



Trauma, Intersectionality, and Identity-Based Oppression

Class 6



Mindfulness Facilitation

Evolution of Trauma

- Initial studies of trauma (20th century) focused on white men in combat
- **Problems:** failed to consider how differences in socialization btw white men & other marginalized groups could impact their responses to stressful events!
- 1960s/1970s, renewed interest in understanding trauma (Women's movement, Civil rights)
- Original conceptualization of trauma inappropriately generalized to women a, minority groups.
- Failed to take into social, cultural factors and how they impact an individual's response to stress.

trauma

DIRECT VIOLENCE

CULTURAL VIOLENCE

NATURAL VIOLENCE

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

political violence
torture
war
forced displacement
accidents
criminal violence
domestic violence
sexual abuse

hurricanes
tsunamis
wildfires
floods
drought
storms
earthquakes
natural death
volcanic eruptions

aggression
apartheid
racism
colonialism
discrimination
exploitation
poverty
disabilities
hunger
unemployment

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives.” — Audre Lorde

Intersectionality & Trauma

- Interrelatedness of trauma and “intersectional” identity-based oppression – *the accumulation of multiple forms of related subjugation (for example, based in racism, homophobia, transphobia, other gender-based oppression, and socioeconomic classism) that can cause and/or mediate traumatic experience.*
- **Intersectionality**: “the complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect” (Crenshaw)

https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality



Source: everydayfeminism.com/2014/04/kyriarchy-101/

Intersection of Oppression and Trauma

“Everyday racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of institutionalized oppression” may lead to

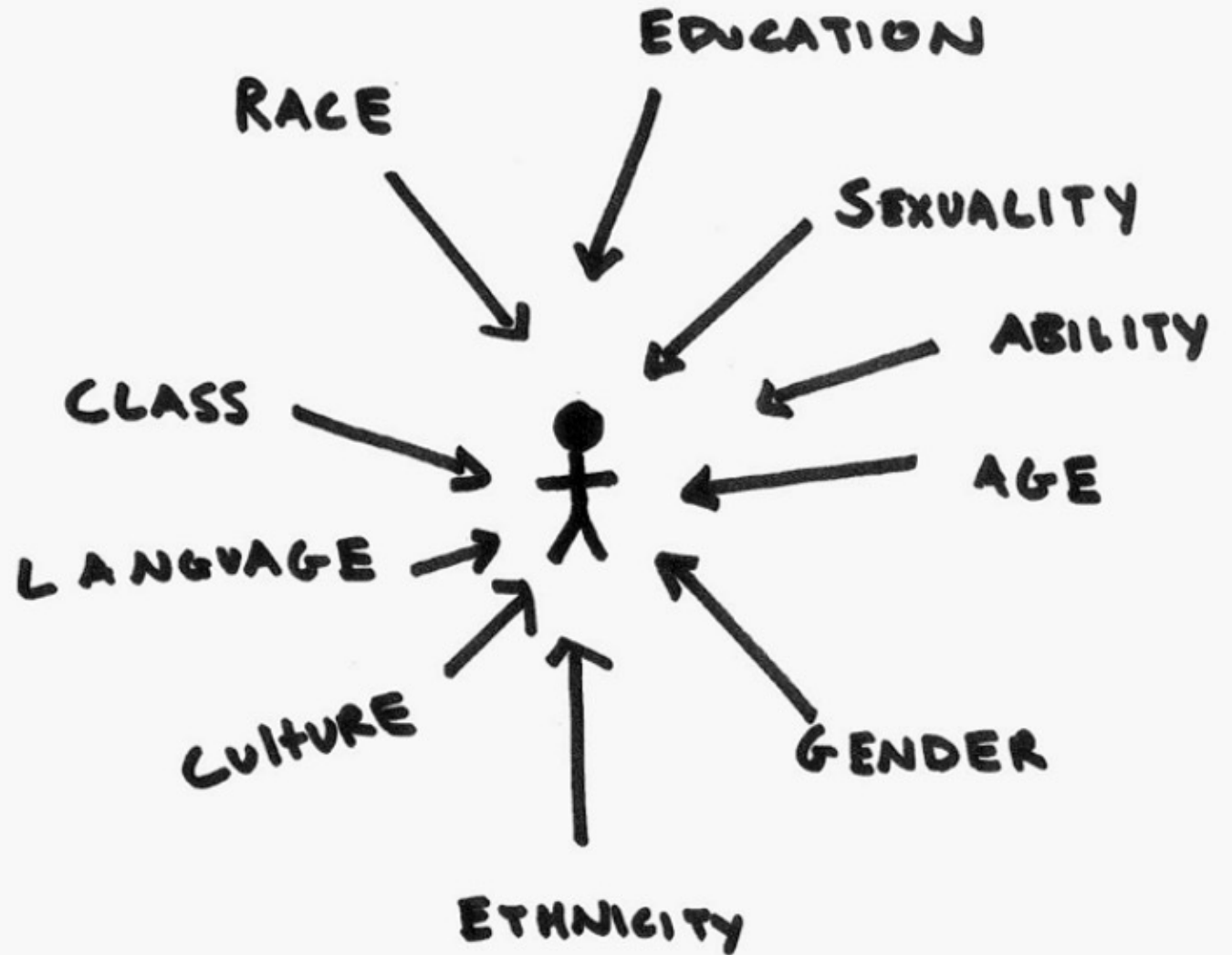
“posttrauma distress and dysfunction arising from doing battle every day against an army of small toxic agents.”

