Trans-Generational Transmission of Trauma

National Council for Behavioral Health 2013-2014
Trauma-Informed Care Learning Community Webinar
February 20, 2014
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> Intergenerational Lens of Trauma
> Understanding Epigenetics
> Historical Trauma
> Cultural Trauma
> Trans-generational Transmission of Trauma (TTT)
> Healing Happens in Communities
“Like leaves on a tree the race of man is found now green in youth, now withering on the ground; another race the following spring supplies; they rise successive and successive fall; so generations in their course decay; so flourish these when those pass away”. 

Pope’s Translation 
The Iliad of Homer
Square Peg in a Round Hole
> First Ask:
  » What is my heritage?
  » Who are my ancestors?
  » What was happening in the world when I was born?
  » What was happening in the world of my parents when they were born?
  » What is my region of origin’s history?
  » What is the history of my culture?
  » What beliefs do I hold about myself; my family, my history?
  » What do I currently do that members of my family also did?
  » What traits and/or characteristics do I hold onto that I view as;
    ● Positive
    ● Negative
We routinely inquire about a person’s family history as part of our screening and assessment?

> Yes
> No
> No, but his makes sense
“In this time of globalization, with all its advantages, the poor are the most vulnerable to having their traditions, relationships and knowledge and skills ignored and denigrated, and experiencing development with a great sense of trauma, loss and social disconnectedness.”

James D. Wolfensohn, World Bank President
The trans-generational effects of trauma occur via a variety of mechanisms including:

- Impact on attachment relationship with caregivers
- Impact on parenting and family functioning
- Parental physical or mental illness
- Disconnection and alienation from extended family, culture and society
- Exacerbated by continued exposure to high levels of stress
"Evolution in Four Dimensions”

> Genetics at the physical level
> Epigenetic level - in which variations in the expression of genes during developmental processes are subsequently transmitted during reproduction
> Behavioral traditions transmission, i.e., food preferences, hang-ups around food in holocaust survivors
> Symbolic inheritance passed on through language and culture

(Jablonska and Lamb, 2005)
In biology and specifically genetics, **epigenetics** is the study of changes in gene expression or cellular phenotype, caused by mechanisms other than changes in the underlying DNA sequence – hence the name *epi-* (Greek: επί- over, above, outer) = *genetics*, some of which are heritable.
Our team has had some discussion about the role of epigenetics when we are talking about what has happened to people?

> Yes
> No
> Have really not ever heard of this
“A drowsiness hanged over him; a kind of paralyzing spell. As so many times before, he found himself again in the Ghetto, being chased by soldiers and looking for a hiding place. The nightmares were vivid and emotionally draining and he yearned for peace and relief. He tried to put shape and give meaning to the frightening images that kept haunting him, but he found nothing of the sort. Just a life-long struggle with a past terror that was not his own, with a tragedy that he, himself, had not survived and with a conviction that catastrophe would surely strike again. How long would it go on?”

(Kellerman, 2011)
Epigenetics
Mammals developed a polyvagal nervous system that allows us to utilize our ‘fight, flight, freeze system and regulate it by social means."
Normal 11 y.o. Male

Maltreated 11 y.o Male with PTSD

(De Bellis et al., 1999)
> 1st Generation – Conquered males were killed, imprisoned or enslaved and no longer able to provide for their families

> 2nd Generation - Many men overused alcohol and/or drugs to cope with their resultant loss of cultural identity and diminished sense of self-worth

> 3rd Generation - The intergenerational effects of violence manifest in the increased prevalence of spousal abuse and other forms of domestic violence (breakdown of the family unit

> 4th Generation - Trauma begins to be re-enacted and directed at the spouse and the child; signifying a serious challenge to family unit and societal norms of accepted behavior.

> 5th Generation - Cycle of violence is repeated and compounded, as trauma begets violence, with trauma enacted through increasingly severe violence and increasing societal distress.

