

# Sexual Victimization of Black Males

19<sup>th</sup> Annual  
MASOC/MATSA Joint Conference  
Preventing Sexual Violence Through Assessment, Treatment and Safe  
Management

# Who is Robert Wright?

- Social Work Private Practitioner
- Former:
  - Correctional Mental Health Worker (WSP)
  - Child Welfare Administrator
  - Ex. Dir. Child & Youth Strategy
- Facilitator, ManTalk



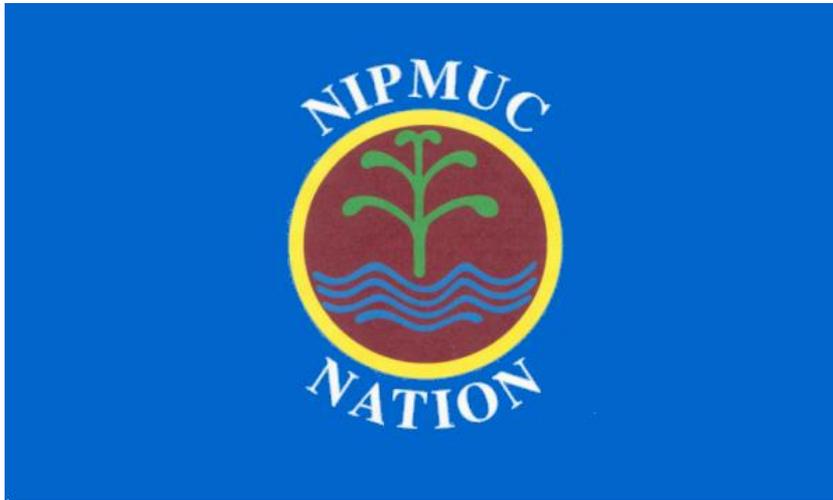
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# Logistics, Warnings, Self-Care

- Conference room rules, bathroom, exits
- Trigger and trauma warnings
- Racism – North America's Original Sin



# Indigenous Acknowledgement



I would like to acknowledge the people of the Nipmuc Nation, who are the traditional custodians of the Land on which we hold these meetings.

I would like to pay my respects to their Elders and to other Indigenous persons who are in attendance.

# Workshop Objectives

## WHAT:

- Explore the History of and effect of sexual abuse on Black men
- Introduce an understanding of cultural pain and racially-based impediments to disclosure
- Discussion of treatment options/considerations

## WHY:

- Black male sexual assault is dramatically under-reported
- Generic cultural competence training may not be powerful enough to reach Black male victims or promote increased disclosure

# Your Questions Explored

- In Two's or Three's sit in small groups and ask your partners:
- Why did you come to this workshop?

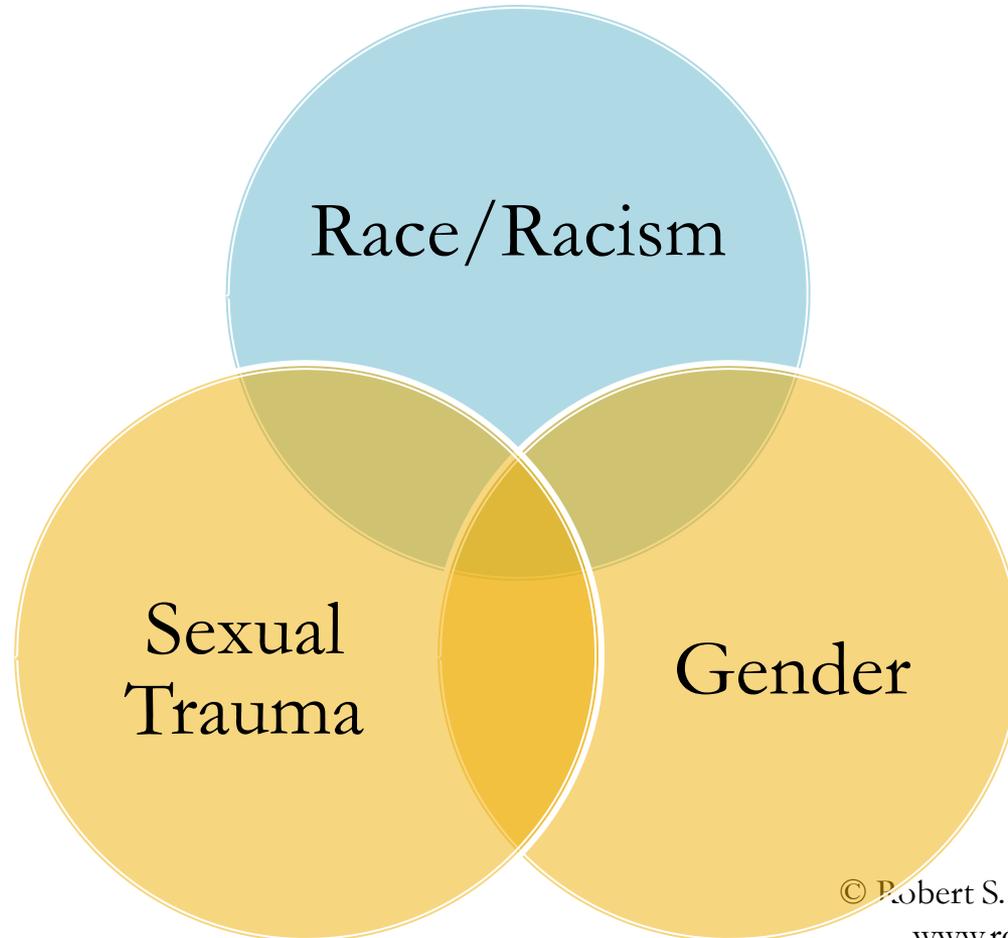
And

- What is the #1 thing you want to leave here having discussed or explored?
- Each group report back one answer to each question

# Key Concepts

- Sexual Assault – unwanted touching, forced participation, forced exposure . . . Of a sexual nature or for sexual gratification
- Sexual Abuse – connotes abuse of a power differential
- Sexuality Abuse – refers to acts perpetrated against a person with the effect of harming their healthy sexual development
- Healthy Masculinity – a sense of “manliness” that is devoid of the stereotypical necessity for control, violence, and emotional distance
- Racial Identity – ascribing and relating to the cultural norms and values of a particular ethno-cultural group

# Intersection of Concepts



# Working with Race: A Brief Introduction to Cultural Competence

- Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures:
  - A. Understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from others
  - B. Understand the different social and cultural realities we work in
  - C. Cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
  - D. Generate and interpret a variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
  - E. Understand structural oppression and the nature of white privilege, and demonstrate a commitment to social justice

# A) Nichols' Model for Understanding Cultural Difference

- Different world cultures developed out of differing physical and socio-political environments which shaped differing world views. Nichols says we can see these differences among 4 domains:
  - Axiology (values)
  - Epistemology (way of knowing)
  - Logic (principles governing reason)
  - Process (practice of problem solving)
- These **substantive** differences should **substantially** affect the way we engage with clients from differing cultural backgrounds
- We should acknowledge emerging cultures: Women, LGBTQ, “Crips” (differently abled), etc.

