



When Our Bridges Don't Connect: Core Concepts for Understanding How Culture and Context Affect Clinical Intervention

Chandra Ghosh Ippen, Ph.D.
Child Trauma Research Program
Chandra.ghosh@ucsf.edu





Talk Overview

- Talk briefly about my context
- Present an overview of core concepts related to working with culturally diverse families
- Present exercises that we use to teach these concepts

Go through a case vignette together as a way to think about how we can apply the core concepts to our work.


All in an effort to begin a dialogue about how culture and context affect the work that we do



National Child Traumatic Stress Network (nctsn.org)


Early Trauma Treatment Network
To raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children aged 0-5, their families, and communities throughout the United States.

Mission of the Culture Consortium
To enhance the ability of the NCTSN to integrate a focus on diversity and context in all aspects of our work


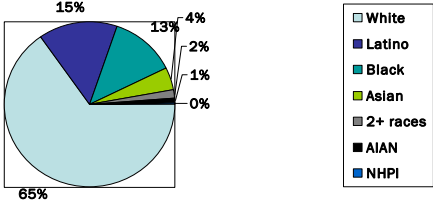


Surgeon General's National Action Agenda: Fourth Goal

Elimination of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in access to mental healthcare services (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000)




U.S. Population Statistics 2007 Estimate

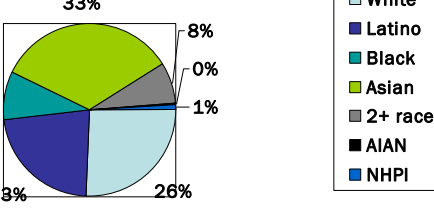



Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
White	65%
Latino	15%
Black	13%
Asian	4%
2+ races	2%
AIAN	1%
NHPI	0%

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>




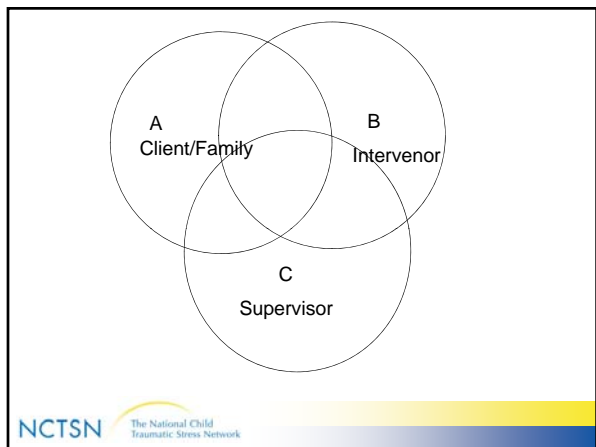
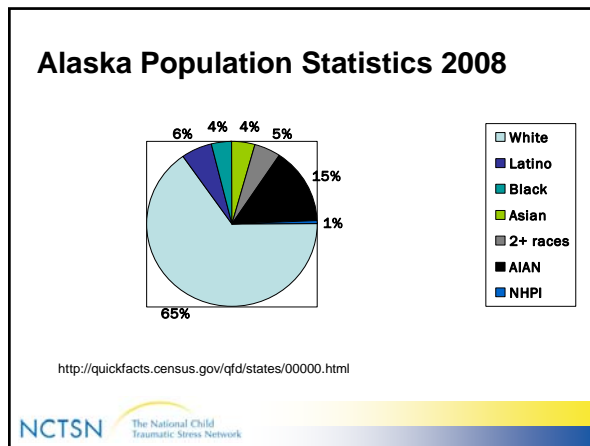
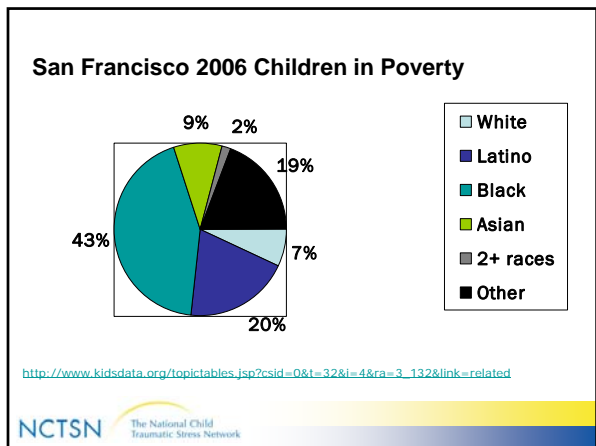
San Francisco 2008



Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
White	26%
Latino	28%
Black	9%
Asian	33%
2+ races	8%
AIAN	0%
NHPI	1%

http://www.kidsdata.org/topictables.jsp?csid=0&t=24&i=7&ra=3_132&link=related



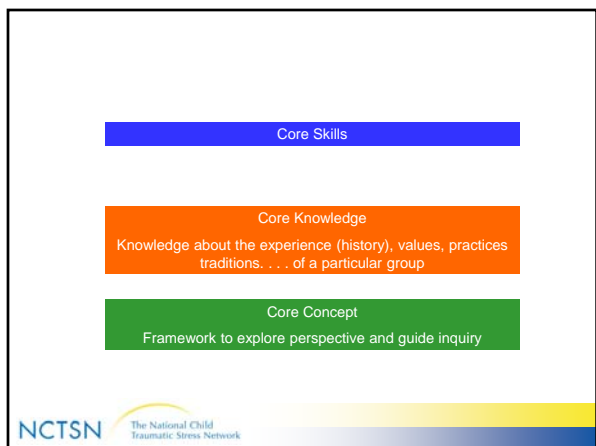


Models of Diversity Training Transnational Competence

- "Learn a framework to guide inquiry with individual patients about how social, cultural, or economic factors influence their health values, beliefs, and behaviors"
- Transnational skills
 - Building interpersonal alliances (respect, empathy, curiosity, reciprocity)
 - Inductive inquiry regarding influences and experiences
 - Ability to identify factors that contribute to vulnerability, resilience, and perspective
 - Understanding the client's context
 - When we say - I don't understand why she is doing this - how do we ask the right questions and then put together the puzzle.
 - Creativity - Develop innovative and contextually appropriate interventions that integrate multiple aspects of the clients' reality

- Betancourt, 2006; Koehn & Swick, 2006, Torry, 2005

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



Diversity Training: Core Concepts Assumptions and Perspective

- Our experience shapes our assumptions. Our assumptions shape our interactions.
 - Experience comes from both our own history and the history of our cultural groups.
- Our assumptions shape our interventions and our systems.
 - The success of our interventions and systems depends to some degree on whether those we serve share our assumptions.
- Our affective states influence our ability to see another person's perspective. When affect is charged we are more likely to lose perspective and go back to what we "know."
- Key forces that shape perspective include
 - Attachment
 - Culture
 - Trauma

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Diversity Training: Core concepts Trauma

- Trauma can disrupt critical relationships that support development and critical tasks of development.
- Trauma is an epidemic
- No ethnic or socio-economic group is immune to trauma, but those in poverty are at highest risk. Ethnic minorities are more likely to live in poverty

Diversity Training: Core Concepts Context

- No behavior or belief can be viewed separate from its context
- Most behavior makes sense if you understand the context
- It is best not to attempt to alter a behavior or belief without understanding its context

Core Concept

- Our assumptions shape our interactions with each other
- Our assumptions are shaped by:
 - Personal history
 - Family history
 - Experience of our cultural group

Your child is hitting other children in school.

You cannot hit your child.

There's a parenting course you could take.

Your child should get a flu vaccine.

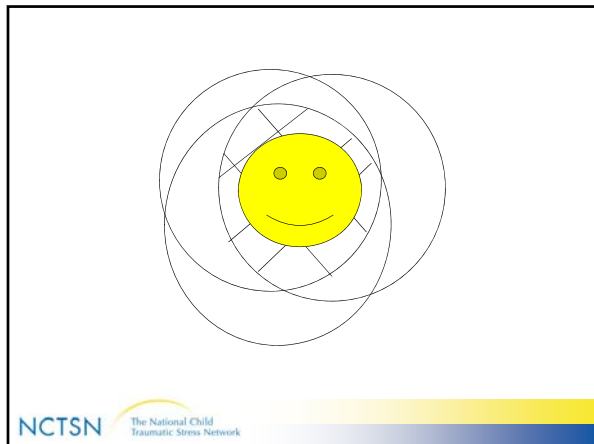
What does this mean for you and your work?

In interactions with another person. . . .

- What is the history between your groups? How might this history affect current interactions?
- How do your beliefs about each other's "group" (ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, geographic. . .) influence your interactions?
- Should you bring this up?
 - When?
 - With whom?

