

# PRIEST DEVELOPS DRAMATIC INDIAN EDUCATION METHODS

## Native Cultural Values Stressed In Classrooms

"It would be well to recall that the system of rewards and punishment in one culture does not necessarily motivate people of another culture."

The Rev. John F. Bryde, a Jesuit priest holding a doctorate in education, has completed an exciting study on Indian education and mental health and is presently putting his theories to work in a new class in Holy Rosary School, Pine Ridge, So. Dakota.

After completing a two-year study on Indian Education and Mental Health, Fr. Bryde says, "the fact that the national Indian drop-out rate from the eighth grade to the twelfth grade is 60 per cent would seem to indicate that Indian schools in general are not meeting the needs of the Indian student.

..."It would appear that the large drop out rate could be attributed to one thing, value conflict.

"The motivation for overcoming value conflict should seem to come from one's own cultural values - and not from the value system of another culture."

Fr. Bryde says that educational systems should not "teach an Indian how to become a white man, then teach him a trade."

"The cultural approach  
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# Cultural Values Stressed . .

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means that he (the Indian) is taught how to use his values—he becomes even more Indian—in taking advantage of vocational or liberal educational opportunities and becoming self supporting."

In a study of the educational performances of Oglala Sioux Indian students, Fr. Bryde found that "these children achieve satisfactorily for awhile, then reverse themselves and show a steady decline in achievement. This has been colloquially termed, 'the cross-over phenomenon.'

"Investigation of school achievement records of the 104 Indian eighth graders revealed excellent performance on the California Achievements tests from the fourth grade to the sixth grade, during which time the performance of these children excelled national norms. At the seventh grade level the Indian students suddenly 'crossed-over' and fell two months behind the norms, and at the eighth grade level were lagging five months.

"It was hypothesized that psychological conflict during the period of adolescence causes personality problems which block educational achievement and that a comparison of the Indian students with white students would reveal significant differences which reflect such personality turmoil.

"In analyzing achievements it was found that the Indian group fell sharply behind the white group at the eighth grade level. No significant differences in achievements were found between Indian boys and Indian girls."

The researcher found that Indian youngsters in this age group showed feelings of rejection, depression, anxiety and tendencies to withdraw, plus social, self and emotional alienation.

"The finds of this study clearly point to a new approach in Indian education," Fr. Bryde concludes.

"The Indian youth is not effectively identified with

his Indian heritage, nor can he identify with the hostile, white world facing him. He is, during the troubled years of adolescence, a 'nothing.' He has an extremely crippling negative self image. He has no direction to his life and is lost."

Fr. Bryde's answer begins with the education of young children.

"Since awareness of historical origins is necessary for orientation to any kind of future action, the first part of this acculturation course should consist in teaching him a solid, clear history of his race, designs to give him pride in his racial origin.

"The next part of the course would teach the Indian youth what values are and how they historically arise, — usually from the economy from which a race makes its living."