



NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS

CLINICAL WEBINARS

FOR HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS

TRANSLATING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Supporting Black Men's Mental Health Through a Culturally Responsive Approach

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Ryan C. Warner, Ph.D., is a sought-after licensed psychologist, speaker, and consultant. He received a PhD in Counseling Psychology from Marquette University. He has conducted speaking engagements and trainings at both national and international levels, has been published in various peer-reviewed journals, and has accelerated meaningful change within small and large organizations. He is an expert in the study of microaggressions, psychological resilience, and unconscious bias, and his message has reached millions of people globally.

Disclosures/Conflicts of Interest

I do not have any conflicts of interest and any disclosures for this presentation, including commercial support, financial support, or any relationship that could be construed as a conflict of interest.

1

Describe ecological exposures that influence mental health treatment for Black men.

2

Identify evidence-based frameworks rooted in social justice to promote cultural healing and well-being.

3

Analyze culturally responsive, trauma-informed strategies to best assess and treat Black men in clinical practice.

Learning Objectives



What is Means to be a Man

Category	Theme	Definition
What it means to be a man	Gradual process: Growth/maturity	You don't become a man overnight. There are things you have to go through and experience before you become a man
	Responsibility: Take care of business	A man handles his business (school, work, family). A man does what needs to be done
	Provider	Providing for your needs and your family's needs
	Mentor	A man helps other people get where they want to go
	Stand alone	A man stands on his own and supports himself without help from others
	Sacrifice	Doing what's needed to get the job done. You may not want to do it, but you do it because you have to
	Family oriented	Taking care of your family and doing what's necessary to support them
	Characteristics of your father	Being able to care yourself just as good as or better than your father

Mincey, K., Alfonso, M., Hackney, A., & Luque, J. (2014). Understanding masculinity in undergraduate African American men: A qualitative study. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 8(5), 387-398.

What is Means to be a Black Man

Category	Theme	Definition
What it means to be a Black man	Something to prove	As a Black man you have something to prove to yourself, society, your family, and others that you aren't a statistic and you can achieve
	Responsibility	You have a lot to live up to being a Black man. You have stereotypes to overcome and a history to uphold
	Strong: strength	Black men are the strongest of all men. Black men have a lot to go through so you have to be strong to overcome that
	Attitude	There is a feeling of power, strength, honor, and so on, when they think about being a Black man
	Stereotypes	Overcoming the stereotypes people have about you



Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H96BP91-6sE>



Did You Know?

Black boys were more than **five times as likely** as their peers to be suspended in kindergarten through third grade (Chow, Gaylor, Grindal, Tunzi, Wei, & Tiruke, 2021)

Black men ages 18 to 24 are **12 times more likely** to be imprisoned than are white males of the same age (Bronson & Carson, 2019)

Black adults living below the poverty line are **more than twice as likely** to report serious psychological distress as U.S. adults who enjoy greater financial security (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2019)



Historic Truths

Psychologists created, sustained, and promulgated ideas of human hierarchy (e.g., eugenicists) through the construction, study, and interpretation of racial difference (Cummings Center, 2021)

The field of psychology has not historically supported research on communities of color (Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie, & Mortenson, 2020)

Psychologists created and promoted the widespread application of psychological tests and instruments that have been used to disadvantage many communities of color (Anderson & Mayes, 2010)

Today's Reality

- ▶ 7% of Black men received mental health services within the past few years
- ▶ The death rate from suicide for Black men was more than four times greater than for Black women
- ▶ Among Black men, the prevalence of depression concurrent with substance use disorders has increased over the years from 9.49% to 21.34%
- ▶ Black men are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia and less likely to be diagnosed with affective disorders than White men, even though studies have found that rates of both disorders among these groups are comparable

Systemic Barriers to Seeking Mental Healthcare

- ▶ Racism and discrimination
- ▶ Lack of diversity in health care
- ▶ Misdiagnosis and clinician bias
- ▶ Poor competency among non-black clinicians
- ▶ Whiteness as a foundation to mental health care

Cultural Barriers to Seeking Mental Healthcare

- ▶ Negative past clinical experiences
- ▶ Distrust of the medical industry
- ▶ Cultural mistrust of healthcare providers
- ▶ Black masculinity norms

Culturally Responsive Treatment Approaches



Interpersonal

- ▶ Build trust through a collaborative clinical partnership
- ▶ Ask Black men about previous clinical encounters with the health care system
- ▶ Utilize culturally sensitive assessment and intervention strategies and techniques
- ▶ Be willing to address the issues of race when appropriate and to validate Black men client experiences, even if it differs from your own experiences



Interpersonal Continued...