Core Message

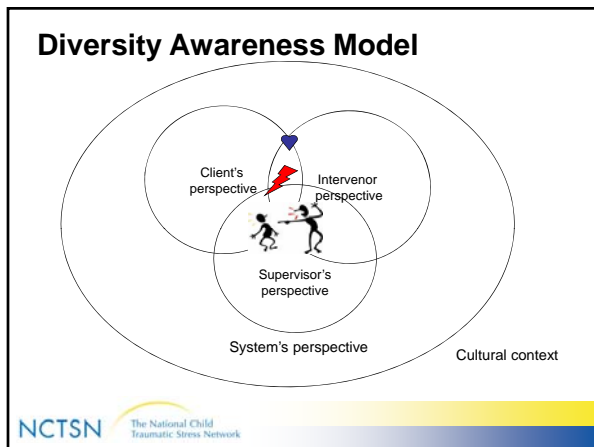
- The success of our interventions and systems depends to some degree on whether those we serve share our assumptions.



What does this mean for you and your work?

- How might each person in the interaction answer the following questions?
 - Is there a problem?
 - Why is there a problem?
 - What can be done?
 - Who should intervene to address the problem?
 - What is a good outcome?
- What happens when we don't agree?

Garcia Coll & Meyer, 1993



Identifying Diversity Related Conflicts

- Strong affect (your's or clients)
- Loss of perspective
 - Desire to label or pathologize, "other"
 - "I don't understand why s/he would do that?"
 - "It makes no sense to me"
- Non verbal cues signaling lack of agreement
- Direct, "logical" course is failing

Fundamental Attribution Error
Othering versus Understanding

- Why do people do what they do?
 - Overestimate internal and underestimate external factors
 - Not considering the situation/context as a factor in determining behavior
- What words may signal this error?
 - Defensive
 - Resistant
 - Intrusive
 - Borderline
 - Controlling

Example: Diversity-Related Conflict

Rena walked slowly into her supervisor, Lorraine's, office. It had been three weeks since she'd seen Jesse and his mother Crystal. Things weren't going well. They'd missed several appointments. Rena was worried about Jesse. He was only 32 months old and might soon be expelled from his daycare. He kicked other kids, hit a teacher, and his speech was very delayed. The daycare thought he needed a different placement. Jesse was in need of serious intervention, but his mother just didn't seem to get it. Rena didn't understand Crystal. Why didn't she see Jesse's problems and recognize that he needed help? Why didn't she appreciate the fact that the services Rena was offering were free? Didn't she understand that without help, Jesse's problems might get worse? Rena had been trying her hardest to see Crystal and Jesse. She didn't know what else she could do. She wondered what Lorraine would say.

(Ghosh Ippen & Lewis, in press)

Affect and Ability to Tolerate Difference

A Venn diagram with two overlapping circles. The left circle is labeled 'Calm' and contains a red dot. The right circle is labeled 'Affectively Charged' and contains a red dot. The intersection of the two circles contains two blue dots. An arrow points to the intersection area with the label 'intersection'.

Adapted from Anne Fadiman, 2008 Grand Rounds San Francisco General Hospital

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Affect and Perspective

When we are angry, we are . . .

- More likely to see people rather than situations as responsible for a problem (Keltner, Ellsworth, & Edwards, 1993)
- Less likely to trust others (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005)
- More likely to make judgments based on stereotypes (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994; DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, & Caidrie, 2004; Tiedens & Linton, 2001)
- Positive affect is associated with increased flexibility in thinking and action (Fredrickson, 2001).

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

“It is not possible to work on behalf of human beings to try to help them without having powerful feelings aroused in yourself . . . In working with families who are in great difficulty, rage can become the most familiar affect, - at the system, at a world with too much violence that creates too much helplessness and also at a family who will not be better or even seem to try.”

(Pawl, 1995, p. 24)

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

What does this mean to you?

- How do you recognize when your affect is charged?
- Is it good to intervene when your affect is charged?
- What can you do?

Basic principal:
When affect is charged, the first affect to regulate is your own.

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Core Concept

- Reflective practice is critical to integrating a diversity-informed approach


NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

A Venn diagram with three overlapping circles. The top-left circle is labeled 'Rena' and contains a red dot. The top-right circle is labeled 'Crystal' and contains a red dot. The bottom circle is labeled 'Lorraine' and contains a blue dot. The intersection of all three circles is empty.

