

Cultural Knowledge Buffers Children from Chronic Stress



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Chronic stress predicts post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms via executive function deficits among urban American Indian children

- Urban American Indian Youth
- N = 178
- Ages 7 to 15 years old
- 98 girls and 80 boys
- Participants listed membership in 15 tribes
- 123 hair samples to measure toxic stress
- Qualitative data is a nested sample of 17 youth
 - Photo elicitation task with follow up interviews
 - Take pictures of the people, places, things that challenge and support you

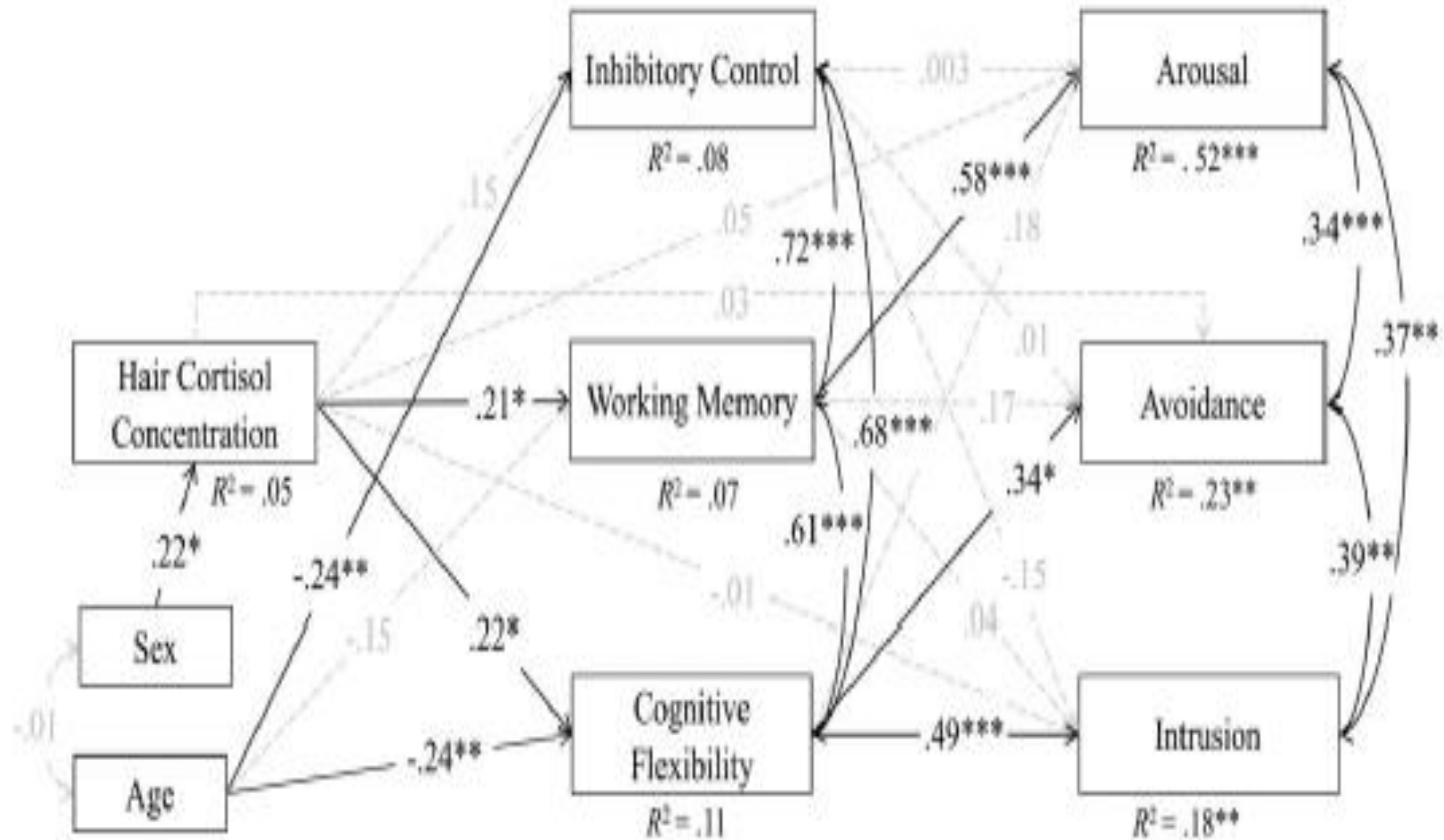
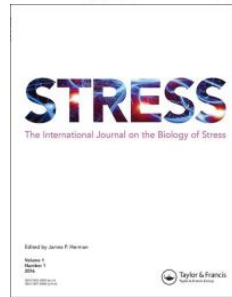


43% of the children have experienced a loved one going to jail
57% have experienced loud arguing and physical violence in their homes



