked for any suggestions about how to make things “none of my business.” White Bear first discussed forgiveness.

There have been times when the Little People will tell me a person has been molested. They will tell me to tell the person that their grandfather [the molester] is here in the lodge, and he would like your forgiveness. The Little People will engage the motion. I have to stay in the energy’s motion rather than the emotion in order to keep it moving. The spirits put them in a situation where they are in charge, something they were not in charge of when it happened. They are in a position where they are aware that the abuser is, God damn it, not running their life anymore. They are in the position to ask, why should he be forgiven.

For White Bear, forgiveness is letting go of something one holds onto. Forgiveness is a door to none-of-my-business consciousness. Energy is blocked when people cling to resentment. Resentment is kept alive by compulsive thinking, retelling the story of the cruelty of what someone has done to them. Although some may think of forgiveness as forgoing an acknowledged right to punishment, White Bear focuses on how the victim is clinging to the past and helps the person to no longer give the abuser the power. She is in the position of choosing to judge or not judge the person who did her wrong, to no longer cling to the negative experience, of allowing the past to control her, and no longer identifying with the label of powerless victim. She is in the position to become aware that the past has no power to stop her from living in the present.

The researcher, reflecting about psychological resistance, commented that many of his clients had stubborn, deep wounds. White Bear responded immediately with the following story.

The other day driving home I had an idea about what I could do on a farm I work at. I thought, but what if the boss doesn't like my idea. I paused and thought about where the fear of rejection came from. I remembered when I was 7 years old my dad sent me to get a watermelon. We were very poor and everybody was excited. I got a great big watermelon and walked it home. Then I dropped it on the floor and it splattered everywhere. He didn't get mad. He just said that he should have sent my brother out there. It crushed me. I suddenly knew . . . I don't want my boss to reject my watermelon. We are here to just be, but we keep creating these confining realities. . . . We not only experience the immediate fear, we experience the other 5,000 fears we had before. They hide themselves and are hard to find. Then we even get identified with our struggles and conflicts that may have started way back. Anyway, you got to feel what you feel to begin with and that is hard. You got to get into the pause and then, if you are sad just be sad. If we fear, then experience fear. That can be the beginning of recognition.

A situation triggers an emotionally charged experience for White Bear. His unity of being is momentarily fragmented, causing him to feel separate from his present situation. Staying focused on his feelings, he realized he felt like a victim. He had a vivid memory that he connected with his current feelings, and he realized that this previous experience and the emotions connected to it are coloring his present experience. Insight gained from making the connections put him in a position to break away from the tedium of addictive shameful emotions and reflections to partake in the great self-creative process that involved connecting with the present environment and to experience nonrepetitive, liberated feelings. He contended that most people carry a lifetime of accumulated sorrow and other emotions. In the pause, he was able to recognize, accept, let it go, and put them in "none of my business." White Bear argued that to be healed people have to reown their experiences in a connected emotional way. But they are afraid to do this, so they deny them. White Bear simply paused to recognize his sadness and feelings of inadequacy. He did not detach from them in his spiritual state; he heightened his awareness of the feelings and owned them. Then he told the researcher that this is simply the recognition stage and that the accepting, letting go, and none-of-my-business stages are still to come before healing truly takes place.

White Bear does not stop with the above difficult challenge. He says,

For healing, you have to take a person back to before when they were in no-time and no-space. Just taking them back to their abuse is not

enough. They are likely in the abuse now, except it may look like alcohol or something else. The spirits take a person to a place of nothingness, at the beginning of creation for healing.

White Bear goes beyond the many therapeutic treatments for trauma, which often involve taking the clients back to the moment of trauma, being with them during catharsis, and helping them with insight and restructuring. He, with the spirits' help, seeks to connect the ill person with the no-time no-space he or she lived in before the abuse. He believes that unless a person is able to reenter the eternal now, the present, to live spontaneously in creation, healing is not possible. He said, "Being in the moment and with the energy, I begin to have experiences of purity. That is what health is."

White Bear distinguished his perceptions of healing in several ways from different psychological approaches. Theories with psychoanalytic foundations see it as vital for clients to work their way back through original traumas toward cathartic ventilation coupled with insight (McWilliams, 1994). White Bear argued for something similar but said that all persons must be held in the energy before the trauma where the pure energy of creation exists to experience healing. This healing space is not simply acceptance of one's traumatic experiences. White Bear advocated that people realize at a deep level that events are "none of my business," relinquishing tight-fisted control of their lives. The point for White Bear was to get into the present where there is infinite and creative energy so that people might be channels, allowing them to live in harmony and health.