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network


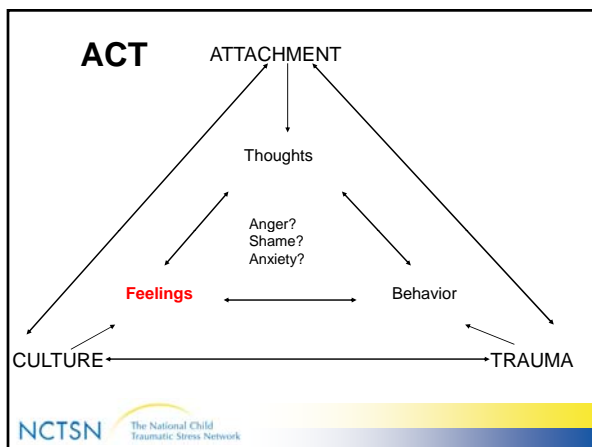
What does this mean to you?

- When you are affectively charged do you have someone you can talk to?
- Do you feel safe enough to really talk not only about the client but about how the client is affecting you?
 - To talk about your feelings?
 - To talk about where the feelings come from?



Core Concept

- Key forces that shape perspective include
 - Attachment
 - Culture
 - Trauma

Emotion Socialization (Cole, Tamang, & Shretha, 2006)

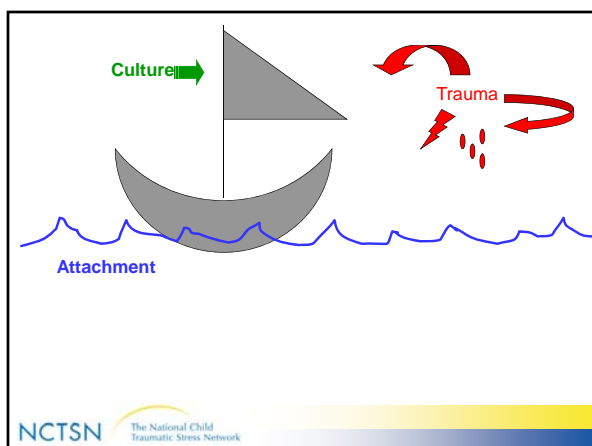
Participants: Two groups in Nepal

- Brahmans (Hindu)
- Tamang (Buddhist)

Methods: Interviews w/ elders & observation of interactions w/ children


Findings

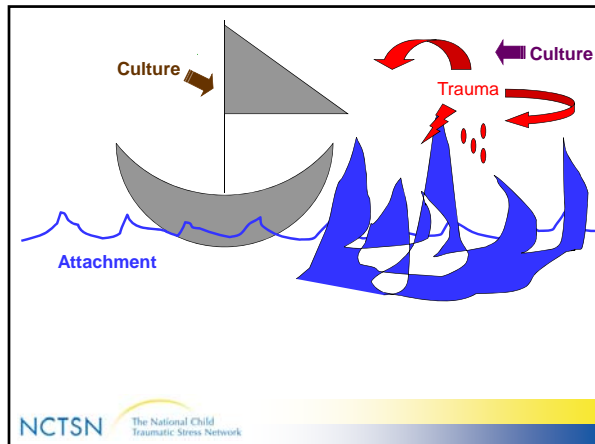
- Shame
 - Tamang –teach and nurture
 - Brahmans – Ignore (75% instances of shame)
- Anger
 - Tamang disapprove, rebuke or tease child
 - Brahmans- teach, nurture or coax child to feel better

The air explodes with the sound of highpowered rifles and the startled infant watches his family fall to the ground, the image seared into his memory. He and other orphans are then transported to distant locales to start new lives. Ten years later, the teenaged orphans begin a killing rampage, leaving more than a hundred victims.

Bradshaw, Schore, Brown, Poole, & Moss (Nature, 2005)





What is our perspective?

- If a mother places her children at risk because she keeps returning to a violent partner, should the children be removed?

Gwen is a 19 year old mother. She was badly beaten by her partner. Neighbors called the police, and the police found her three year-old son sitting near her unconscious body. They now reside in a domestic violence shelter. Her son, Tre has significant behavior problems. He bites other children and has kicked teachers.

Her partner has been arrested before on drug dealing charges. Gwen won't press charges against him.

Why won't she leave?

