

Culturally Specific Approaches to Trauma and Domestic Violence

Hosted by the Family and Youth Services Bureau's Family Violence Prevention and Services Program, Women and Trauma Federal Partners Committee, and the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

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Thinking about Trauma in the Context of Culture and Domestic Violence

The Need for an Accessible, Culturally Resonant, DV- & Trauma-Informed, Social Justice Approach

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 National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
 Women and Trauma Federal Committee Webinar
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National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

Special Issue Resource Center supported by the US DHHS ACYF Family Violence Prevention & Services Program to:

- **Improve program and system capacity** to serve domestic violence survivors and their children experiencing a range of trauma, mental health & substance abuse-related needs
- **Develop culturally relevant responses** to the range of issues survivors face in trying to free their lives of violence and heal from its traumatic effects

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Trauma, Culture & DV
Expanding our Definition

Individual Trauma: Unique individual experience of an event or enduring condition, in which:

- An individual is exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual and/or psychological violation
- The individual's coping capacity and/or ability to integrate their emotional experience is overwhelmed causing distress

Collective Trauma

- Cultural, historical, insidious and political/economic trauma that impacts individuals and communities across generations

Interpersonal Trauma: Intimate and social betrayal; Cumulative burden; Ongoing risk

Giller 1999; APA; DSM V; Fabri; Triple Trauma Paradigm; Root: Insidious Trauma; Packard: Historical Trauma; Dabney: State-sponsored GBV; NCDVTMH

Evolving Understanding of Trauma & Its Effects
Implications for an ACDVTI Approach

- **1980's PTSD**
 - Injury model; Symptom constellations
- **1990's Complex Trauma**
 - Borderline reframe; Adaptations/survival strategies; Multiple domains
 - Development, attachment & parenting
- **2000's Neuroscience Research**
 - Circuits & pathways; neural architecture
 - Gene X environment; epigenetics; neuroplasticity

Herman 1994, 2009; Bloom 1997; van Der Kolk and Courtois 2005; Courtois 2009; Ford 2009

Understanding Trauma Responses in Context:
Feelings about ourselves, others & the world

- **Trusting other people & systems**
- **Trusting and valuing oneself & one's community**
- **Capacity to manage internal states** in ways that do not create other difficulties
- **Impact on executive & integrative capacities**
- **Center of gravity; Collective impact; Social fabric**
- **Social support, meaningful connections, community and other sources of resilience** can counter these effects; epigenetic resonance; quality of interactions

Harris 2001; Saakvitne et. al. 2000; Lanius et al 2011; NCDVTMH 2013

Thinking about Trauma in the Context of Culture & DV

- At the same time, experiencing the traumatic effects of abuse puts women at greater risk from an abusive partner and from the systems they turn to for help

Mental Health Coercion Survey

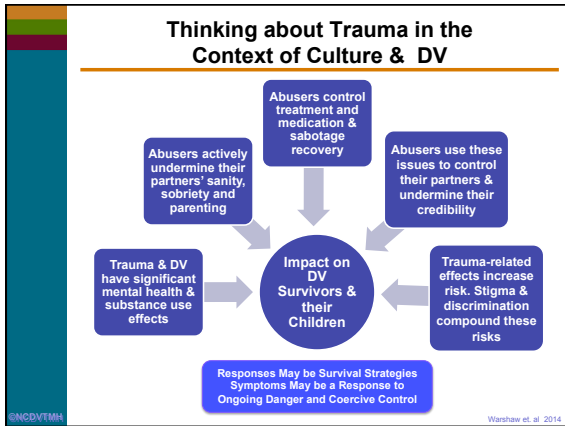
N=2,733

- 86% Ever called "crazy" or accused of being crazy
- 74% Deliberately did things to make you feel like you are going "crazy" or losing your mind
- 50% Partner or ex ever threatened to report to authorities that you are "crazy" to keep you from getting something you want or need (e.g., custody of children, medication, a PO)
- 53% Ever sought help for feeling upset or depressed
- 49% If "yes" Has your partner or ex- tried to prevent or discourage from getting that help or taking prescribed meds for those feelings

Substance Abuse Coercion Survey

N = 3,224

- 27% Pressured or forced to use alcohol or other drugs, or made to use more than wanted?
- 37.5% Threatened to report alcohol or other drug use to someone in authority to keep you from getting something you wanted or needed
- 24.4% Afraid to call the police for help because partner said they wouldn't believe you because of using, or you would be arrested for being under the influence?
- 26% Ever used substances to reduce pain of partner abuse?
- 15.2% Tried to get help for substance use?
- 60.1% If yes, partner or ex-partner tried to prevent or discourage you from getting that help

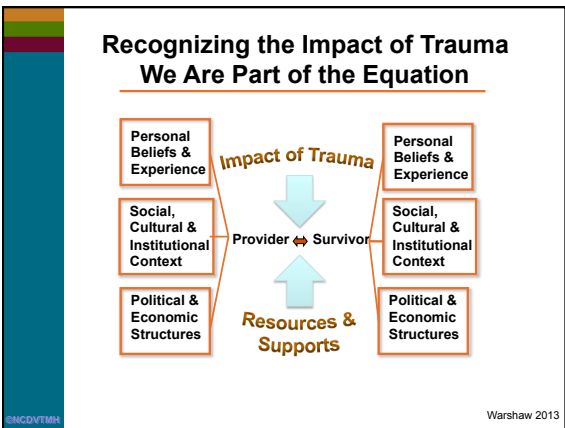


- ### Trauma, DV, Culture & Discrimination Affect Access to Resources & Services
- **Trauma can affect access to services**
 - Avoidance of trauma reminders; Reluctance to reach out when trust has been betrayed
 - Retraumatization in service settings; misperception of trauma responses and coping strategies
 - Impact on providers, institutions & communities
 - **DV can affect access to services**
 - **Discrimination & lack of cultural attunement can affect access to services**
 - **Trauma trigger or revictimization?**
- ©NCADV/TMH