- ▶ Use an authentic, gradual approach when collecting information
- ▶ Identify and build on strengths
- ▶ Discuss treatment options within a holistic framework of health promotion
- ▶ Widen your inquiry to address sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts



Clinical Interventions



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Person-Centered Therapy

- ▶ The three components of this Person-Centered Therapy (congruence, empathetic understanding, and unconditional acceptance) create a therapeutic atmosphere and bond between the therapist and the client
- ▶ This treatment modality allows Black men clients to stay in control and direct the therapeutic process
- ▶ Creating a safe, supportive, non-authoritarian space may challenge the persistent belief that social and treatment services try to impose White American values



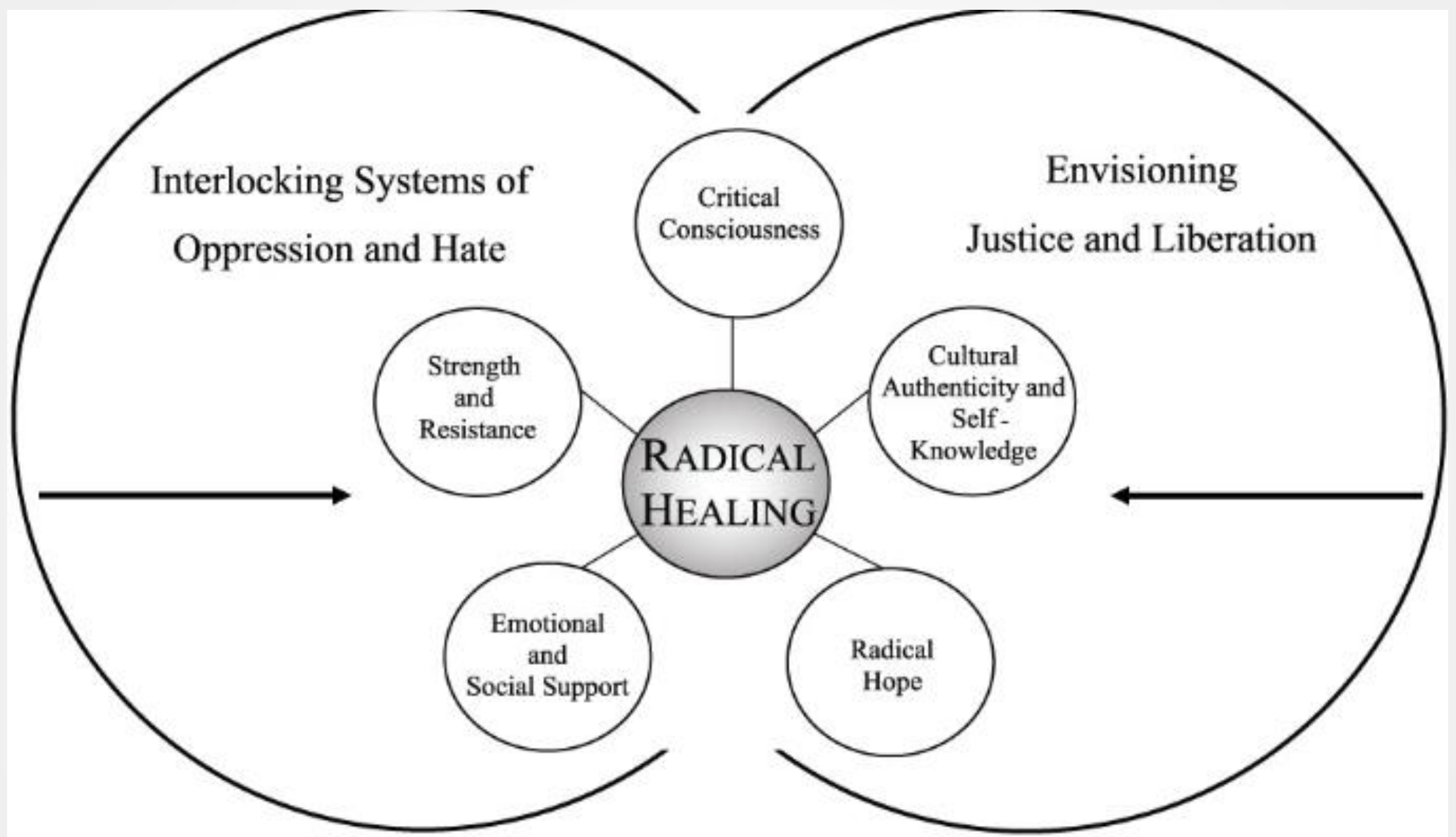
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- ▶ CBT may foster bias and stigma if not properly addressed
- ▶ Researchers recruited 218 North American therapists who found that validation strategies were deemed more crucial than cognitive change strategies for Black clients (Ezawa & Strunk, 2022)
- ▶ Increased therapeutic effectiveness of CBT among Black men is enhanced by treatment approaches where the use of validation is offered first