(Blanco in Levine and Kline 2007)
Atkinson successfully linked the historical events associated with the colonisation of Aboriginal lands (‘accidental’ epidemics, massacres, starvations, and the removal of people to reserves) to increases in the rates of family violence, child sexual abuse and family breakdown in Indigenous society. (Atkinson 2008)
As you watch the video, think about Tonier’s culture; historically, transgenerationally, societally and in services.

Healing Neen Short Version
We don’t see things as they are; We see things as we are.

Anais Nin
“The shared values, traditions, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people that are unified by race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religious beliefs, spirituality, socioeconomic status, social class, sexual orientation, politics, gender, age, disability, or any other cohesive group variable.” (Singh, 1998)
Clinical studies reported a wide range of affective and emotional symptoms transmitted over generations:

- distrust of the world
- impaired parental function
- chronic sorrow
- inability to communicate feelings
- an ever-present fear of danger
- pressure for educational achievement
- separation anxiety,
- lack of entitlement
- unclear boundaries
- over-protectiveness within a narcissist family system

(Braga, LL, Mello, MF, Fiks, JP., 2012)
Core dimensions influence “who” an individual is.

Participatory dimensions influence an individual’s connections to others.

- Geographic Location
- Perceptions of Qualities and Capabilities
- Military Experience
- Employment
- Class
- Political Affiliation
- Parental Status
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- English Language Proficiency
- Family & Extended Family
- Community Networks

- Knowledge/Experience
- Partnered
- Education
- Literacy
- Immigration Status
- Incarceration experience
- Unlimited Mindfulness Consulting, LLC 2010
### Core Dimensions
- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- History
- Country of Origin
- Physical Abilities
- Sexual Orientation

### Participatory Dimensions
- Family and Extended Family
- Community Networks
- Knowledge and Experience
- Partnered
- Language
- Spiritual Beliefs
- Incarceration Experience
- Literacy
- Education
- Immigration Status
- Military Experience
- Mental Health
- Physical Health

### Participatory Dimensions
- Parental Status
- Geographic Location
- Political Affiliation
- Perception of qualities and capabilities
- Economics
- Income
- Class
- Employment
- Income
- English language proficiency
History, e.g. racism, sexism, and genocide:

- Set the tone for the fundamental sense of safety; our way of being in the world and what we teach our children

- Traumatic events and circumstances, migration patterns and factors

*Cathy Cave, 2012*
Current Conditions reinforce the tone and build upon previous learning:

» Global, community, and family perspectives

» Individual experiences with
  ● Systems
  ● Work
  ● Recovery

Cathy Cave, 2012
Where one feels belonging
What is or is not an illness
What is helpful
Who is helpful
Where it feels acceptable to go for help
If it feels safe to return

Cathy Cave, 2012
Cumulative trauma is a significant predictor of all parenting outcomes

PTSD is significantly negatively related to physical discipline

Maternal history of victimization can seriously disrupt a parent’s caretaking abilities

Veterans and family members report greater incidences of interpersonal violence when PTSD is present

(Cohen, Hein and Batchelder, 2008)
• The risk of women developing PTSD after an assault is markedly higher than that of men (Breslau and Anthony, 2007)
• Men tend to respond to trauma with destructive actions
• Women tend to respond more often with retreat
• Men will often use addictive behaviors to escape
• Women will often manifest addictive behaviors in order to maintain a relationship

(Covington, 2008)
Collective emotional and psychological injury ... over the life span and across generations’ (Muid, 2006)

Multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural group

Can be experienced by “anyone living in families at one time marked by severe levels of trauma, poverty, dislocation, war, etc., and who are still suffering as a result”.

(Cutler, n.d.)
Possible Manifestations of Historical Trauma

> Historical Unresolved Grief
> Disenfranchised Grief
> Internalized Oppression
People of Color

> Have been exposed to generations of discrimination, racism, race-based segregation and resulting poverty.