- Financial: he earns the money for food and rent.
- I've lived in a shelter before. It's not much better.
- He knows where to find me.
- He's the one who's legal. If I leave, he'll call INS on me and my family.
- Have you seen the rest of my life. This is nothing.
- Where I live is dangerous. Without him I wouldn't have protection and my kids wouldn't have protection when they grow up
- Need for a dad, any dad: I didn't have a dad growing up, and I know how much that hurt me. I can bear to get hurt by this man if my kids can just have a dad
- I am also violent: My worker doesn't know this, but I can give as good as I get. I can protect myself
- Cultural/Familial: I grew up with this. My parents used to hit each other. No one ever did anything then, and we turned out ok
- I want a man around/ All the men I've ever known have been violent. If I meet someone else they'll probably be violent. At least he's the father of my children - at least that way he won't sexually molest them.

What is our perspective? . . .

- If a grandmother who is caring for her 5 year-old grandson uses corporal punishment.

- He has serious behavior problems and is in danger of being expelled from kindergarten. He doesn't listen to the teacher, climbs on top of desks, and hits other children.

My grandmother's name is Estelle Marie Talley. She's not here tonight. And this is going to be the toughest part. But she was my first acting teacher. She told me to stand up straight. Put your shoulders back. Act like you got some sense. We would go places. And I would wild out. And she would say, "Act like you've been somewhere." And then when I would act the fool, she would beat me. She would whup me. And she could get an Oscar for the way she whipped me because she was great at it. And after she whipped me, she would talk to me and tell me why she whipped me. She said I want you to be a Southern gentleman. She still talks to me now. Only now, she talks to me, in my dreams.

And I can't wait to go to sleep tonight because we got a lot to talk about. I love you."

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Jamie Foxx, 2005 Oscar Acceptance Speech

Core Concept

- Theoretical models represent a worldview.
 - Thus all are biased by our perspective
 - When we intervene with those who do not share our perspective, our theories may not hold true.
 - When we intervene with those who do not share our perspective, we may be blind to aspects of their lives central to their well-being.

Theories are defined as unproven assumptions.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's Context

- Proposed *A Theory of Human Motivation*, in 1943
- "I was a terribly unhappy boy. My family was a miserable family and my mother was a horrible creature. I grew up in libraries and among books without friends. With my childhood. It's a wonder I'm not psychotic." (Maslow as cited in Hoffman, 1988, p. 1)
- I've always wondered where my utopianism, ethical stress, humanism . . . Came from. I knew certainly of the direct consequences of having no mother-love. But the whole thrust of my life philosophy and all my research and theorizing also has its roots in a hatred for and revulsion against everything she stood for. Pg 9
- "When I was a boy anti-Semitism was really a tangible thing. You walked down the wrong side of the street and you were in trouble."
- "To me as a child [superstition and religion]. It was all the same thing. And I learned from her certainly to despise everything about it."

Change in Maslow's Context

Health problems, end of life, travels to Mexico and to visit the Blackfoot Indians

- "My whole value-laden philosophy of science could certainly be called Jewish – at least by my personal definition. I certainly wasn't aware of it *then*" (The Journals of A.H. Maslow, Volume 2 as cited in Hoffman, 1988, p. 306
- Sixth motivational step, self-transcendence - going beyond the self, putting ones own needs aside, engaging in services to others, and connecting with mystic and transpersonal experiences (Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

What are our assumptions?

- What is therapy?
 - Is it acceptable to express different feelings? How should we express them?
 - What is the meaning of play and what is a parent's role in play?
 - How much do you value respect?
 - How much do you value self expression?



Core Concept

- Theoretical models represent a worldview.
 - Thus all are biased by our perspective
 - When we intervene with those who do not share our perspective, our theories may not hold true.
 - **When we intervene with those who do not share our perspective, we may be blind to aspects of their lives central to their well-being.**

Theories are defined as unproven assumptions.

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

- Precolonial history
 - See there was no alcohol in this continent 500 years ago. There was no drugs. There was no problems – no domestic problems, no social problems. Everything was good because everybody lived according to customs and teachings. And there was no jails, no hospitals. There was no prisons, no insane asylums. There was none of that stuff because everybody lived according to a strict custom. It would be considered like moral. Everybody had their morals them days. And . . . If you didn't listen to the morals of the societal conduct of living. . Well you were kicked out of the tribe. You were banished, they call it, and that was considered a fate worse than death.