A Psychological Framework of Radical Healing

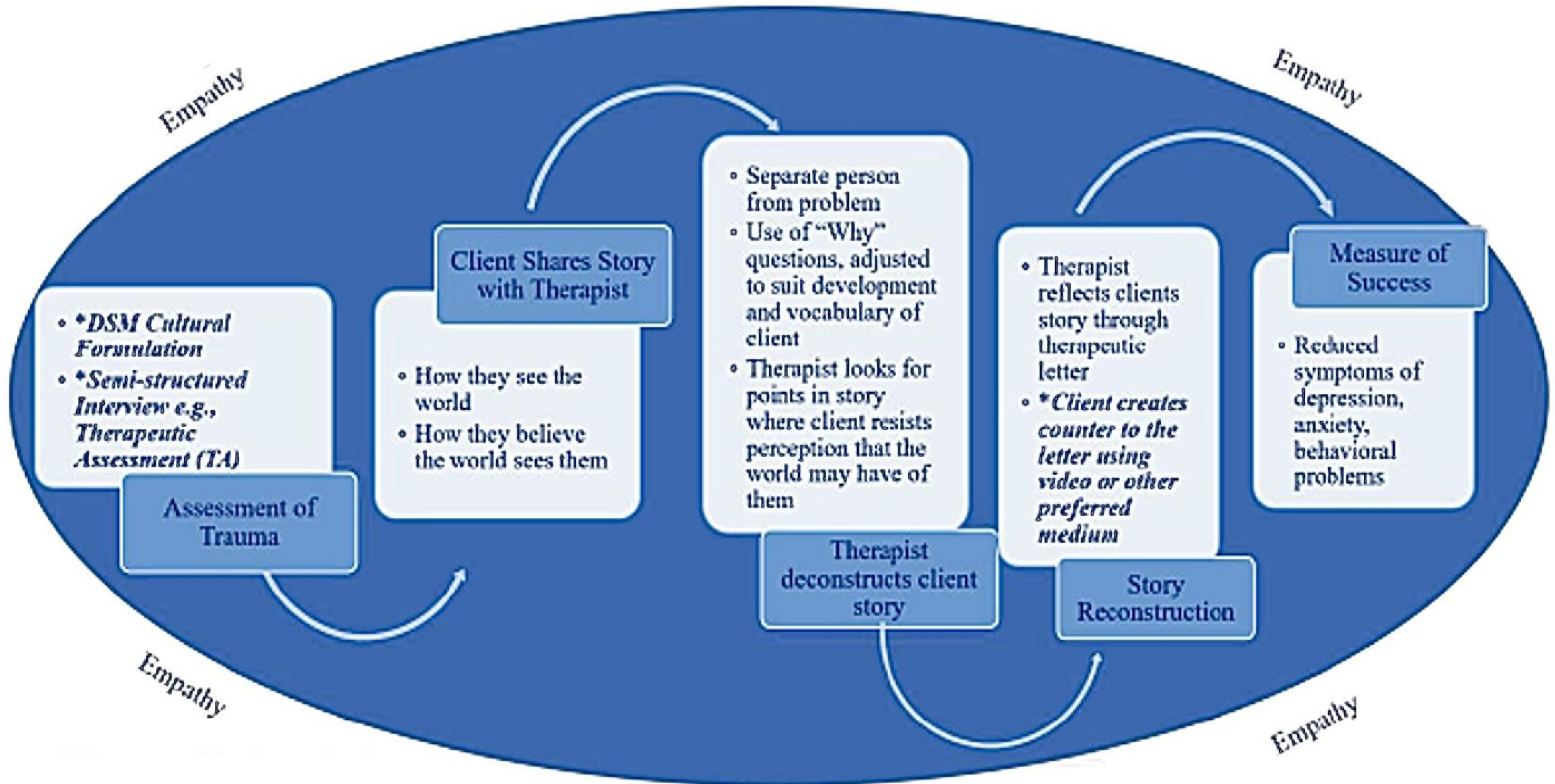
- ▶ Radical healing is defined as being able to sit in a dialectic and exist in both spaces of resisting oppression and moving toward freedom
- ▶ Radical healing incorporates strategies that address the root causes of the trauma by building on the strengths of individuals and engaging the general and culture-specific practices of their community that promote resilience and wellbeing.
- ▶ Clinicians are encouraged to move beyond traditional spaces and modalities of treatment and consider how healing can also be experienced within community settings (e.g., collaborating with spiritual healers to provide alternative therapeutic spaces)