Recently "mindfulness," an Eastern meditation practice that encourages one to pay attention in the present in a nonjudgmental manner, similar to what White Bear advocated, has gained some attention in psychology and medicine (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). White Bear argued that one way that may help people to break out of psychological blockages so that they begin the path of mindfulness is wondering about the gift in others and in their own experiences, even the most painful and tragic. Again, White Bear delineated the complex internal psychological processes of spiritual healing typically not described by most writers of Native American spirituality who too often say simply that Native Americans value the present more than Euro-Americans.

Little People or Spirits

Throughout the interviews, White Bear mentioned spirits who help him with healing. Before discussing the nature of the work White Bear does with Little People or spirits, it may be worthwhile to describe them and the broader nature

of White Bear's relationship with them. The interviewer had been taught all his life by other medicine people that spirit helpers were to be approached with extreme deference, if not fear. They would help human beings only out of their pity for us. In contrast, White Bear explained that he had never met a spirit, and certainly not Little People, that he feared in the least. He said that Little People were impersonal beings that simply worked to bring back the energy of what he called no-time no-space, with which modern people have lost touch. He said Little People were one with "the energy" and would never act in either malignant or sentimental ways.

White Bear said he sensed spirits through their unique vibrations and sometimes saw them as lights. When he saw them as figures, they appeared as small, long haired, and brown skinned. He distinguished them from other spirits, such as the human dead, with whom he rarely works. When asked if he really believed in these spirits as entities outside his own psyche, he said, "I don't believe in them, and I don't doubt them. That is how I can stay connected to the energy. I might be a disassociate. It doesn't matter a bit to me. I am with that energy." When asked for more information about the spirits, he said,

The Little People just are. They are not becoming something. . . . They are born from moment to moment. They are not here primarily for individuals, but to bring back the original vibration of the moment. Little People are just interested in us becoming what is.

He explained that spirits are invisible to us because of their different vibratory level and "only by having a nonjudgmental perspective can you see these entities." He said that people must "alter our sense of individual identity and open ourselves up to new possibilities." In the above remarks, White Bear spoke of lights and vibrations like many mystics and shamans (Vitebsky, 1996). He was attuned to the spirits' higher vibrations. He specifically alluded to "Little People" spirits, a commonly accepted phenomenological experience of many Native American people. To become attuned to this awareness that Little People live in, humans must broaden their range and let go of preconceived notions, and they cannot think judgmentally. The healing spirits are nonjudgmental and somewhat impersonal, here to help people simply reconnect to the eternal now. White Bear appeared to have a moment when he was aware of how strange his remarks were when he said he might be a "disassociate," but his self-consciousness, at least related to the "strangeness" of his remarks, was unabashed.

White Bear said that he is in unremitting contact with spirits that often involves working with them to heal others. He said whenever he sees anyone,

he sees spirits with the person. Whenever he wakes in the night, he sees spirits in his room. At one point, he came to a jolting stop and said,

Grandfather Spirit Eagle took me off a little while ago as we were talking. They had me in Africa helping a child die. He may have took me there for my growth or something. But my presence was important. They helped that child's soul out of its body. . . . They use us to heal and work with people. Spirits take the person they are working on to the perfect state, and the person may even experience it, but they don't stay with it. If they do experience it, they start trying to figure out what they experienced.

White Bear claimed to have the capacity for bi-location, to be in two places at once. Many people have claimed to leave their bodies to escape from pain, during times of danger, when using drugs, and during dreams. Some mystics have claimed to be able to leave their bodies using methods such as going into trances, whirling, and various meditative techniques. Quantum theory suggests that subatomic particles can be multiple places at one time (Capra, 1991). Perhaps since most people are aware of only a small portion of who they are, the psyche ranges further than most think.

When asked to give an example of how the Little People conduct their healings, White Bear said,

Little People are very fierce and direct about what they want done. They will work through me when I am in my gift of service to them. A kid with three DUIs was working with me the other day. Actually he wasn't working. To ignore him would have done him no good. The spirits had me say, "Kid get your head out of your ass." Some people learn from aggression. The spirits showed me that his attitude had nothing to do with him but with abuse he had suffered. While I went toe to toe with him, I watched the spirits work him over, trying to humble him enough to get him back to no-time no-space. I am Bear energy, and the Little People sometimes beckon me to tell the truth when it will make people mad. Words must be spoken, but they must be God words not mine. I felt his spirit. I felt his anger. I was going into his spirit. When you do this, it is like throwing Miracle Growth on his and my character defects. You are vulnerable, not controlling your character defects anymore. It is much better for him to be expressing his character defects than to hide them. The kid's spirit was saying, "Talk to me. Love me. Help me. I am in prison."