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

DEVELOPED BY EDWIN J. NICHOLS, PH.D.

ETHNIC GROUPS ETHNIC WORLDVIEW	AXIOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY			LOGIC	PROCESS
		APPLIED	PEDAGOGY	METHODOLOGY		
<b>EUROPEAN</b> <b>EURO-AMERICAN</b>	<b>Member-Object</b> The highest value lies in the object or the acquisition of the object	<b>One knows through Counting and Measuring</b>	<b>Parts to Whole</b>	<b>Linear and Sequential</b> <i>-Assembly line-</i>	<b>Dichotomous</b> <i>Either/Or</i> <i>-Newtonian theory-</i>	All sets are repeatable and reproducible <i>-Technology-</i>
<b>AFRICAN</b> <b>AFRICAN AMERICAN</b> <b>LATINO/A</b> <b>ARAB</b>	<b>Member-Member</b> The highest value lies in the relationships between persons	<b>One knows through Symbolic Imagery and Rhythm (function)</b> <i>-Gladwell <u>Blink</u>-</i>	<b>Whole Holistic Thinking</b> <i>-The BIG picture-</i>	<b>Critical Path analysis</b> <i>-Cut to the chase-</i>	<b>Diunital</b> <i>Union of opposites</i> <b>Difrasismo</b> <i>-Aztec thought-</i> <b>The In Between</b> <i>Ibn 'Arabi</i> <i>-Quantum theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks <i>-Black church-</i>
<b>ASIAN</b> <b>ASIAN AMERICAN</b> <b>POLYNESIAN</b>	<b>Member-Group</b> The highest value lies in the cohesiveness of the group	<b>One knows through Transcendental Striving</b>  <i>-Tree the forest-</i>	<b>Whole and parts are seen simultaneously</b> <i>-To read a Chinese word-</i>	<b>Cyclical and Repetitive</b> <i>-Stroke order in writing a Chinese word-</i>	<b>Nyaya</b> <i>-The objective world is conceived independent of thought and mind-</i> <i>-Chaos theory-</i>	All sets are independently interrelated in the harmony of the universe <i>-Keiretsu-</i>
<b>NATIVE AMERICAN</b>	<b>Member-Great Spirit</b> The highest value lies in oneness with the Great Spirit	<b>One knows through Reflection and Spiritual Receptivity</b> <i>-Purification rites-</i>	<b>Whole is seen in cyclic movement</b> <i>-Seasons-</i> <i>-Medicine Wheel-</i>	<b>Environmentally experiential reflection</b> <i>-Rites of Passage-</i>	<b>Great Mystery</b> <i>-A set of 4 and a set of 3 form the whole-</i> <i>-Super string theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through the elements, plant, animal, and spiritual networks <i>-White Buffalo-</i>

# Africentricity

- The assertion of a worldview that places all people of African descent at its centre, asserts a common culture, philosophy, and history, and critiques, and perhaps even rewrites global history from this perspective

## B) Social, Cultural and Historical Context

- North American Diversity is fraught with complicated and tragic history
  - **Enslavement of Africans, Attempted Genocide of First Nations, Global strife resulting in trans-global immigration, oppression and social exclusion of Women, LGBTQ and “Crips”, etc.**
- A local knowledge of how our **racist (use broadly here)** history is a living legacy is necessary: Africville, Cornwallis, Names of Sport Teams, Racist Place Names, Colonial Nature of Public Celebrations

# African American Social, Cultural and Historical Reality: Begins with . . . European Trade Triangle



# Results in . . .

- A cluster social problems and psycho-social phenomena described by Dr. Joy DeGruy as . . . Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome:
  - Vacant Esteem (c.f. Peter Bell's concept of Cultural Pain)
  - Ever Present Anger
  - Racist Socialization