Integrative Narrative Therapy Model

- ▶ Narrative therapy is a collaborative and non-pathologizing approach to counseling that examines the significance of relationships, communities, and other contexts, such as class, age, size, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, that influence one's thinking and behavior
- ▶ The integrative model is modified to address the needs of Black male clients
- ▶ The client is the expert, and the therapist employs empathy
- ▶ Process is iterative, using as many story sessions as needed



Assessment

- ▶ Use semi-structured interview assessment rather than a traditional psychological assessment
- ▶ This gives the therapist an opportunity to ask questions for clarity and meaning, making the client the expert

Therapeutic Process

- ▶ Use narrative therapy during the first session, focusing on the process and the intended outcomes
- ▶ Throughout the therapeutic process, the client will share his story, describing how he sees the world and how he believes the world perceives him
- ▶ The process is iterative, allowing the client time to tell his story his way; It is projected that an average of seven sessions will be needed

Measure of Success

- ▶ The client creates a counter to the letter and reconstructs his story using video, music, poetry, or another preferred medium
- ▶ The reconstructed story showcases the therapeutic change that the client has experienced
- ▶ The story is recorded for the client to reflect upon in the future
- ▶ The client separates himself from the trauma and focuses on his response and healing

Eliciting Client Views on Presenting Problems

- How do you label your problem? What do you think caused your problem?
- What is going on in your body as a result of this problem?
- How have men in your life responded to similar challenges?
- What are your beliefs about seeking support from others when challenges arise?
- What frightens or concerns you most about this problem and its treatment?
- How is your problem viewed in your family? Is it acceptable?
- How is your problem viewed in your community?
- How does your problem affect your stature in the community?
- What kinds of treatment do you think will help or heal you?
- What has been your experience with mental health in the past?
- How do you view mental health treatment now?
- What is important for me to know about you during this process?