White Bear contended that sometimes a person has to be fierce in his or her interactions. This is not the brutal honesty that some pride themselves in. White Bear described recognizing with an intuitive awareness the wholeness of another person, a spirit emanating from him or her. When people find themselves antagonistic toward another, they might try to become aware of his or her grief and pain as White Bear did with the young man he confronted. He looked with compassion at the young man even as he challenged the young man about his behavior. The Little People waited for White Bear to get into the moment, into his Bear gift, so they could use him as a portal into time and space where they can begin healing. He saw himself as a conduit for pure energy, demonstrating how healing energy can move through the healer's unique energy, humor, warmth, and compassion.

White Bear said that it is not just the spirits of the Little People who help him with healing. He said,

I have catalogued in my mind hundreds of unique gifts that people have. When I am healing somebody, I call up that person with that particular gift to heal. Recently I worked on someone that I really didn't like. They were so hateful. So I had a judgment toward this person. I knew a person who had extraordinary compassion, so full of compassion, and the spirits let me see it. So I brought their energy forward to work with this person. I am no longer involved in my judgment then. I don't know how they do it, and I know it is really none of my business. . . . I don't have any expectations as to whether a person gets better or not.

White Bear suggested that people are not so enclosed in time-space thinking and self as Descartes and Newton suggested, but instead we are "entangled," to use a quantum mechanics term, interconnected across distances and time. He said that we can expand our repertoire as healers by "calling up" others with their special gifts. Again, he stressed that judgment blocks the flow of the pure energy that heals and that not having specific expectations regarding the ends or fruit of his work is vital for healing.

Discussion

Much of the analysis of White Bear's comments is found in the above result section. Here in the discussion, the focus is on the relationship of White Bear's ideas to Western psychology. At the basis of White Bear's healing was the concept of subtle energies and their manipulation, which is part of most religious perspectives in one form or another: Buddhism (Norbu, 1992),

Christianity (Cutsinger, 2003), Hinduism (Woodroffe, 2003), and Shamanism (Eagle Feather, 2007). Some therapies have made attempts to understand and utilize subtle energy manipulation in therapy, such as focusing (Gendlin, 2007) and Reichian therapy (Reich, 1975), both of which study its observable manifestations, antecedents, and consequences in an empirical manner but may, in the process, disregard some of the less empirically analyzable, esoteric aspects that White Bear emphasized.

To learn from the differences in White Bear's diagnostic approach, psychologists might consider his utilization of a profound meditative scanning that can be accessed only by one who has admission to a no-time no-space state of being. Instead of trying to distinguish between normal and abnormal states of mind to find the proper pathological category that objectifies and dehumanizes the person in need of healing, White Bear made a more nuanced assessment. His way of diagnosing was more empathetic, intuitive, and spontaneous and less conceptual and categorical. Bradford (2010) argued that too often professional helpers fail to acknowledge that diagnoses are constructed and fail to do justice to the idea that diagnosis is a subjective–intersubjective activity. White Bear, with what he referred to as a “no-time no-space focus,” participated in the moment with the person seeking healing. He did not exclude the past or future but rather perceived the momentum of the energy of the past in the moment as the person participated in it. White Bear's no-time no-space diagnosis reiterates Heidegger's (1966) distinction between “calculative thinking” and “meditative thinking.” Instead of imposing a personality typology on a client, White Bear agreed with Heidegger's preference for a meditative thinking of “openness to the mystery” in which dualistic thinking is loosened, allowing one to be awestruck by the gifts of the client (Bradford, 2010). Rogers and Sanford (1985) also listed being immediately present, relying on moment-to-moment experiencing with clients as being primary to diagnosis and treatment.

