STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC RACISM AS EMBEDDED WITHIN PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTICE: A NEED TO DECOLONIZE AND INDIGENIZE PSYCHOLOGY AND HEALTH PRACTICES FOR INDIGENOUS HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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School of Public Health/School of Social Work
Cultural of Health
National Academy of Medicine
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As we gather here today, we acknowledge the Indigenous ancestors and their homelands (Anacostan, Piscotaway, Pamunkey peoples). We pay respect to the ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another and our ancestors and place.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choctaw/Chahta</th>
<th>Choctaw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancestors/Alba Oma</td>
<td>Community Engaged Collaborator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain/ Talihina Nanh</td>
<td>First generation Highschool graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River/Bok Yannush Okla Hannali</td>
<td>Masters trained in human development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Choctaw**
- **Full Professor**
- **Indigenous Health Psychologist**
- **Integrated primary care**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Love of my ancestors</th>
<th>Storyteller</th>
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<tr>
<td>Future ancestors</td>
<td>Land-based Narrative transformation therapy</td>
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</table>

- **Storyteller**
OVERVIEW

I. Colonial impacts of trauma on Indigenous mental and physical health

II. Systemic and structural racism in psychology and mental health care-

III. Potential of fostering a culture of thrivance through ancestral land-based practices
**Indigenous Health Framework**

- Ancestral stories have **instructions for health**
- Interrelationships/Responsibilities
- Mother earth and women respected/sacred
- **LOVE/HOLLO**
- **Future ancestor** focused
- Relational restoration and balance is key for health

**Western Colonial Health Framework**

- **Ancestors have diseases** that they passed onto you
- **Distinction** between mind, body spirit, nature
- Women and hollo are not sacred
- Illness arises from negative individual experiences with pathogens or vulnerabilities
- Individual healing can occur void of context
- **Knowledge is universal**
- Feminizing love and rendering this “unscientific” “unmeasurable”
INDIGENOUS COLONIAL TRAUMA: A MATTER OF POLICY

Genocidal Attacks
- Massacres
- Warfare
- Biological warfare/Small pox blankets
- Illegal sterilization

Removal
- Enslavement (250,000 Choctaws alone)
- Massacres
- Illegal healing practices until 1978
- Starvation as tactic
- Land-allotment

Assimilation Policies
- Boarding Schools
- Land/Food Trauma
  - Nutrition experiment
  - Gardening/animal husbandry

Structural Racism
- Healthcare access
- Urban/rural
- Self-determination restrictions
- Reservations – environmental pollutants
**Historical trauma (HT)** is cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and **across generations**, emanating from massive group trauma experiences and **collective distress and mourning** (Campbell 2008); the **historical trauma response (HTR)** is the constellation of features in reaction to this trauma among the individual, family and community. 

- **Disrupted connection to mother earth, ancestral teachings, and ability to be well**

*Braveheart, 1999, 2003, Campbell, 2008*
Eugenics and Psychology

1800's to late 1900's to present (Walker, 2016)

Termin Stanford-Binet developed IQ test with AIAN as the deficit

"The Intelligence of Indian Children" 1926 by the Journal of Comparative Psychology

Race Psychology 20 of 25 Studies on AIAN (Garth, 1931)

1940's 25-50% of all AIAN children lived in foster home or boarding school

Indigenous women sterilized across the entire country, an 25% of Native women of childbearing age were sterilized by 1976 and as many as 70,000 (Turby, Lawrence, 2000)
American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) in the IHS Service Area 2009-2011 and U.S. All Races 2010  
(Age-adjusted mortality rates per 100,000 population)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>AI/AN Rate 2009-2011</th>
<th>U.S. All Races Rate - 2010</th>
<th>Ratio: AI/AN to U.S. All Races</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL CAUSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases of the heart (Heart Disease)</td>
<td>194.7</td>
<td>179.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malignant neoplasm (cancer)</td>
<td>178.4</td>
<td>172.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents (unintentional injuries)*</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes mellitus (diabetes)</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-induced</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic lower respiratory diseases</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebrovascular diseases (stroke)</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza and pneumonia</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-induced</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome (kidney disease)</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional self-harm (suicide)</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alzheimer's disease</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Septicemia</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault (homicide)</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential hypertension diseases</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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Native Americans more likely to be killed by law enforcement than other racial or ethnic groups

Native Americans are killed in law enforcement actions at a higher rate than any other race or ethnicity, according to CDC data from 1999 to 2015.

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<tr>
<th>Race/Group</th>
<th>Average Annual Deaths per 1 Million Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American*</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American*</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White*</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander*</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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*non-Hispanic

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Findling et al., Discrimination in the United States: Experiences of Native Americans. Health Serv Res. 2019 Dec;54 Suppl
Intergenerational Trauma

Historical trauma → Present Trauma
TRAUMA AND LOVE

• Both are enduring for generations
• Both are felt deeply and can affect our health, wellbeing and cells
• Both are affected by past, current and future generations
HEALTH’S INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY CONTRIBUTIONS TO MEDICINE AND PSYCHOLOGY

- Mental health
- 90% of western medicines derived from Indigenous meds (Weatherford, 1989)
- Psychedelic treatment
While **indigenizing** is building up from our Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and practices,

**decolonizing** is simultaneously dismantling internalized colonization that permeates everyday living and infiltrates thought ways and practices.

This includes decolonizing thoughts, behaviors, feelings—while concurrently revitalizing healthy cultural traditions and creating new traditions to thrive.

**Indigenous communities MUST be in control**

(Walters, Johnson-Jennings et al., 2018)
DECOLONIZING RESEARCH

— Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples
INDIGENIZE THROUGH LAND-BASED HEALING

- (re) connecting to the land and centering the land in order to conduct healing, or a health intervention

(Johnson-Jennings, Billiot, Walters, 2019. Returning to our Roots, Genealogy.)
SCIENTIFIC BENEFITS OF LAND-BASED CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS

Removes one from daily stressor
Increases mild altering chemicals within the brain/mental health; increases immunity, decreases blood, glucose levels, and decreases cortisol
More likely to have a long-term change of behavior

Gets back in touch with mother earth/original instructions; Keeps grounded
Remember ancestral ways of healing
RESTORYING…

• “when you continue to center the trauma, then you continue to center the colonizer and the colonizing process.” —Yappalli participant (Johnson-Jennings & Walters, 2023)
Decolonizing + Indigenizing

Warp of Transformative Resistance

Weft of Ancestral Knowledge

Thrivance Weaving

Walters & Johnson-Jennings (In Press)
SDOH

Considers individual as braided within

- Connection to natural world is interwoven with health outcomes
- We are connected and influenced by the greater universe - across generations forward and back
- Need multilevel intervention methods such as measuring holistic land-health metrics (i.e., measuring blood pressure and water health for instance)
- Healing occurs across these domains and more….

Johnson-Jennings et al., 2023. All Systems are related… Contemporary Clinical Trials, 124, 10701