(Brown, 2008, citing Root, 1992, and Sue, 2003)



Impact of Intersectionality

- “So what do you call being impacted by multiple forces and then abandoned to fend for yourself? Intersectionality seemed to do it for me” (Crenshaw, Ted Talk).



(Graphic from International Women's Developmental Agency)

Racism and Trauma: What is racism?

- Racism is a phenomenon that is implemented by those with more power against those with less power.
- Racism is a belief in the inferiority of a person caused by prejudice against their ethnic group, phenotypic characteristics, or purported biological nature.
- Racist incidents are cognitive/affective assaults on one's ethnic self-identification. These assaults can be verbal attacks, physical attacks, or threats to livelihood, but because they are racially motivated, they strike the core of an individual's selfhood/identity.

Joy DeGruy example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf9QBnPK6Yg>

Racism and Trauma: Mental Health Effects

- Unequal access to mental health care
- Induce physiological and psychological reactions that can lead to adverse changes in mental health status (paranoia, hypervigilance, anxiety)
- Internalization of stereotypes that lower one's positive self evaluation and well-being.
- Exacerbate post-trauma symptoms in survivors of other traumas as well.

Racism: Traumatic?

Some take the perspective that racism is a significant source of emotional abusiveness and trauma for people of color. Traditional models of trauma and the diagnosis of PTSD does not include trauma from racism and should be broadened.

- Why are some in the field unwilling to label the experiences of racism as emotional abusive and traumatic?
- In what ways can experiences of racism, both overt and systemic, contribute to or exacerbate trauma for individuals and communities?



Intersectionality, Trauma & Identity-Based Oppression

- Interrelatedness of trauma and “intersectional” identity-based oppression – *the accumulation of multiple forms of related subjugation (for example, based in racism, homophobia, transphobia, other gender-based oppression, and socioeconomic classism) that can cause and/or mediate traumatic experience.*
- Intersectionality: “the complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect” (Crenshaw)
- What does that mean? Discrimination doesn’t happen in a bubble!
- Different kinds of prejudice can be amplified in different ways when put together.
- More than just race & gender – broadened to illustrate the interplay btw any kinds of discrimination.

Stigma (Goffman)

- What is stigma?
- stigmatized individuals are likely to interpret their interactions as being undermined by the dominant group, as they may justifiably anticipate rejection based on their marginalized status
- Research demonstrated the relationship btw *social stigma and negative health and MH outcomes*
- Internalize negative attitudes and direct them inward

Minority Stress (Meyer)

Marginalization and marginalized status of minorities increases vulnerability to traumatic & non-traumatic stress.

Meyer's Minority Stress Model: 4 Factors

- external, objective stressful events,
- the expectation of minority stress and the vigilance this expectation requires (stigma),
- the internalization of negative societal attitudes (internalized homophobia), and
- sexual orientation concealment.

Direct v. Insidious Trauma

- Direct trauma – (isolated event considered traumatic by DSM 5), easier to study and contain in practice?
- Insidious trauma – *“associated with the social status of an individual being devalued because a characteristic intrinsic to their identity is different from what is valued by those in power, for example, gender, color, sexual orientation, physical ability”* (Meyer, p. 24).

Insidious Trauma

- ***Insidious*** trauma is characterized by the frequent lower level, deleterious incidences that occur over a lifetime related to ones marginalized status
- “like drops of acid falling on stone”
 - “each drop by itself does little damage”
 - “just enough damage to render the next drop more damaging”
 - “over time a fissure develops...invisible”
 - “person may appear to crack ... when the apparent stressor seems small and not threatening at all”
- (Brown, 2008, citing Root, 1992, and Sue, 2003)

A photograph of a stack of nine smooth, light-colored stones balanced on a bed of dark sand. The stones are arranged in a vertical column, with the top stone being the smallest and the bottom stone being the largest. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape. The text "Mindfulness Facilitation" is overlaid in the center of the image.

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CASE EXAMPLE: SARA



See handout

Reading Reflection

- Considering the diverse identities and experiences within the LGBT community, how might intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, social class, culture, religion, age, and ability status influence the experience of trauma and its impact on mental health?
- Why is it important for therapists (and others) to consider the intersectionality of identities, such as race, social class, sexuality, age, and disability, when working with fat women?



A photograph of a stack of nine smooth, light-colored stones balanced on a bed of dark sand. The stones are arranged in a vertical column, with the top stone being the smallest and the bottom stone being the largest. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown. The text "Mindfulness Facilitation" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and partially overlapping the stones.

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