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

- Colonial Incursion
 - . . . But when the Whiteman came, they. . . Forced the people, the Indian people, to get rid of their way. Their religious spiritual beliefs. They forced them to trade their economy, which was based on the barter system, and on living off the land – the wildlife, fish. . . And herbal medicines. They forced them to change that. And then they not only did that, they annihilated them. Then they turned around and forced their culture on them – their religion, their beliefs, their foreign ways onto them – by taking all the young people out of homes and putting them away in boarding schools. . .and forcing the Whiteman's teachings on them. Such as history. They changed history, rewrote history to suite themselves to justify the bad things they did to the Indian people. It's genocide. That's what it was: Genocide. Wiping out a whole people so they could benefit.

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

- View on Psychotherapy – Under what conditions would he consider referring his loved ones to the mental health clinic a the local HIS facility. That's kind of like taboo. You know, we don't do that. We never did do that. . I guess it's like a war, but they're not using bullets anymore. They're using sophisticated modern technology. . [It's] like ethnic cleansing. I guess you could say. They want to wipe us out. Wipe the Indian reservations so they could join the melting pot of the modern white society. And therefore the Indian problem will be gone forever. I guess you could make a choice. Where do I want to end up? An I guess a lot of people want to end up looking good to the Whiteman, I guess. Then it's be a good thing to do: go the the white psychiatrists, you know, in the Indian Health Service and say, "Well go ahead and rid me of my history, my past, and brainwash me forever so I can be like a Whiteman. And I don't know. I guess that'd be a choice each individual will have to make. . . I don't like it myself.

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

- Era of Postcolonial Revitalization
 - And then, after we looked around and realized that. . . We left something behind. . We started going back up to the hills so fast. We started going back to the mountaintops to fast. We started going to the sweat lodges to pray and to sweat. We started going to the elders to learn. . . Regain. . . What we were missing. We never was happy, you know, living like a Whiteman. . . I would give the credit to the Creator, and to the spirit world, for pitying the people to allow us to get [our ceremonial traditions] back. To me what the ceremony does is you put up a sacrifice, and effort. And what you're doing is you're calling on the Creator, the spirit world, and the grandfather spirits for something. For life, or for good health, or for a . . . good clean mind. An alcohol and drug free mind. Or you're calling on the spirit world for guidance you know. Or for survival even. Even survival.

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

- Era of Postcolonial Revitalization
 - And then, after we looked around and realized that. . . We left something behind. . We started going back up to the hills so fast. We started going back to the mountaintops to fast. We started going to the sweat lodges to pray and to sweat. We started going to the elders to learn. . . Regain. . . What we were missing. We never was happy, you know, living like a Whiteman. . . I would give the credit to the Creator, and to the spirit world, for pitying the people to allow us to get [our ceremonial traditions] back. To me what the ceremony does is you put up a sacrifice, and effort. And what you're doing is you're calling on the Creator, the spirit world, and the grandfather spirits for something. For life, or for good health, or for a . . . good clean mind. An alcohol and drug free mind. Or you're calling on the spirit world for guidance you know. Or for survival even. Even survival.

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

Analysis of the Discourse

- What is the problem? Historical trauma
- Why is there a problem? Whiteman
- What can be done? Ceremonial sacrifice by individuals and communities will move the Creator to give the gift of a good clean mind and good health. Through ritual we connect/reconnect to powerful beings that guide us.
- Who should intervene to address the problem? Not the Whiteman. Ask an elder who knows the ancient traditions for guidance. Bring the elder a little gift – it's the traditional way to ask for guidance.

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Discourse with Traveling Thunder Gone, 2007

I would say if the Indian Health service was really interested in helping the Indian people, they better learn some culture and some traditions and some respect first before they want to help them. Because.. . They're liable to do more harm than they are good. If they're gonna force their white ways and white beliefs on [us].