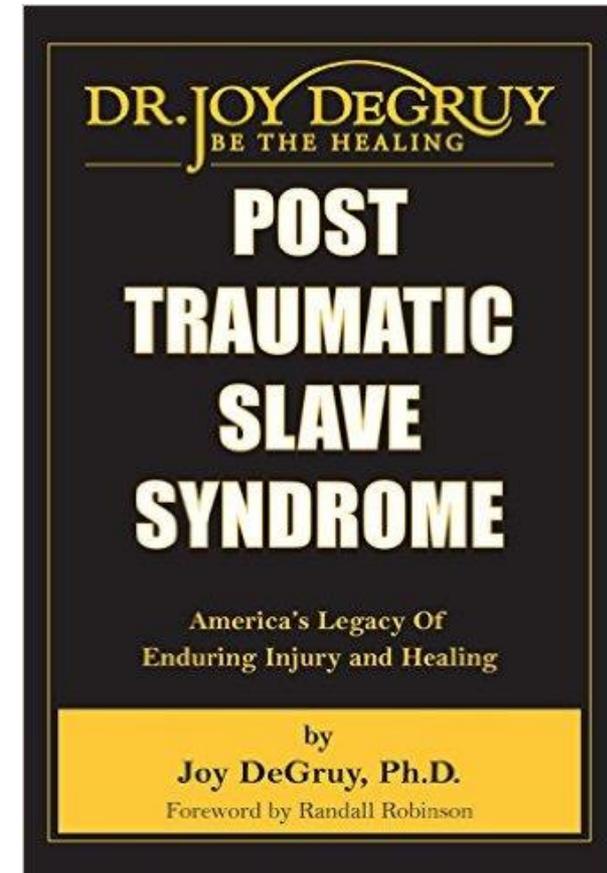
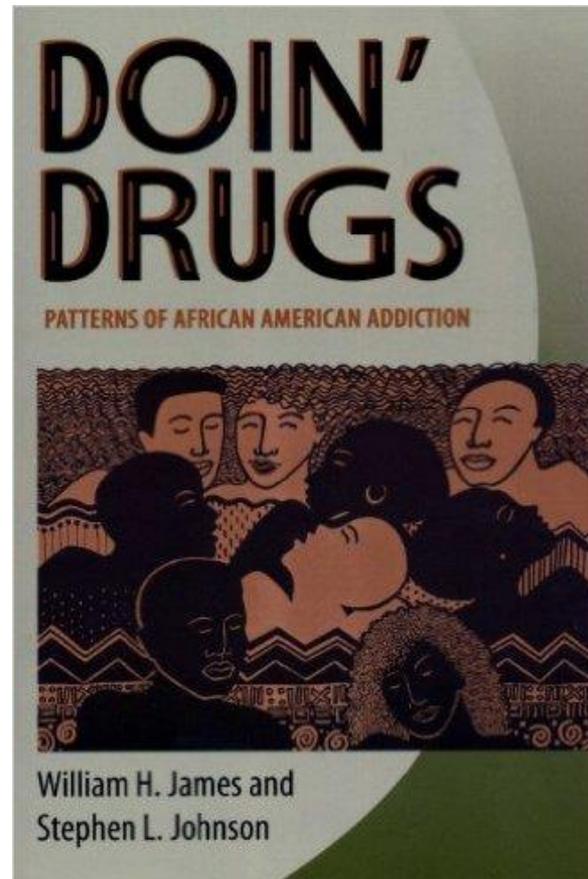
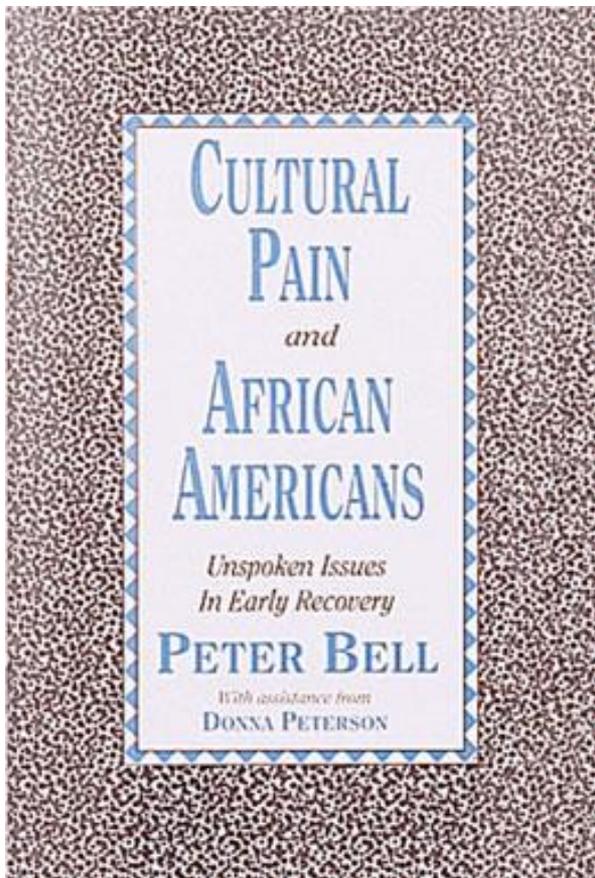
# Bell on Cultural Pain

- “Feelings of insecurity, confusion, uncertainty, and inadequacy are all examples of cultural pain. The history of slavery, racism, and segregation, added to today's conflicting expectations and pressure of being a(n) . . . African American, all combine to create cultural pain. By addressing self-identity issues, you can begin to develop new coping skills that enhance your own recovery.” (From Hazelden.org’s description of the Bell text)
- The added shame of emasculating un/under-employment, the increased stigma of homophobia in the AA community, the confusion and struggle to accept or reject “the hustle”, perceptions of selling out when one “goes straight”

# Impediments to Disclosure and Treatment

- These phenomena are internal/clinical and cultural impediments to help seeking
- Our inability to see, acknowledge, substantiate and engage these phenomena result in poor client engagement and treatment outcomes

# Resources Describing Cultural Effects and Patterns



# PTSS and Cultural Pain Q&A

- In Twos and Threes, discuss your understanding of PTSS and the concept of Cultural Pain:
- How have you seen these concepts in the lives of your clients?
- How have you engaged these phenomena/ raised them with clients/established them as a focus of clinical intervention?
- Come back and report one of these things back to the larger group

## C) Appropriate Attitudes

- Cultural competence requires that practitioners VALUE diversity.
- On a continent with a history of multiple founding peoples, that was built up on the foundation of ethnic/immigrant labour, and whose future depends on immigration, any other attitude should reasonably be seen as unacceptable.

## D) Communicating Across Cultures

- In sociology: the context of a person's world view is necessary for the proper understanding and interpretation of behaviour and rhetoric (Voyvodic, pp. 16, 17)

# Elmar Holenstein

- Before meaningless, unnatural, non-human or immature behaviour and corresponding values are attributed to people of another culture, it is better to begin by doubting the adequacy of one's own judgment and knowledge

# Elmar Holenstein Paraphrased

Before you conclude that I am crazy  
you should consider the possibility that  
you are stupid!

# Communicating About Culture

- Cultural competence requires the ability to comfortably and competently ask clients about cultural issues that may be a consideration in the context of your work with them. Consistent with expectation of CFI

