PROMOTING COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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“THE FEELING IS WE ARE ALL RELATED, SO WE HAVE TO HELP EACH OTHER”... “EVERYBODY IS TIGHT-KNIT”

Despite experiences of historical oppression, Indigenous peoples have been resisting oppression and demonstrating survivance and resilience throughout history.

- “Resilience” includes the ability to positively adapt despite experiencing adversity (Greene 2009, 315-434).
- “Survivance” includes the ingenuity indigenous peoples have continuously demonstrated despite the adversity imposed by colonial subjugation, as evidenced by a commitment to their homeland, humor, and strength of spirit (Vizenor 2008).

However, survivance may have enabled this Indigenous community to persist, yet many of the challenges posed by mainstream society undermine the traditional practices that have provided indigenous people strength across centuries.

“Indigenous peoples” -- those affected by colonization and are thought to be original inhabitants the U.S.
MY BACKGROUND

- Been working with Indigenous Communities for over 5 years
- Admired strength and resilience and was concerned about health disparities
- Reached out to Indigenous peoples across the U.S. and asked for suggestions of how I may contribute as an ally/work in solidarity with Indigenous peoples
- Study on culturally sensitive research: listen, work with insiders, enable self-determination, give back
- Invited to work with Southeastern tribe on violence against women. I was interested in resilience, and violence was a problem of concern to the community.
- Met with community members and leaders, went through tribal and IRB process, and lived near Indigenous communities for the summer of 2012.
- Taken a position at Tulane to work with this tribal community and another Southeastern community on “Weaving healthy families Project”
- Today: Promoting community and cultural resilience to prevent violence in indigenous communities
PROMOTING COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE: RELATED WORK

- Work in culturally sensitive ways with Indigenous communities
- Indigenous women’s:
  - Resistance and resilience to historical oppression
  - Experiences with the service system related to violence
  - Consequences of violence on women, children, and families
  - Experiences with violence
- Indigenous women and professional’s
  - Solutions to violence against women
  - Family risk and protective factors
  - Individual/couple risk and protective factors
  - Cultural/community risk and protective factors
- Indigenous youth protective and risk factors at individual, familial, cultural and community levels
- Work with Older Indigenous Americans around wellness and mental health
OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK: HISTORICAL OPPRESSION AND RESILIENCE/SURVIVANCE

Historical Oppression

Conquest
Cultural invasion
Manipulation
Divide and rule

Resilience / Survivance

Unity
Cooperation
Cultural Synthesis
Organization
RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR AI/AN YOUTH WITHIN AN ECOSYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK

- **Societal:** Historical Oppression & Perceived Discrimination
- **Cultural:** Ethnic Identity, Spirituality, & Connectedness
- **Community:** School, Community, Peer Influence, & Social Support
- **Family:** Support, Income, Mental Health, & Trauma
- **Individual**
PERCENTAGES OF FACTORS WITH EMPIRICAL SUPPORT ACROSS ECOSYSTEMIC LEVELS

- Individual: 13%
- Familial: 41%
- Community: 23%
- Cultural: 16%
- Societal: 7%
HISTORICAL OPPRESSION AND IT’S MANIFESTATIONS
ECOSYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK

Societal level: (Historical Oppression) Conquest, Cultural invasion, Manipulation, Divide and rule

Community Level: Norms of Violence, Clashing Religious beliefs, Community Fragmentation, Perceived Inequity

Family Level: Family division, Parental impairment, Absent parental figure, and Intergenerational nature of violence, substance abuse, and parental impairments.

Individual/Couple: Jealousy, Substance Abuse, Violence/Adversarial Roles
METHODS: DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Note. Arrows depict the continual process of reconstructive analysis with standards of rigor for this phase, which include: negative case analysis, expert checking coding, and comparing findings with data.
### Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Size</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29 (14 professionals)</td>
<td>20 (11 m, 9 f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (mean, range)</strong></td>
<td>44, 22-76</td>
<td>40, 22-74</td>
<td>49, 26-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>12 (25%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College/Technical Degree</td>
<td>12 (25%)</td>
<td>12 (41%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
<td>8 (28%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s or Above</td>
<td>11 (22%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>36 (74%)</td>
<td>22 (76%)</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiethnic</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Raw numbers are listed, followed by percentage of respective sample. Within the subsample of women, 14 were also professionals, and the number of males and females within the professional populations are indicated by m and f, respectively.
PROTECTIVE FACTORS FROM A ECOSYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Societal Level: Unity, Cultural Synthesis, Cooperation, Organization

Cultural/Community Level: Community Infrastructure, Enculturation/Ethnic Identity, Non-violent Values, Elders

Family Level: Family Support, Family Role Models, Tight Knit Extended Family & Family Time

Individual/Couple: Supportive Partner, educational orientation, affirming talents and abilities, constructive coping, which included helping others and expressing emotions, faith, optimism and resilience perspectives, self-sufficiency and inner strength.
CULTURAL/COMMUNITY LEVELS: “WOMEN ARE SACRED...EVERY CHILD AND WOMAN ARE SACRED.”