White Bear spoke extensively about how healing energy is blocked by thought processes being stuck in concepts that keep one from experiencing the present situation. Cognitive behavioral therapy teaches that people are caught in patterns that they repeat over and over. Perry, Pollard, Blakely, Baker, and Vigilante (1995) reported that people's lives can be shaped by reactivations of implicit memory, which lack a sense that something is being recalled. People simply enter these engrained states, which have been encoded as implicit memories, and chronically experience them as the reality of their present experience. Whatever new situations in which they find themselves, they tend to re-create the old patterns of thinking, feeling, and behavior by which they were conditioned. They may take on a new costume, but they inevitably resume

their old personality that consists of endless mental repetition. If they are complainers, they reassume automatic negative self-talk and complaining to others. White Bear suggests that “blocking,” or thinking one can hold onto, contain, or stop ever-unfolding reality, is an illusion. Such remarks may also be connected with Gestalt therapy that sometimes concentrates on capturing the evanescent quality of the moment through a kind of impressionism. There is an essence that cannot be captured through cognitive analysis of the whole through its constituent parts. It teaches clients not to live through expectations but to allow oneself to respond naturally, to be even immobile at times (Perls, 1992; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1980).

White Bear also argued that blocked emotion, manifested as repression or as an absorption in an emotion connected with a traumatic event, results in illnesses in all dimensions of one’s life. Biopsychosocial psychology supports White Bear’s comments about the relationship between repression and physical diseases (Felitti et al., 1998). As reported in the results section, White Bear saw a correspondence between the cancer of hatred and the cancer in the woman’s body. Furthermore, as recent biopsych research referred to above reports, blocking emotions can create a physically diseased body. White Bear said, “When people are angry with each other, they are connecting spirit to spirit, but they are boxing energy and using it up.” Negative emotion is toxic to the body and to its harmonious functioning. It disrupts the energy flow through the body and affects the heart, the immune system, digestion, and production of hormones.

White Bear argued that when people become stuck in negative repetitive emotions, thoughts, and reactive patterns, they are no longer able to experience others in the present moment. Psychoanalytic (and other related schools) therapists (Myerson, 1991; Shapiro, 1999) work with their clients to go back to work through problems in early relationships that have acted as frames from which all succeeding relationships are seen. Cognitive therapists (Beck, Freeman, & Associates, 1990; Hollon & Beck, 1994) help their clients escape from the dysfunctional self-talk loops. To address the problem, White Bear introduced the idea that failing to consider the value of our conflicts has harmful consequences. Both of these schools of thought encourage emotional expression and either insight or cognitive restructuring. White Bear offered some very specific ways to aid therapeutic progress for therapists to consider: Express feelings naturally but do not harbor them, and consider the gift in even the most difficult experience, as this will initiate movement of energy and bring change.

Although White Bear’s perspective on spiritual healing is expressed with different metaphors, it is similar to positive psychology in some ways in its

focus on the gifts of others and forgiveness and in seeing transformative elements in painful experiences. A study that supports White Bear's advocacy of people looking at themselves and others in positive ways is one done with "pessimistic people" who spent 1 week doing exercises in which they wrote down times in the past when they were at their best. Results showed that up to 6 months later these persons were happier than those who did not write positive messages (Seligman, Stern, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Happily married couples say five positive remarks for every negative remark, even when having conflicts, whereas those headed toward divorce say less than one positive remark for every negative one (Gottman, Gottman, & DeClaire, 2006). The act of forgiveness can result in less anxiety and depression, better health outcomes, increased coping with stress, and increased closeness to God and others (Tibbitts, Ellis, Piramelli, Lukin, & Lukman, 2006; Worthington, 1997).

White Bear's perspectives can be applied to psychology in fairly concrete ways. For example, the pause silence White Bear esteemed can be utilized during sessions and in teaching meditation and mindfulness to our clients. Also emphasized was an intersubjectivity that involves a mobile perspective during the process of diagnosis, in which a therapist mindfully considers blockages in each dimension and their relationship to each other. In addition, White Bear warned about the dangers of imbalance in regard to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions blocking a fully connected life.

Therapists can be challenged to consider whether their clients are perpetually engaged in the act of judging others or themselves and are consequently stuck in the quagmire of their own traumas and vindictive relationships. Regarding themselves, therapists can reevaluate their role in the healing process. White Bear described the healer as a vessel for spirits. That is, healing occurs through the healer or therapist, not by the healer. This distinction has the potential to change the dynamics for a therapist relating to a client. The therapist who thinks of himself or herself as a vessel will see himself or herself as sharing energy rather than bestowing his or her powerful but potentially patronizing guidance.