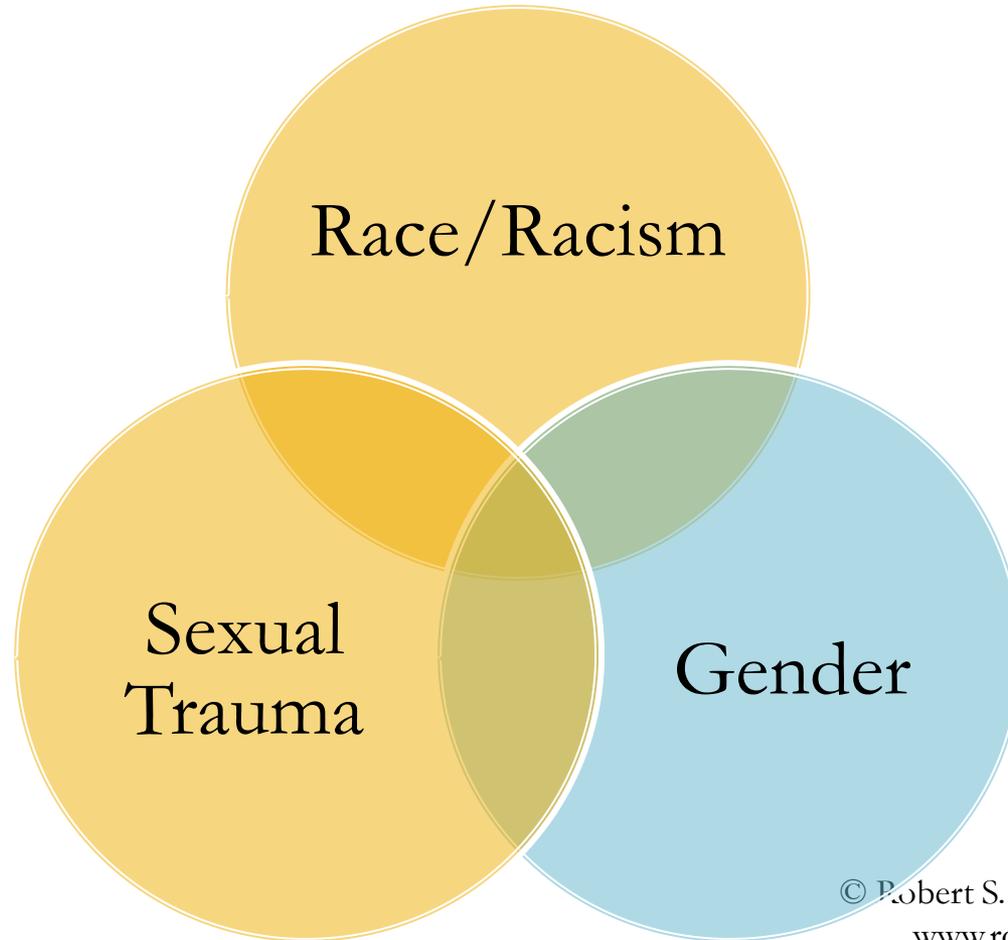
Figure. Flow of Cultural Formulation Interview domains for cultural assessment



# E) Social Justice Commitment

- We must
  - understand the nature of privilege
  - demonstrate an awareness of structural discrimination
  - demonstrate an active anti-racism/anti-discrimination programme
- What does this look like at your workplace/setting? (whole group discussion)

# Intersection of Concepts



# **Working with Men: Power of Victimization**

**The Measure of Victimization Experience and  
Trauma Symptomatology Among Protective Custody Inmates  
at  
Washington State Penitentiary:  
Implications for Returning Persons to General Population**

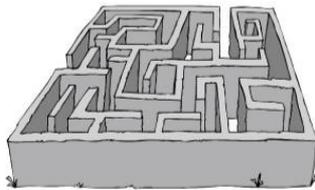
**Robert S. Wright  
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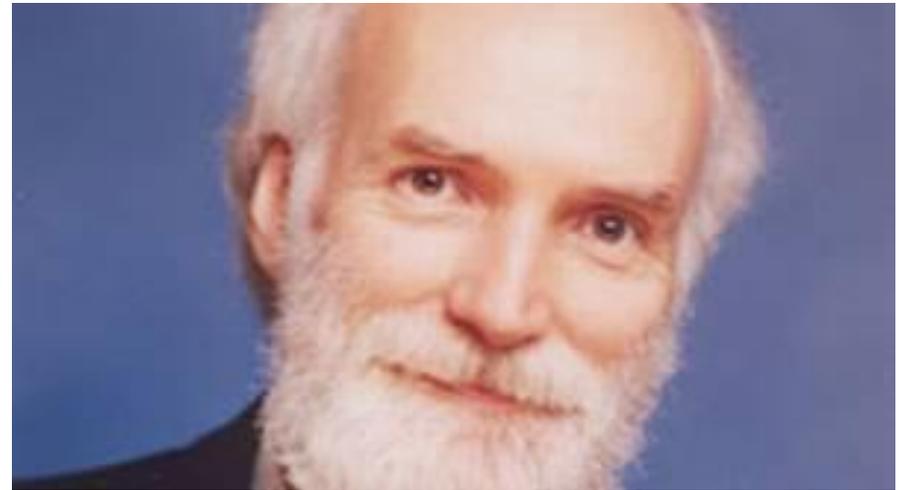
# The Invisible Boy

 Health Canada Santé Canada

## The Invisible Boy: Revising the Victimization of Male Children and Teens



Canada 



- Fred Matthews, Sparrow Lake Alliance
- Strongest, earliest advocate for male victims

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# Working with Men: What is ManTalk

- Established in Fall of 2011
- Professionally supported, educational, and emotionally supportive group for male victims of sexual abuse
- A pro-bono service of my private practice
- Meets twice a month on the first and third Wednesdays
- Received some funding from DOHW, then SVS-DCS