> “Exposed to micro-aggressions, defined as “events involving discrimination, racism, daily hassles that are targeted at individuals from diverse racial and ethnic groups.” (Michaels, 2010).

> Stressors: Slavery, colonialism or imperialism

> Manifestations: Mistrust of police; self-protection (e.g. weapon ownership); feelings of low self-worth. (Rich and Grey, 2005)
Immigrants

Variation in culture by country of origin will differ from group to group.

- Southeast Asians, i.e., Cambodians, and Vietnamese
- Africans
- Latinos
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Koreans
- Irish
Reasons may differ

- Voluntary relocation
- Forced migration - may be the result of conflict, natural disaster, famine, development projects and policies, or nuclear and chemical disasters
- Group displacement of Cambodians, Somalis, Sudanese, Nepalese

Stressor: Prevention of cultural and spiritual practices of an entire group of people

Manifestations: Fear of the legal system; fear of loss of culture – spiritual practices, language and other traditions

(Michaels, 2010)
Leads to family stress, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, mental health challenges, and domestic violence (Wilson, 2005).

Those in poverty tend to live near one another, clustering in neighborhoods and regions. (Kneebone, Nadeau & Berube, 2011).

Frequently intergenerational

Stressors: Hunger, poor or inadequate housing, lack of access to health care, community crime.

Manifestations: Domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse. (Wilson, 2005)
History, e.g. racism, sexism, and genocide:

» Set the tone for the fundamental sense of safety; our way of being in the world and what we teach our children

» Traumatic events and circumstances, migration patterns and factors
Current Conditions reinforce the tone and build upon previous learning:

» Global, community, and family perspectives

» Individual experiences with
  ● systems
  ● work
  ● recovery
> Where one feels belonging
> What is or is not an illness
> What is helpful
> Who is helpful
> Where it feels acceptable to go for help
> If it feels safe to return
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Nebraska</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White alone, percent, 2012</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone, percent, 2012</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, 2012</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone, percent, 2012 (a)</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races, percent, 2012</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2012 (b)</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second largest minority group in Nebraska behind Latino population
Double the birth rate
Less likely to be married
Larger proportion of homes maintained by women with no male figure present
30% below the poverty level versus 16%
Median age of 29 years versus 39 years of Non-Hispanic Whites
  » 33% under 18 years
  » 7% over 65 years
Native American Reservations Represented in Nebraska

- Niobrara Reservation – Santee Sioux
- Omaha Reservation
- Ogallala Sioux Reservation
- Oto Reservation
- Pawnee Reservation
- Ponca Reservation
- Sac and Fox Reservation
In 1990, immigrants made up 2% of Nebraska’s total population, 4% in 2000, and to 6% in 2010.

Between 1990 and 2010, population in Nebraska grew by 298%, largest increase in the region.

Since 2000, Nebraska has welcomed 6,153 refugees from 39 countries.

- Burma (1,952),
- Sudan (1,118),
- Iraq (431)
- Former Yugoslavia (381)
- Smalia (361). In addition,
- Asylees - 40 settle in the state each year.
Organizational Implementation of Trauma-Informed Approaches
Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment
- Voice and choice

(Fallot 2008, SAMHSA, 2012)
• **Domain 1:** Early Screening and Assessment – Are you asking cultural and historical questions through sensitive inquiry?

• **Domain 2:** Consumer Voice, Choice and Advocacy – Are you engaging consumers from diverse backgrounds to support historical and cultural exploration?

• **Domain 3:** Trauma-informed, Educated and Responsive Workforce – Is staff trained to understand exactly who you are serving and that their history impacts their behavior?
How Does TTT Fit in the 7 Domains of TIC

- **Domain 4**: Evidence-based Best Practices – Do your practices reflect the culture and history of those you serve?
- **Domain 5**: Safe and Secure Environments – Are you considering what feels safe to one person might not feel safe to another?
- **Domain 6**: Engaging in Community Partnerships – Do your community partners reflect the historical perspectives of the community at large?
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