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Racism and Mental Health

Coker, T.R. et al. (2009)

- 5147 5th graders enrolled in public schools in Los Angeles, California, Birmingham, Alabama, and Houston Texas
- Asked: Have you ever been treated badly because of your race or ethnicity also have you ever been treated badly because of the color of your skin?
- 15% said yes
- Perceived racism related to symptoms of depression, conduct disorder, ADHD, ODD

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002 Racial Socialization

- What do we tell our children and when do we tell them?
- Interviews with parents of African American preschoolers

Racial Pride	89%
Spirituality	74%
Bias	67%
Mistrust	65%

Parents who shared messages related to the promotion of pride, spirituality, and mistrust reported fewer behavior problems

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Alternative Treatment Models

Indigenist model of trauma, coping, and health outcomes for American Indian women (Walters & Simoni, 2002)

```

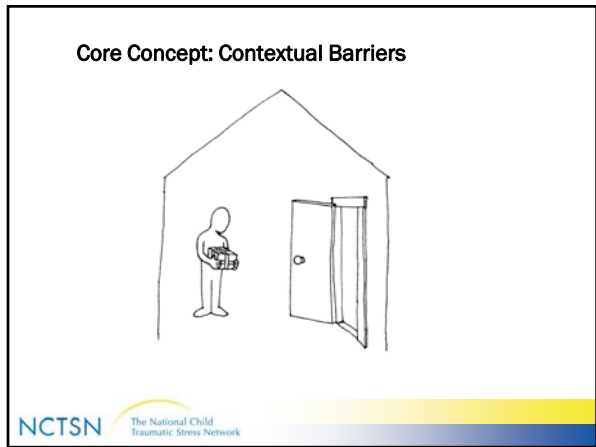
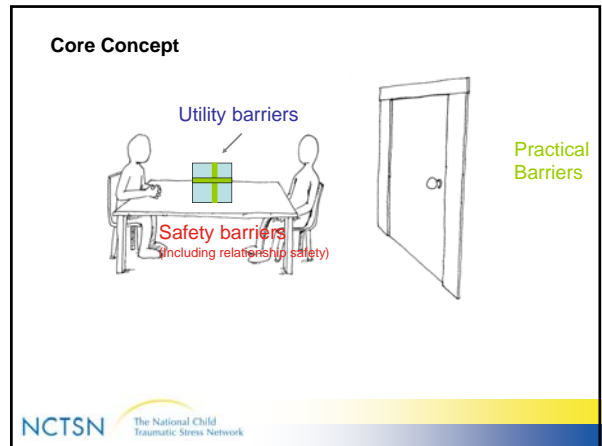
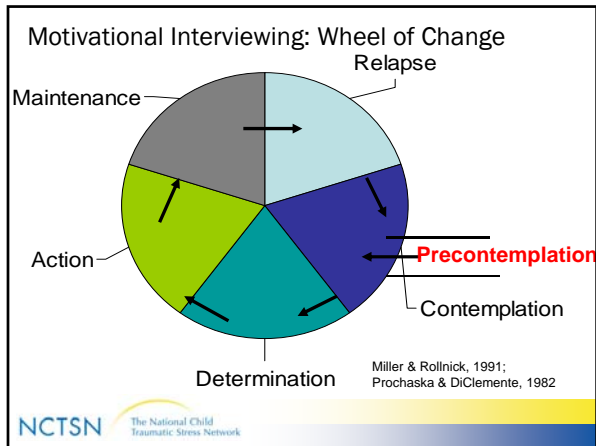
    graph LR
      Trauma[Trauma  
Historical trauma  
Discrimination  
Traumatic life events] --> CulturalBuffers[Cultural Buffers  
Identity attitudes  
Enculturation  
Spiritual coping  
Traditional healing practices]
      CulturalBuffers --> Health[Health  
HIV risk  
Morbidity]
      CulturalBuffers --> Alcohol[Alcohol/Drug  
Use/abuse  
Dependence]
      CulturalBuffers --> MentalHealth[Mental Health  
PTSD/anxiety  
Depression]
  
```

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Treatment Formulation: Meaning Making

- As part of meaning making – if things have happened to us as an individual do we need to understand why?
- If things have happened to our entire cultural group – do we need to understand why?
- Is this part of treatment?

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



- ### Factors Affecting Engagement
- Practical barriers
 - Transportation
 - Financial constraints (need to work)
 - Other responsibilities (other children, caring for other relatives)
 - Real and perceived safety
 - Will I be deported?
 - Will I be judged? Can you understand me?
 - Will my children be removed?
 - What will my partner think?
 - Can I trust you enough to speak with you about my emotional experience?
 - Your people hurt my people in the past - should I be getting help from you?
 - Real and perceived utility
 - Does the service plan make sense given all that has happened and all that we are currently experiencing?
 - Are the goals of the system in line with the goals and values of the family?
- NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