**HALIFAX  
PRO-BONO  
COUNSELLING  
CLINIC...**

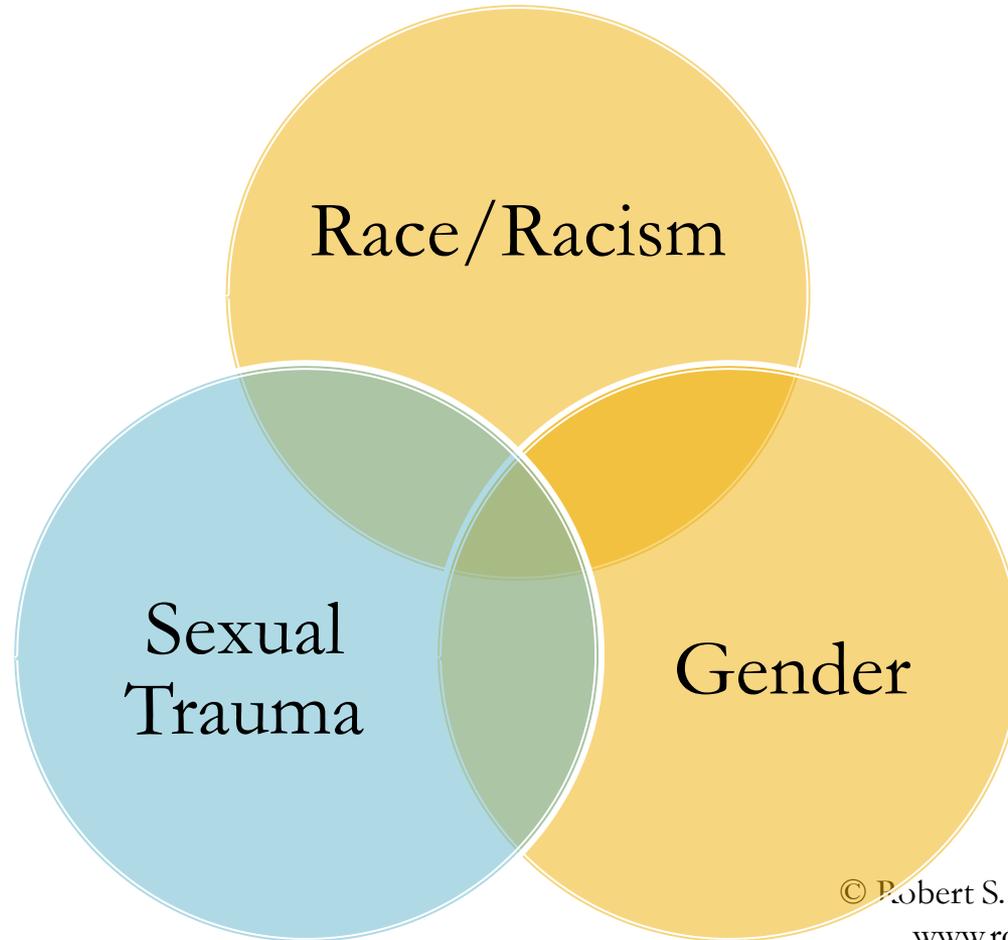


**MANTALK**

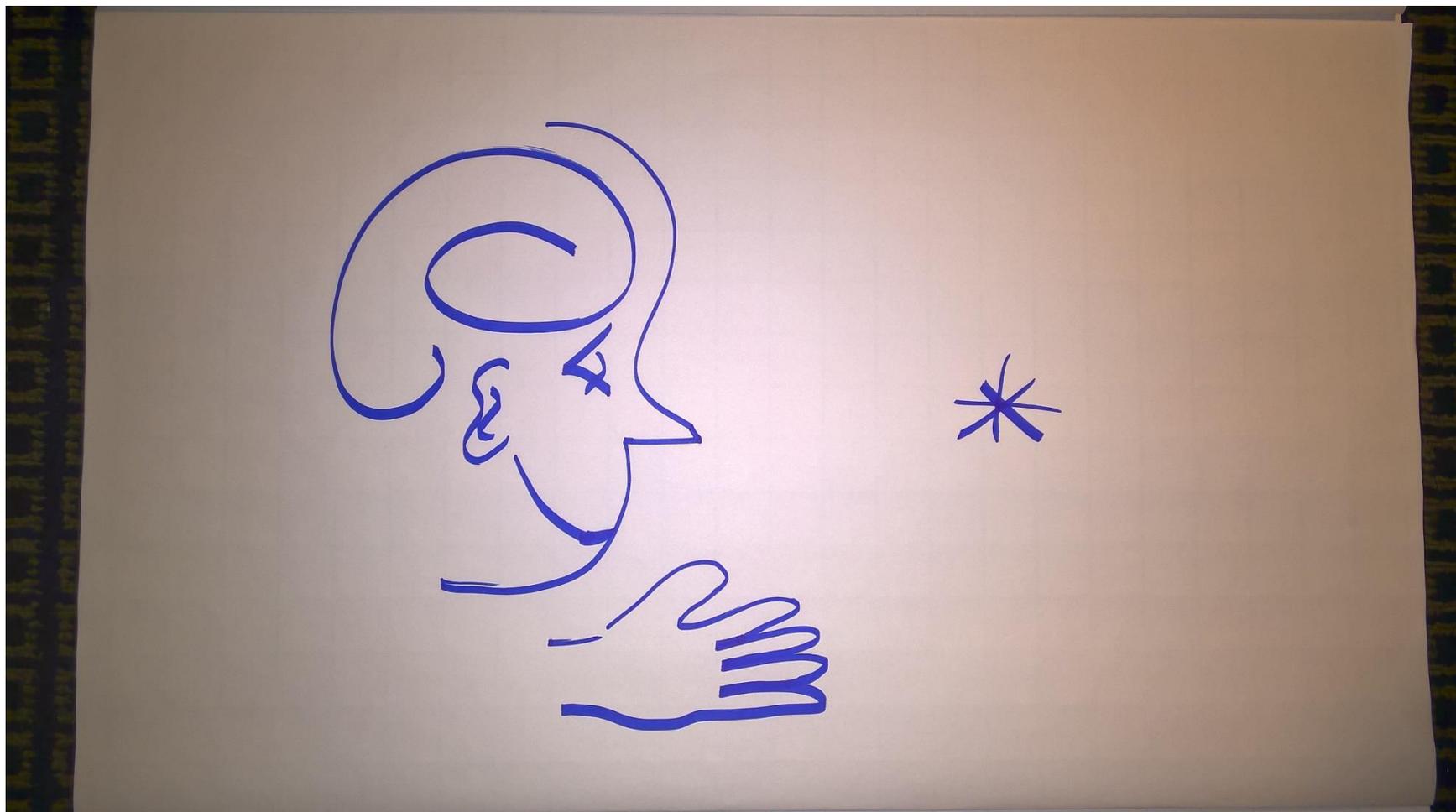
# What Does “Male-Inclusion” Look Like?

- Matthews’ Four Propositions
  - Articulate **diverse** male-centred points of view
  - Support male victims as they search for balance in their struggle to heal
  - Honour and protect female victims’ gains and women’s leadership in breaking the silence about violence and abuse
  - Envision the empowerment of all stories into a coherent and inclusive perspective that we can collectively and respectfully own and use in the struggle to reduce and eliminate interpersonal violence.

