

Eduardo Duran: Building Cultural and Spiritual Resilience Among Indigenous Populations

Overview

This project investigates Eduardo Duran and his unique approaches to counseling—practices and techniques that we believe are essential for fostering cultural diversity and competency. The findings herein highlight Duran's view that therapy is fundamentally universal and therefore requires adaptive and appropriate representation and awareness of trauma, colonization, and non-Western influences on Indigenous communities. This paradigm encourages future progress and transformation of care to cultures, societies, communities, and individuals.

Leadership Roles

Eduardo Duran, a clinical psychologist of Apache, Tewa, and Lakota heritage, is a leading figure in the field of mental, behavioral, and emotional healing for Veterans and Indigenous communities (Zen Mountain Monastery, n.d.). A Vietnam Veteran himself, Duran served in the US Navy before pursuing psychology, ultimately developing a mental health program for a tribal consortium (International Humanistic Psychology Association, n.d.; Trauma-Sensitive Awareness Foundation, Inc., n.d.). His work, deeply influenced by Native teachings and his involvement in Buddhist and traditional Native practices, centers on healing intergenerational trauma and "soul wounding."

Duran has also held graduate-level professorships, continues to lecture, and is a respected author of several books, including *Buddha in Redface* and *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*, which reflect his integrated approach to healing and understanding consciousness. Other published works by Duran include *Healing the Soul Wound: Trauma-informed Counseling for Indigenous Communities* and *Healing the Soul Wound: Counseling with American Indians*

and Other Native People, which offer culturally-sensitive intervention strategies and explore the interplay of consciousness in Indigenous and Western cosmologies (The Awake Network, 2024).

Professional Contributions

As an educator, author, researcher, and working counselor, Duran has made significant contributions to the counseling field. His published texts have served to reshape counselor education by integrating Indigenous approaches into the profession (Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). Another key aspect of Duran's groundbreaking work involved establishing the theoretical framework of "soul wounds," which shed light on the effects of intergenerational trauma within Indigenous communities and further contributed to the advancement of liberation psychology (International Humanistic Psychology Association, n.d.). As a counselor dedicated to serving Indigenous populations with a culturally informed approach, Duran has worked to create clinical models that integrate traditional knowledge and Western psychological frameworks, addressing what is now known as historical trauma. Furthermore, Duran's work has promoted the reconnection of self to identity and soul (Two Feathers NAFS, 2020), disrupting Western ways of pathologizing and creating space for alternate pathways of both healing and research.

Duran looks at healing from a large historical lens to find roots of both trauma and healing practices. This work includes educating people on the foundation of Western medicine—which derives from ancient Greek practices of centering the body, mind, and spirit—as well as on dream medicine, a practice that has been employed by diverse cultures for over 10,000 years (Kory, n.d.; Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). Duran focuses on identity restoration as a path to healing from historical trauma, utilizing a connection with one's roots to restore identity to a point before trauma by addressing the initial perpetuation of violent energy into communities and

peoples (Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). He also practices transforming spirits, a method where mental, physical, and spiritual difficulties are understood as spirits of energies rather than diagnosis tied to individual identity, and are viewed as relational as opposed to encompassing (Root & Duran, 2007; Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). This concept centers around the understanding that energy and matter cannot be destroyed—that pain cannot just disappear—and also that patients have agency to transform the energy of the spirits visiting them—to utilize and learn from these spirits (Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). Duran advocates for counselors not to view themselves as serious experts, but instead to embrace the medicine of joy and to remove themselves from ego as a way to be open to new knowledge and develop cultural competence (Kory, n.d.; Two Feathers NAFS, 2020).

Through his ongoing efforts, Duran supports social justice initiatives, actively challenges harmful norms, and promotes culturally congruent healing. He challenges Western-centric approaches, highlighting their limitations in addressing the unique historical trauma faced by Native Peoples, and advocating instead for the integration of traditional healing practices (International Humanistic Psychology Association, n.d.). Duran's term, "clinical racism," emphasizes the need for Western healthcare to shift away from pathologizing Indigenous patients through Western diagnostic lenses and instead embrace culturally relevant and decolonizing practices (Root & Duran, 2007). He has also critiqued evidence-based demand and empirical research methods, claiming that the use of Westernized practices yields colonial results and is unethical in its harm of indigenous communities (Kory, n.d.). Furthermore, Duran provides comprehensive cultural competency training to clinicians and communities worldwide, specifically focusing on the treatment of substance abuse, intergenerational trauma, and

internalized oppression as experienced by Native Peoples (Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). These achievements have established him as a leading figure who has redefined counseling for Indigenous and trauma-impacted populations by bridging the realms of theory, practice, advocacy, and teaching.

Professional Identity

Eduardo Duran's identity as an Indigenous person of the Apache, Tewa, and Lakota nations has had a great influence on his professional work. Growing up, Duran wrestled with a divided identity, pulled between his Indigenous heritage and the pervasive effects of colonial influence (Kory, n.d.). Now, identity restoration is a focal point for his treatment of historical trauma (Two Feathers NAFS, 2020). He claims that "by realizing who you are, your existence opens up and so much more becomes possible" (Kory, n.d., "A Nice White Guy," para. 24). Much of Duran's work centers on the importance of identity in the field of counseling and the idea that one must feel strong in their own identity in order to help others comprehend theirs (Root & Duran, 2007). During graduate school, while working on a reservation in the mountains of California, Duran was sought out by many community members who viewed him as trustworthy and knowledgeable simply due to his Native identity (Kory, n.d.). It was in this placement that he became intimidated and even rejected in his work, he challenged himself in his practices by listening to the community—learning about their beliefs, addressing their oppression and how it was manifesting in the counseling setting, and incorporating these findings into his techniques and, ultimately, his professional identity (Kory, n.d.).

Duran provides mental health training across the country, recognizing that many Native communities lack the benefit of Native professionals, and aiming to equip practitioners with