Efforts were made in the result section to link White Bear's wisdom with Western descriptions to provide potential bridges across perspectives. To briefly reiterate some of the points, most psychological approaches have a bias toward what is wrong with people. It is believed that interfacing White Bear's admonition to "wonder about others' gifts" to one's clinical practice could be beneficial. Just as the positive psychology movement could be characterized as more supplemental than comprehensive, focusing on encouragement, forgiveness, humor, happiness, life satisfaction, appreciativeness, and positive mood and optimism, so too might White Bear's spiritual folk wisdom

supplement therapist's perspectives and approaches. Like positive psychology, this article offers a strength-based perspective, or as White Bear said, a perspective that illuminates and builds on "gifts" rather than trying to remedy deficits. It informs our understanding of a variety of psychological constructs and assumptions, allowing us to raise new and important questions about how psychologists conduct therapy.

Ethical Considerations

Because the field of psychology has paid so little attention and at times even rejected spirituality, practitioners are paying a high price and may find themselves confronted with ethical dilemmas. More and more people are seeking spiritual experiences and on their journeys are having crises with which many therapists are ill equipped to deal. Many therapists may have a difficult time distinguishing between mystical experiences and mental illnesses, may not be informed enough experientially or theoretically to help clients integrate powerful personal spiritual experiences, may be incapable of assessing the readiness of clients to engage in inner transformation (Grof, 2000), and may not be able to comprehend or help clients realize the healing potential of their spiritual struggles and crises. For a therapist to be competent to help clients with the spiritual dimensions of their lives, Fukuyama, Sevig, and Soet (2008) contend that therapists should be able to articulate their own spiritual beliefs and practices in the cultural context, describe their spiritual developmental stage, explain the similarities and differences between their own way and their client's, demonstrate acceptance for their client, and assess the relevance of the spiritual domains in the client's therapeutic issues. The researchers would add that therapists should accumulate a referral list of potential therapists who may share spiritual and cultural similarities with clients who present with spiritual concerns. Also, to better meet the needs of the great number of persons today who are seeking spiritual direction, it would behoove therapists to seek out workshops where they might become more acquainted with spiritual issues that affect psychological functioning.

Every effort has been made not to reduce or manipulate White Bear's perspectives. This included taking seriously the "nonsensical" aspects of his discourse. The value of otherness is lost if a space is not allowed for the incomprehensible; the potential of this study is undermined if White Bear's remarks are civilized. Certainly, White Bear's interactions with Little People will be difficult to believe for many. But many tribal people do believe in spiritual presences and expect that by conscious interaction with them they will have the opportunity to increase their wisdom. Therapists, especially those in

multicultural settings, will need to adopt a framework that is sensitive to the beliefs of such clients.

Clinical Implications and Future Research

The above description of White Bear's healing process is merely a stepping stone that should be understood in the framework of his larger mystical descriptions. What White Bear really offers psychologists is a new language and new paradigms. The special language of pathology and psychological treatment can become mindless repetition. Even the techniques just described are specialized forms of communication. For the writers of this article, White Bear offers language innovation and variation that is needed in the complex world of multicultural psychology. In one of the past jobs of the researcher at an American Indian clinic, he was fortunate to have worked with a director who had Native American Indian healers come to the clinic once a month to discuss healing with the therapists. The language they used to describe diagnosis and treatment enriched our thinking about psychology and healing immensely and provided unique joint healing opportunities.

Although White Bear showed an aversion toward ways of healing that were programmatic and would look askance on anyone who would feel too at ease even in his own healing approach, he did reluctantly concede a path that might help clients gain a foothold in the direction of healing: recognition, acceptance, letting go, and none of my business. Psychologists might guide clients to recognize the accumulated knots in their bodies and the pain they have held in their physical frames. This might be done in a meditation or through an assignment in which they note the physical pain they feel during the days between therapy sessions. Next, psychologists might help clients connect their physical pains to images and memories. The clients might be encouraged to cognitively accept both the painful and the happy experiences in their lives and to accept these experiences as having contributed to their identities. During this achievement of new awareness, previously neglected experiences, past and present, may emerge to the surface. White Bear referred to emotions such as aversion, anger, sorrow, and fear. Many have the desire to "just make the pain go away," but acceptance of emotional pain is part of the healing, though the emotions must be released. The emotion must be moved through and then viewed with the wondering attention to its potentialities for growth. By not being absorbed in the emotions, people can offer themselves the empathy and affection that leads to healing. Psychologists help clients to assuage themselves with kind, accepting, and transforming remarks. Having achieved an e-motional level of awareness, possibly after many sessions of

work, clients may be guided in viewing and appreciating themselves as a part of unfolding creation. During this stage, clients identify not with their own selfish interests but with a vastly larger spiritual perspective, acknowledging that their finite and prejudiced minds cannot understand ongoing creation, but they can observe and wonder at creation and know, in a holistic way, that something larger than themselves is at work in being itself and that it can be experienced as beautiful. The none-of-my-business pause state cannot be maintained indefinitely in time and space, but it can be accessed periodically and, when accessed, bring individual and collective healing and transformation.