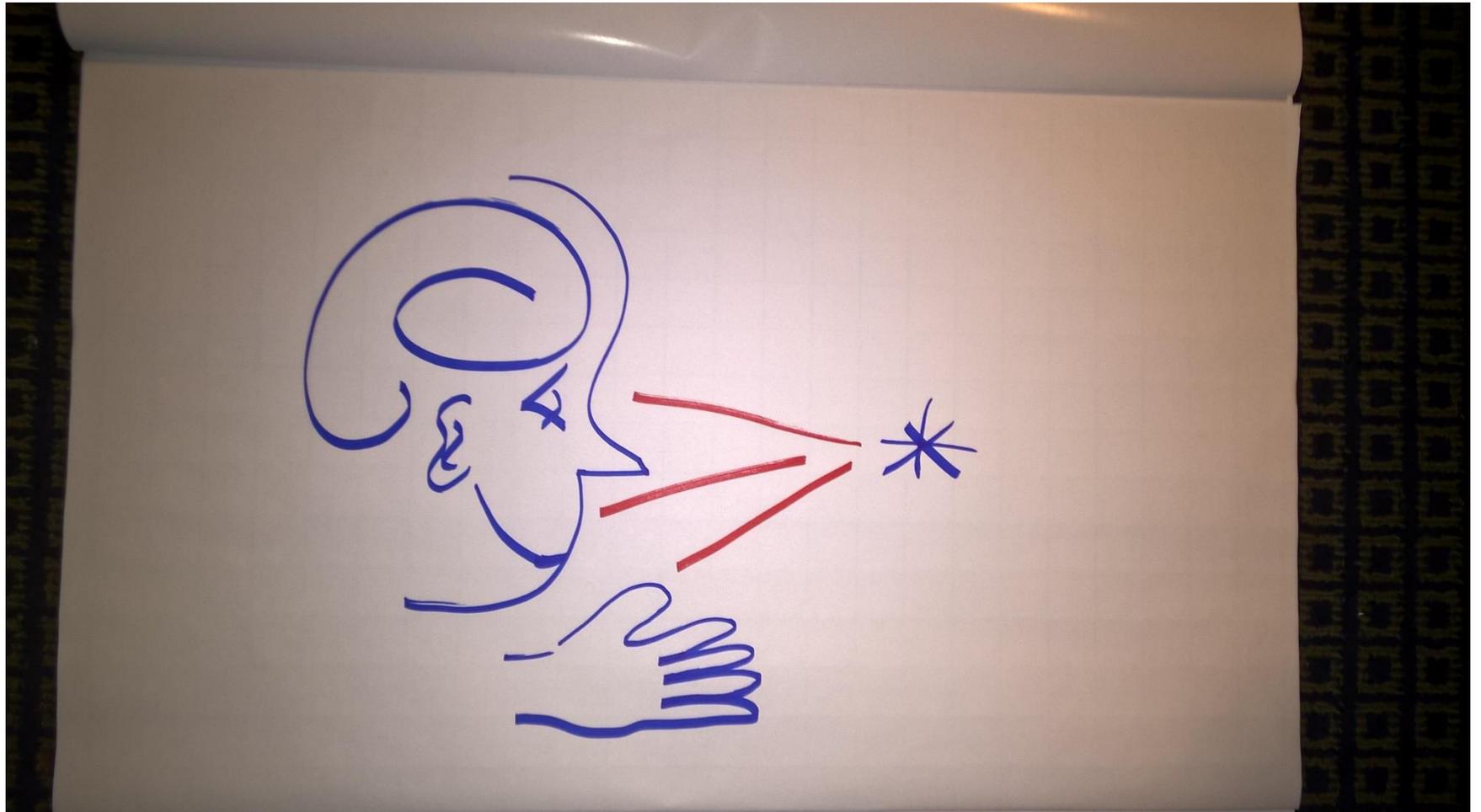
# Intersection of Concepts



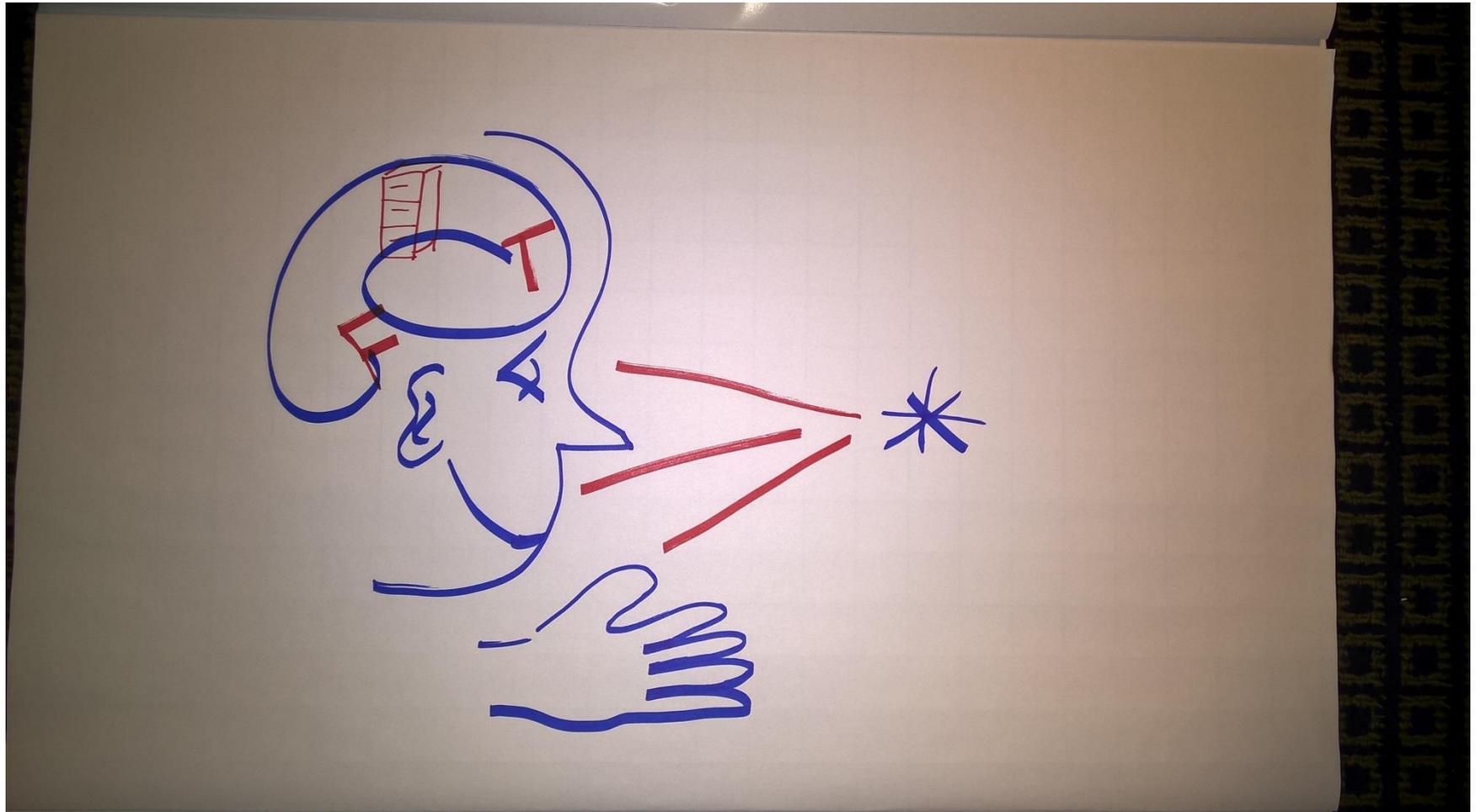
# A Simple Model of Trauma



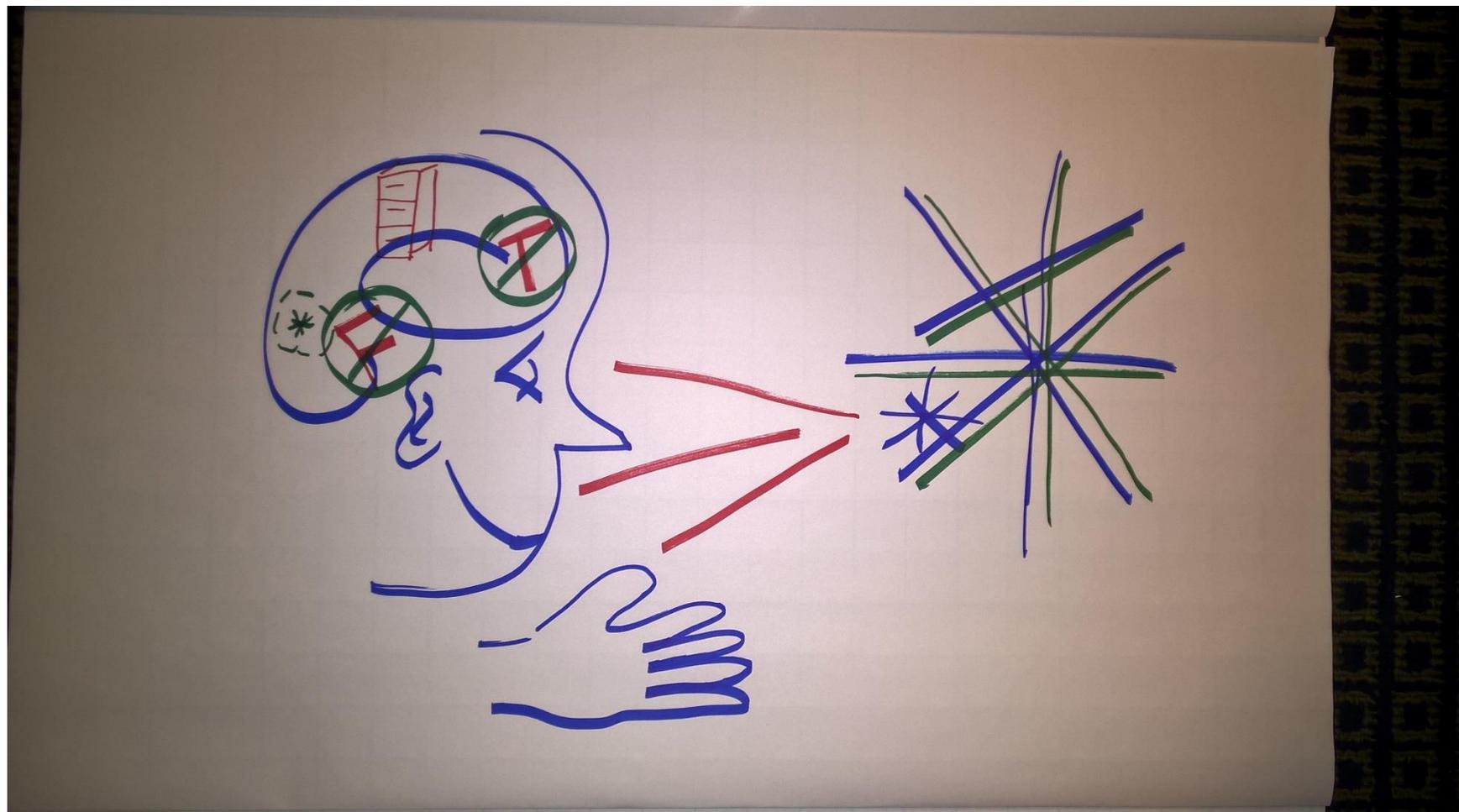
# A Simple Model of Trauma



# A Simple Model of Trauma



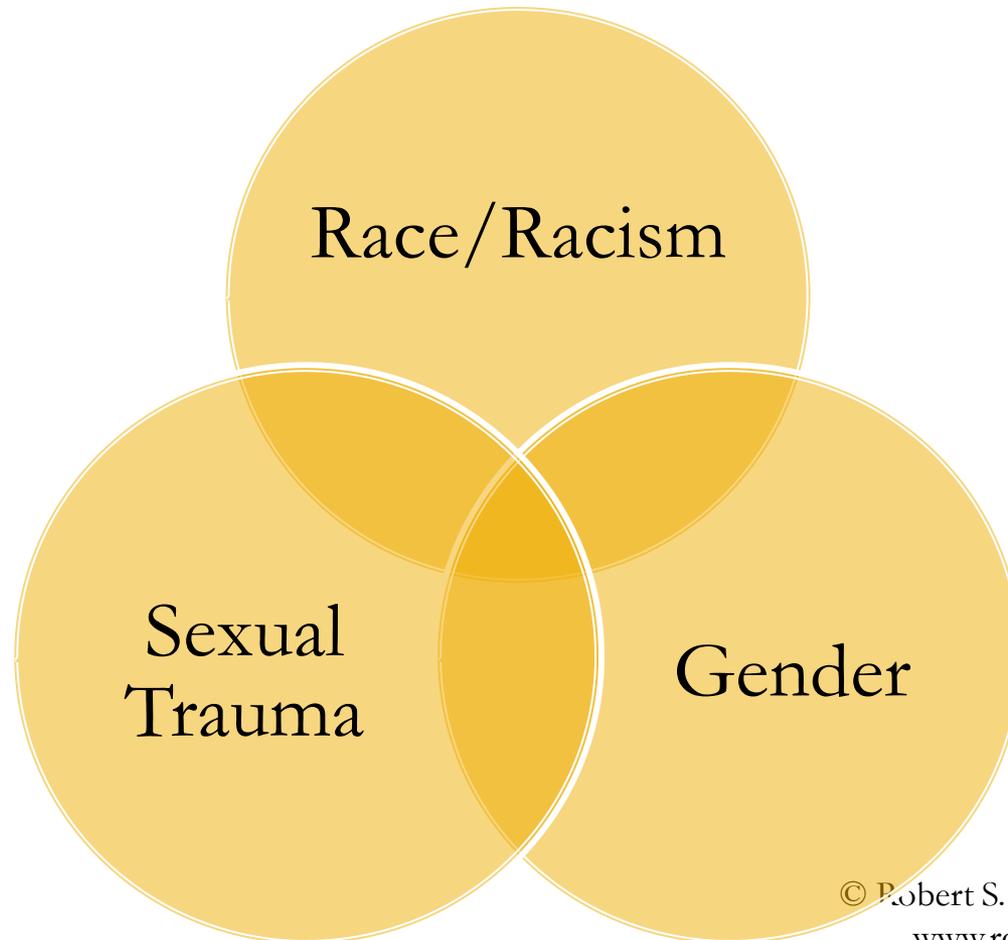
# A Simple Model of Trauma



# Critical Understanding of Trauma

- Trauma is a highly individualized experience
- The capacity to “think and feel” about an issue is shaped by our past experience
- “Making meaning” and integrating experience into our identity is a key aspect of healing
- Culture shapes how we make meaning and construct our identity
  
- Ergo . . . Understanding and engaging culture is essential to treating trauma!
- Understanding the social history of trauma within the culture is powerful!