Community infrastructure

Enculturation: Almost all (92%) women and 63% of professionals highlighted enculturation, or the importance of identifying with and learning about one’s cultural background.

“Find out about your roots, your background, where your parents came from, the cultural ways, the spiritual way all of that incorporated.”

“I think there should be a certain degree of pride, I am a [tribal member], I know how to speak my language. I know how to do, play the traditional games, the traditional songs and stories ... some of those traditional old time stories that were told by the elders. ... Preserving those things ... I am not only a citizen of the United States, but I am a [tribal member]. ...Our ancestors were here long before [non-Indigenous people.]...There is a lot of reasons to take pride.”

Non-violent Values: In total, 68% of women and over half (53%) of professionals emphasized the importance of values.

“Those morals and values that are so important. We shouldn’t hit each other to achieve what we need to achieve. You shouldn’t have to walk around in fear and wonder if you’re going to get hit.”
Elders: Almost all women (96%) and many professionals (58%) of professionals highlighted the importance of elders to the tribal communities. Elders played a strong role in setting behavioral expectations and instilling values.

“[when] Elders tell you something it’s the truth. They don’t make up stories. But we just need to get that out to the younger generation that’s coming up, so they won’t be so lost when they come up on a relationship--you know it is like knowing what to do. Say when you break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend. All they think about is just the anger and the anger gets the best [of them].”

Elders tended to play an instrumental role in promoting family time and family celebrations, which provided opportunities to transmit traditions.

“We always had dinners and our family and my mom’s side of the family and my dad side of the family, we always had dinners, whether it’s our house or their house, birthdays and almost every month we will go in somebody’s house somewhere.”
Family support: All of women and over half of professionals (53%) described the importance of family support.

- “Family is very important, the connection, and it’s kind of like if you don’t have that, it kind of like who are you?”
- “Me and my brother, I guess because we are being just I felt like shifted around—whether it’s between my mom and my dad and my grandma’s then—all we had was each other. So we had love for each other, we relied on each other, and we went through the same things.
- “My grandma and my grandpa stood with her and said, you know, we’ll take care of you, take care of the kids, do not worry.”

Family role models: Almost three-quarters (72%) of women and 63% of professionals highlighted the importance of role models, and without fail, women identified family members as their role models.

- “My grandmother…I really feel like my grandmother was my mom and my dad, so I was very, very close with her
- “Well my aunt, because she was so young, she would do things with me, you know, like take us to skating, take us to the movies, so we were always doing something fun. …When she was going to college you know, she was teaching me things at the same time and trying to tell me, you know, what I needed.” She added, “I could tell that she was trying to better herself and she was trying to better me. She taught me that I needed to learn, memorize my social security number and she taught me that I needed to build my vocabulary, because she was going to school at that time and say that, you need to do this, you need to do that, but she was teaching me at the young age.”
**FAMILY LEVEL: TIGHT KNIT EXTENDED FAMILIES & FAMILY TIME**

- **Tight Knit Extended Families: All women and 63% of professionals highlighted the support of tight-knit extended family support networks.**

  - “I had three uncles that lived near us and we all would go out, play softball, they would teach us how to play basketball even, even though I was small they tried to keep me in with the family like playing volleyball. Every Christmas or Thanksgiving event we would do it together.”

  - “So there was a lot of people to play with and have fun within everything so when we did have big family get-togethers it was really a big deal and it was a positive thing there usually wasn’t alcohol or anything like that there was always food….That’s pretty common for us and it still is.”

  - “I still have that sense of if something happens to the family, we are all circling the wagon and we are all going to help.”

  - “They’re just so close to family…. The community gatherings if they eat, let’s say they eat for somebody’s birthday or anniversary or wedding. The whole family is there and everybody participates.”

  - “My children have always been with me, and they’ve never been away from me. I haven’t left them here and there…When people see us, they say, they are like your little ducklings-- you are the mom and they are walking in a line behind you.”
IMPLICATIONS/FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1.) Increasing community engagement and awareness: Education about historical oppression, resilience/survivance, traditional teachings about women and children, complementary partnerships and relationships, values (respect, unity, harmony) that promote non-violence

2.) Bolstering the existing service system: Assess appropriateness of structure, integrate tribally developed service systems

3.) Enhancing competency and professional training: Educate tribal members to provide services

4.) Child-focused prevention and education strategies: Enculturation and ethnic identity programs to learn about tribal history, traditions, healthy relationships with self, other, the environment, teachings about non-violent values, promote ethnic pride

5.) Family focused interventions: Weaving healthy families, tribally based model of family resilience
The inherent strengths of Indigenous communities are readily identifiable.

Though strengths may have been overshadowed by historical oppression, there is still ample evidence of resilience.

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can learn from the strengths and resilience of Indigenous communities.

Building on strengths is a promising way to prevent violence in Indigenous communities.

Questions?
RESOURCES AND REFERENCES RELATED TO THIS WORK


