

A Conversation with Sioux Tribal Elders: Toward a Culturally-Tailored Curriculum to Address the Needs of American Indian Youth

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INTRODUCTION

- Research with AI/AN communities constrained by cultural exploitation, intrusive research practices, and an incongruence between “western” paradigms and AI/AN cultural contexts.
- Culturally situated models partner researchers with communities to develop, deliver, and assess interventions.
- Research suggests the efficacy of an existing AI/AN life skills curriculum (Lefromboise, 1996).

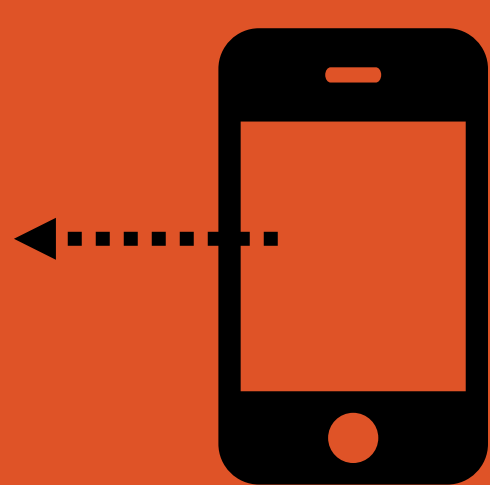
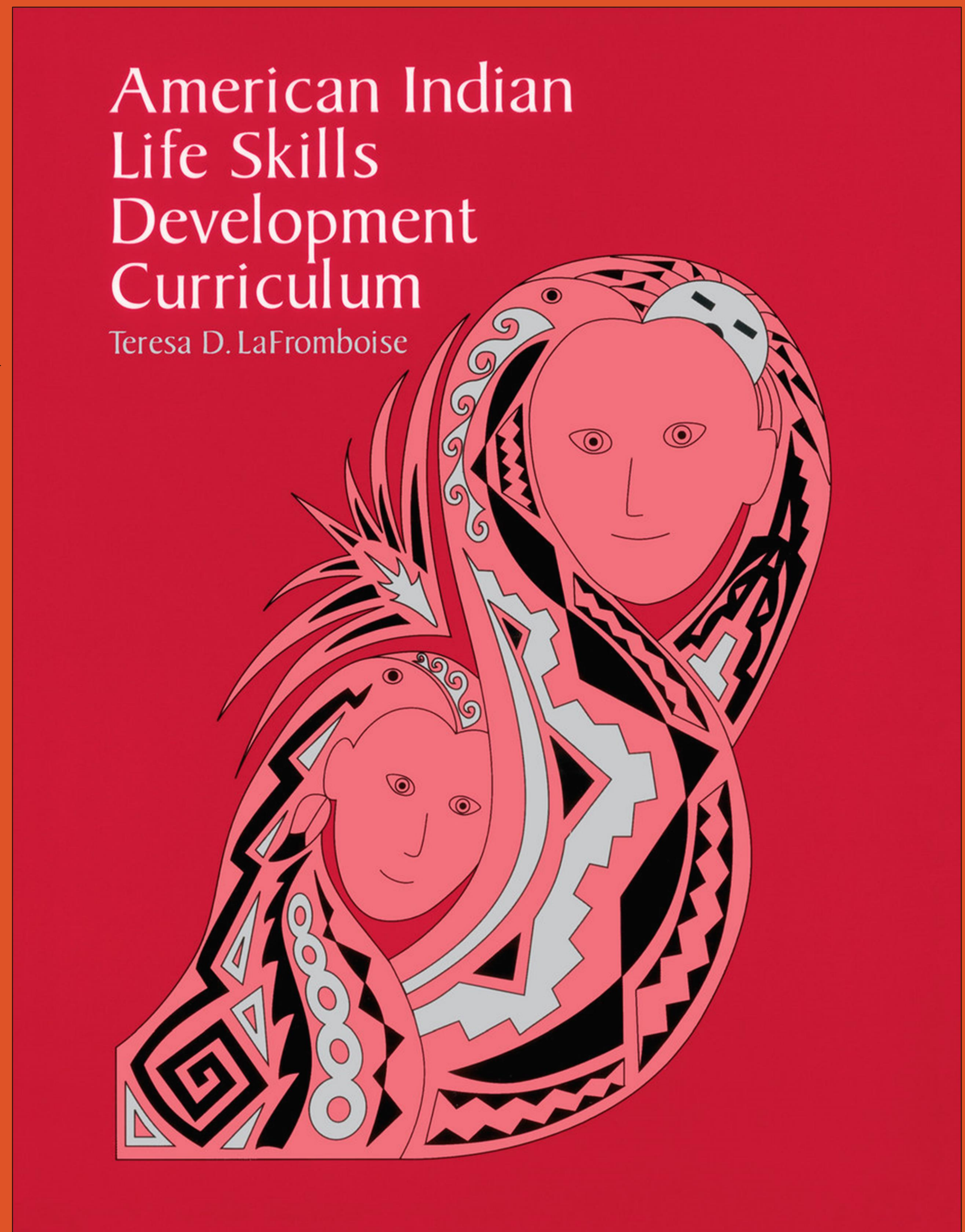
PURPOSE

- To dialogue with tribal elders to co-construct a culturally tailored life skills curriculum to address Lakota youth needs
- Research Questions: (1) “What are the strengths and needs of Lakota Sioux youth?” and (2) “How well does an existing AI life skills curriculum complement Lakota Sioux youths’ strengths and needs?”

PARTICIPANTS AND METHOD

- Study context was the Sioux YMCA (after-school program, summer camp)
- In-depth Zoom interviews w/purposeful sample of 5 Lakota Sioux tribal elders
- Deductive-inductive coding to construct themes; Coder triangulation for data validation.

Lakota Sioux tribal leaders stressed that a curriculum targeting AI/AN youth needs to be culturally grounded, with a focus on self-esteem, identifying emotions and stress, life-planning skills, and suicide prevention.



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FINDINGS

- Tribal elders affirmed that Sioux youth face high risk of suicide, depression, low self-esteem, and substance abuse, and notably have few educational and enrichment opportunities.
- Tribal elders acknowledged underlying issues of extreme poverty.
- Strengths of the curriculum identified by tribal leaders include:
  - ✓ Focus on self-esteem and identifying emotions and stress,
  - ✓ Life-skill building opportunities,
  - ✓ Communication and problem-solving skills,
  - ✓ Emphasis on culture and sense of self, and
  - ✓ Suicide prevention and awareness activities.
- Curriculum gaps identified by tribal elders included the need for life planning and social-emotional development activities associated with limited opportunities for Sioux youth.

DISCUSSION

- This study advanced the trust-based relationship between the research team and Lakota Sioux tribal elders
- Critical information was provided on the strengths, weaknesses, and relevance of a culturally tailored curriculum to address the needs of AI/AN youth.
- Engaging Sioux YMCA stakeholders highlighted the needs and strengths of AI/AN youth contextualized within the Lakota River Sioux tribal community.