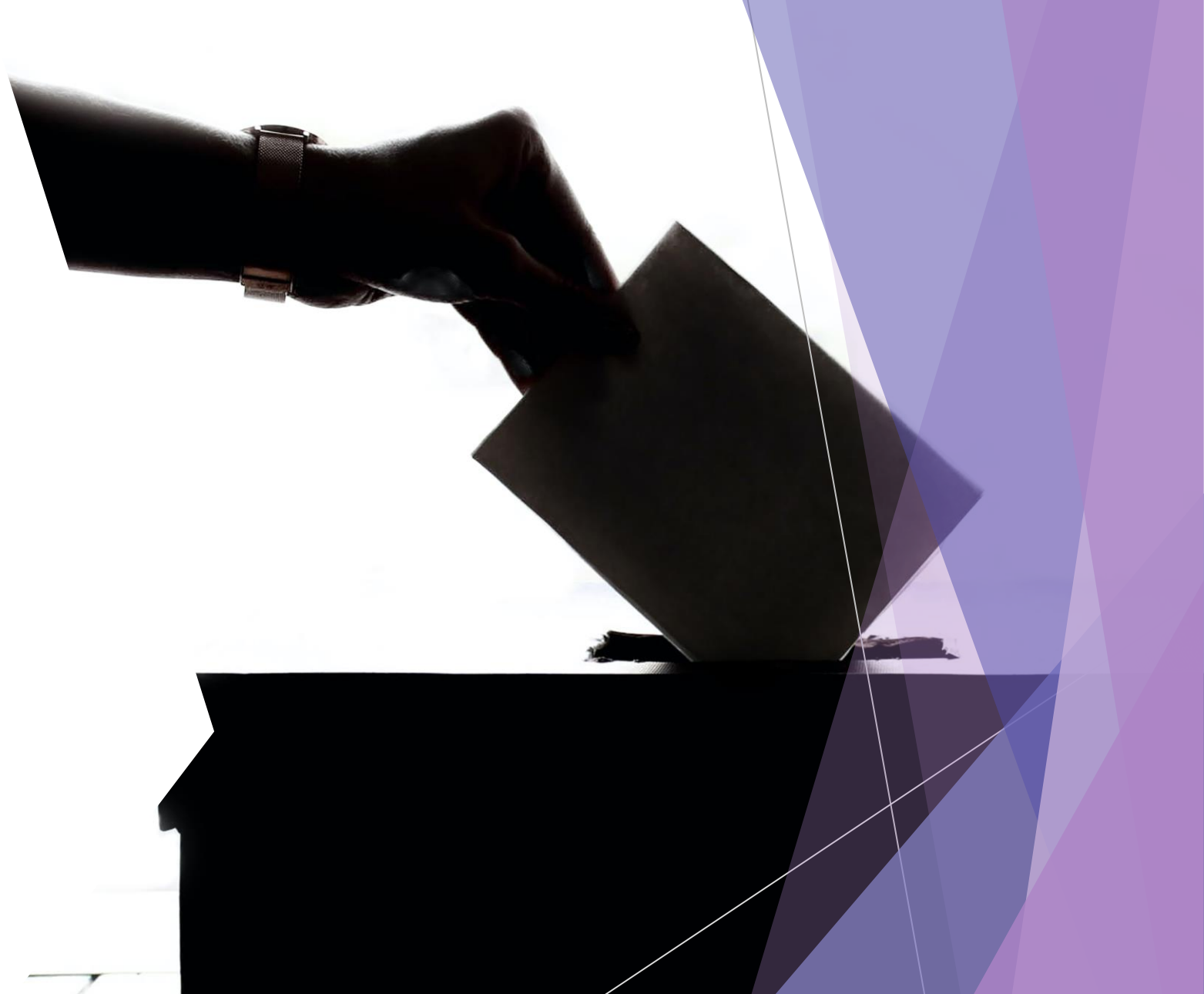
Systemic

- ▶ Review systemic policies
- ▶ Examine current psychological assessments, screeners, intake processes, triage processes, referral sources, etc.
- ▶ Identify how environmental messages (e.g., website, wall paintings, etc.) may impact your client population
- ▶ Take positive action in your own community (e.g., lobby for concerns impacting vulnerable communities)

Intrapersonal

- ▶ Increase awareness of how your beliefs, biases, and assumptions may influence the establishment and maintenance of therapeutic relationships
- ▶ Reflect on your positionality (e.g., your place in the racial and sociocultural hierarchy) and its impact
- ▶ Build knowledge about the local community and its influence
- ▶ Identify ways in which you may be unintentionally perpetuating inequity, discrimination, and/or bias in and out of the therapy room
- ▶ Understand how systemic barriers have historically and currently impact mental health treatment for Black men

Time for a Poll!



Resources

- ▶ **Black Men Heal:** This nonprofit provides information on how you can get free therapy sessions from selected providers.
- ▶ **The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation:** Founded by actress Taraji P. Henson and named after her father, this foundation provides links to licensed therapists of color. There is also information on free therapy access.
- ▶ **TherapyForBlackMen.Org:** This organization also has a digital directory of therapists for Black men.
- ▶ **Black Mental Health Alliance:** BMHA serves the community and organizations by providing workshops and forums covering a range of topics and subjects. They also offer the community an opportunity to connect with culturally-competent and patient-centered licensed mental health clinicians through our expansive referral database.

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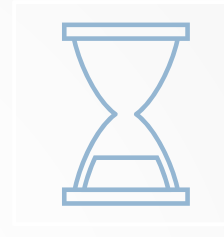
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Q & A With Dr. Ryan C. Warner



Dr. Elchert will read select questions that were submitted via the Q&A feature throughout the presentation.



Due to time constraints, we will not be able to address every question asked.

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