# Considering the Intersection



# History of Black Male Sexual Victimization

## ■ In Slavery

- Black women's sexual abuse in slavery is well documented
- Male bodies similarly eroticized and fetishized
- Male genital torture and mutilation well documented
- Males forced, powerless spectators of Black women's rape
- Males forced to rape Black women while white men watched
- Forced "slave breeding"
- Males sexually assaulted by male slave owners (>with proximity)
- Males sexually assaulted by female slave owners

(Foster. T. (2011). The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery. Journal of the History of Sexuality 20, 2. pp. 445-464)

# History of Black Male Sexual Victimization

- After Slavery
  - Literature is limited
  - Similar patterns continue to exist
  - Brutal attacks on Black men often involve genital torture and mutilation
  - Masculinity of Black males under constant threat
  - Increased opportunities for sexual exploitation



# History of Black Male Sexual Victimization

- More modern times
  - Black bodies eroticized and fetishized
  - higher incidence of child abuse
  - higher incidence of being in care and incarceration (youth and adult)
  - ubiquity of abuse in oppressive institutions
  - Hip hop framing of male sexuality
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR6Wy9Lhjr0> @12:40



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# Consequences of Sexual/Sexuality Abuse

- Disturbing patterns of Black male criminal engagement
  - Hyper-masculine bravado in Black male criminality
  - Human trafficking and pimping (cf. Smith, T. (2000). Pimping and Prostitution in Halifax in the Early 1990's: The Evolution of a Moral Panic)
- Disturbing patterns of Black male misogyny and homophobia (depicted in hip hop culture)
- Disturbing patterns of Black male substance use and trafficking (Amos, et al, 2008)
- Disturbing patterns of Black male interpersonal violence
  - Greatest offense is “dissing” or “punking”

# Towards Greater Engagement of Black Men

- Remember Matthews' Four Propositions
  - Articulate **diverse** male-centred points of view: focus on exploring the Black male point of view
  - Support male victims as they search for balance in their struggle to heal: This may mean acknowledging and coopting racial anger, misogyny and homophobia. Patience is the therapists' greatest virtue
  - Honour and protect female victims' gains and women's leadership in breaking the silence about violence and abuse: Particularly the role of the Black woman in the history of AA struggle and resistance, and the role of the Black mother
  - Envision the empowerment of all stories into a coherent and inclusive perspective that we can collectively and respectfully own and use in the struggle to reduce and eliminate interpersonal violence: Particularly once Black men are beginning to heal they can begin to see themselves as fellow sufferers with white men, women and others who suffer
- Acknowledge the living legacy of historical and personal harm
- Make race transparent at all stages of engagement, beginning at intake
- Screen for Black male sexual victimization
- Acknowledge systemic abuse of Black males by white patriarchy

# Acknowledgements

- My mother
  - For providing the safety net of her sofa, though I haven't needed it yet
- My daughter and my son
  - For the sacrifices they make that enables me to do this work
- My pantheon of mentors, models, and ancestors
- My sisters
  - For their constant love and care (though they threaten to work me to death!)
- My lovers, including my ex-wife
  - For walking with me on my own journey of racial and sexual healing

# Q & A



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**END**

# Is Feminism Still Relevant?

- Feminism is an emancipatory theory that seeks to right injustice and promote social inclusion. It is feminism, with its inclusive lens of intersectionality, that has been responsible for much of the progress made in the SA field.
- As male stories begin to be voiced more centrally in the SA discourse we will see that male victimization is fueled in our society by the same forces that are at the root of the oppression of other peoples.
- As Black male stories begin to be voiced we will see that Black male victimization is fueled by patriarchy and racism. An intersectional approach will be very powerful
- A male-centric, emancipatory theory, with a powerful analysis, model of practice and critical mass of practitioners does not yet exist. (What we have seen from the Men's Rights and men's liberation movements is not a progressive, male-centric, emancipatory voice.)
- Feminism is still relevant

# History of Work with ANS

- “At-Risk”, Inner-city Youth – Code language for Black Youth
- Co-author of The Nia Centre – Africentric Substance Abuse Prevention Programme 1993-1997
- Race Relations – Growing up Black and Proud
- Racial Equity Committee NSBS
  - Cultural Competence in the Law
  - Judicial Diversity Advocate
- Lead author ANSMHAI
- Founding member ACPAC
- Cultural Competence Educator

# History of Work with Boys and Men

- Early Work in Poverty and Homelessness – Turning Point Outreach, Shelter for Men
- Student Support Worker – “At-Risk”, Inner-city Youth
- Child Protection
- Race Relations in Education– Growing up Black and Proud
- Correctional Mental Health - WSP
- Child Protection Clinician/Administrator
- Child & Youth Strategy
- Private Practice

# ManTalk's greatest accomplishments

- Established a pro-bono service to male victims
- Has been continuous since 2012 except for storm interruptions
- Has contributed male voice to current provincial SA discourse
- Has created a non-misogynist, healthy masculinity space for men
- Open acceptance by other SA service providers
- Has served a diversity of men: ANS, trans, diverse SES, queer and straight
- Training ground for interns and associates

# ManTalk's Greatest Challenges

- Restricted by lack of funding and integration into SA network\*
- **Racial diversity is insufficient**
- Sexual orientation diversity is insufficient
- Based in a private practice

# The Nia Centre

- Africentric Substance Abuse Programme
  - Youth Development
  - Africentric Curriculum – Growing up Black and Proud (Bell, 1992)
  - Inter-active Small Group Work
  - Gender-segregated Groups
  - Skills-based
  - Formally Recognized by Systems (course credit in school)
  - Community Involvement (youth public service, Black men's/women's groups established)