- ### Why Accessible, Culturally Resonant, DV- & Trauma-Informed (ACDVTI) Services?
- **Without a trauma lens, services can be retraumatizing**
 - **Without a DV lens, services can be endangering**
 - **Without a culture lens, services may not be relevant or helpful**
 - **Without a human rights lens services may not be accessible**
 - **Without a social justice lens, abuse, violence & trauma are likely to continue**
- ©NCADV/TMH

Once we understand the impact of trauma, oppression and DV, then a culturally resonant, DV- and trauma-informed approach becomes a logical next step

- An ACDVTI Approach:
How Does this Translate into Practice?**
- **Recognize the pervasiveness & impact of trauma**
 - On survivors, on staff, on organizations, on communities
 - **Minimize retraumatization**
 - **Counteract the experience of abuse and oppression:** Relational, cultural, environmental & programmatic aspects
 - **Facilitate healing, resilience & well-being**
 - **Mitigate the effects of abuse:** Culturally resonant, DV/ Trauma-informed and –specific approaches & interventions
 - **Attend to impact on providers & organizations**
 - **Address & transform social conditions that perpetuate abuse, trauma & oppression**



ACDVTI Services & Organizations:
 Counteracting the Experience of Abuse; Mitigating its Effects

Service Domains

- Culturally Resonant, Physical, Sensory & Relational Environments
- Welcoming, Inclusive Intake & Assessment Process
- Culturally Meaningful Programs & Services
- Community Collaboration & Referral Relationships

Organizational Domains

- Organizational Commitment & Infrastructure
- Staff Training and Supports
- Feedback and Evaluation

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Trauma Treatment in the Context of DV:
 What do we know?

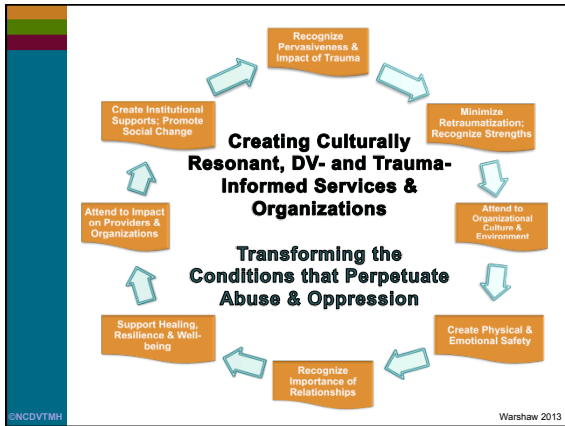
- **Symptom-focused vs. Multidimensional approach**
 - PTSD treatment targets specific symptoms; Complex trauma treatment addresses multiple domains; Culturally specific approaches may involve entire communities
- **Past abuse vs. Ongoing risk**
 - Most trauma treatment models focus on past abuse; Few are designed for survivors still under siege whether from DV or ongoing oppressive conditions
 - Some evidence-based treatments for PTSD can be harmful in context of complex trauma and/or ongoing abuse
 - Women experiencing DV and/or co-occurring conditions often excluded from clinical trials
- **Treatment should attend to the impact of trauma, ongoing risk, and cultural values & context**

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Research Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities

- **Tools to measure outcomes of culturally relevant, DV- and trauma-informed services and organizations that are meaningful to survivors**
- **Culturally relevant trauma treatment in the context of DV** and in the context of other lifetime trauma and ongoing risk; Culturally specific approaches to individual and collective healing
- **Methodologies that account for complex lives and conditions** (including factors outside of survivor's control), meaningful outcomes, individual tailoring and multiple life circumstances and trajectories
- **Implementation, replication, dissemination & support**


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Being culture, DV- and trauma informed means embodying in our own practices, organizations & communities, the world we want to create

Warshaw 2008

- NCDVTMH Resources**
- ACDVTI Agency Self-Assessment Tool
http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/ACDVTI-Self-Reflection-Tool_NCDVTMH.pdf
 - Resources for Advocates on Trauma-Informed Practice
<http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/publications-products/resource-for-advocates/>
 - A Systematic Review of Trauma-Focused Interventions for Domestic Violence Survivors:
<http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/publications-products/ncdvtmh-review-of-trauma-specific-treatment-in-the-context-of-domestic-violence/>
 - Mental Health and Substance Use Coercion Surveys Report
<http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/2014/09/mental-health-and-substance-use-coercion-surveys-report-now-available/>
 - Special Issue of Synergy on Trauma in the Context of Domestic Violence
<http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/2014/10/ncdvtmh-quest-edits-special-issue-of-synergy-in-honor-of-dv-awareness-month/>
 - Trauma-Informed Care for Mental Health Professionals:
<http://athealth.com/trauma-informed-care-for-mental-health-professionals/>
 - Tips for Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence:
http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Tipsheet_Children-Exposed_NCDVTMH_May2012.pdf



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