In regard to future research, one may consider interviewing multiple healers and comparing and contrasting their epistemologies and methods of healing. Interviewing the patients of folk healers may also reveal valuable information about the efficacy of folk healing as well as the characteristics of those who may be most likely to benefit from it. Neuroimaging research of the neural network with persons who practice “the pause” may provide more sophisticated understandings of the underlying changes in thought and behavior that are enhanced or unaffected while one is in the pause. They may provide insights into aspects of higher cerebral function, including visionary experiences, memory, and speech. Such research studies have already been proposed to White Bear and are currently being considered. Although he had no objections to researchers conducting the research with him, he wondered when researchers would “catch him” out of a pause. He expressed concerns about researchers transforming “the pause into some kind of meditation which it is not.” There appeared to be some possibilities for comparing people’s mental and emotional states of being when they engaged in Diamond Dancing and after they had ceased to dance. Still, the complexities of such a study must be thoroughly worked out. Care would need to be taken not to reduce the cultural meanings many might place on such experiences and to understand them in relation to the belief system inherent in the folk healing method.

Investigations into several other research questions may reveal helpful information. How are White Bear’s healing methods similar to or different from those of folk healers in other communities? How might his methods be described in diverse racial, ethnic, and religious groups? Is it possible that White Bear could work collaboratively with positive psychologists? What would the diagnoses and treatments look like? How might they be set up to conduct outcome studies? What types of traits or broad personality dispositions might the persons who benefit most from White Bear’s spiritual approach possess?

Conclusion

This article has been an attempt to depict a spiritual folk healer's perspectives and approaches to the healing process from a multicultural perspective. Efforts were made not to put mystical knowledge on a pedestal, realizing that mystics, although capable of unique and profound insights, may lack critical insight into the cultural and social influences that can affect the way their visions are interpreted (Wilber, 2006). In addition, mystics may be at risk of overgeneralizing personal visionary experiences and may be so esoteric that others may not have the experiences to allow them to understand their visions. However, the researchers hope that juxtaposing the mystical wisdom of the folk healer of this study with psychological theory and research may provide a critical context to facilitate readers in understanding and evaluating the interplay of the two. Researchers hope readers will be able to make connections between the perspectives, facilitating more meaningful interpretations in terms of both depth and breadth. Ponterotto, Casa, Suzuki, and Alexander (2010), in a powerful chapter, criticize the narrowness of doctoral psychology training programs and advocate a more varied externship and internship training with Native healers.

From White Bear, psychologists can learn from his perspectives on being in the moment, realizing the gift in everything, feeling emotions without judging, and experiencing the unitary, no-time no-space nature of reality. They can reflect on his ideas about being "in the pause"; being guided by Little People or spirits; and the holistic, integrated view of people as physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual beings. They can remember that they are not in control of the healing process and that their egos can get in the way if they are not mindful. They can instead enter into the present moment with their clients and provide them with a space to draw from their strengths and gifts and begin the healing process. They can call to mind the attitudes and methods of others in their interactions with clients. They can seek to move their clients to recognize, accept, let go, and practice none-of-my-business consciousness. In short, they can expand on the predominantly Western notions prevalent in modern psychology. They can recapture a sense of wonder and mystery in creation, their clients, and themselves.

Both mystic folk traditions and empirical psychology can benefit from integrating the partial truths both sides have to offer. Researchers hope that more studies will explore the nature of folk healing and of the role of addressing the spiritual needs of clients in the holistic healing process.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. White Bear is a pseudonym to protect the participant's confidentiality.
2. See Manny Twofeathers's (1996) book, *The Road to the Sundance*, for descriptions of the Sun Dance. Since White Bear and the researcher are considered guests at Lakota Sun Dances, they do not have the right to tell others about them in detail.
3. For more information, read *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*, by John Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes (1972).
4. See Jean Chaudhuri and Joyotpaul Chaudhuri's (2001, pp. 52-54) *A Sacred Path*.

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