Indirect Effects of Hair Cortisol Concentration on PTSD Symptoms of Arousal, Avoidance, and Intrusion through Deficits in Inhibitory Control, Working Memory, and Cognitive Flexibility

Working Memory, and Cognitive Flexibility



Culture is the missing variable

- Traditional spirituality, traditional practices, and cultural identity are protective factors

- Traditional spirituality and practices were associated with alcohol cessation (Torres-Stone et al., 2006) and were negatively related to depressive symptoms (Whitbeck et al., 2002) and suicidal behaviors (Garrouette et al., 2003) in adults

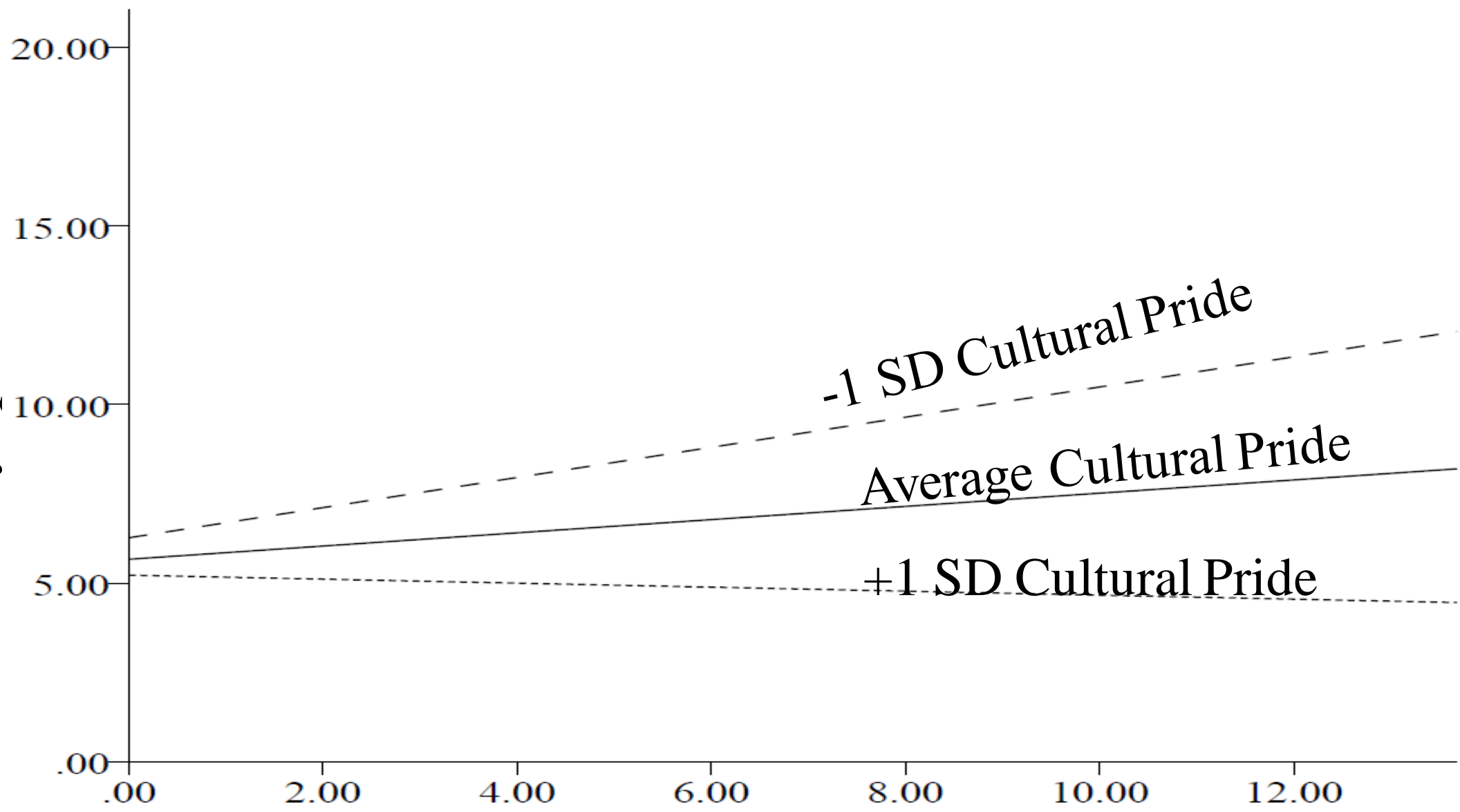
All 3 associated with increased self-esteem, academic success, and prosocial behaviors among adolescents (LaFromboise et al., 2006; Pu et al., 2012; Reinhardt, Evenstad, & Faircloth, 2012)

Cultural traditional activities, identification with American Indian culture and use of tribal languages have been shown to be protective, reducing suicide attempts and substance abuse (Henson, Sabo, Trujillo & Teufel-Shone, 2017).

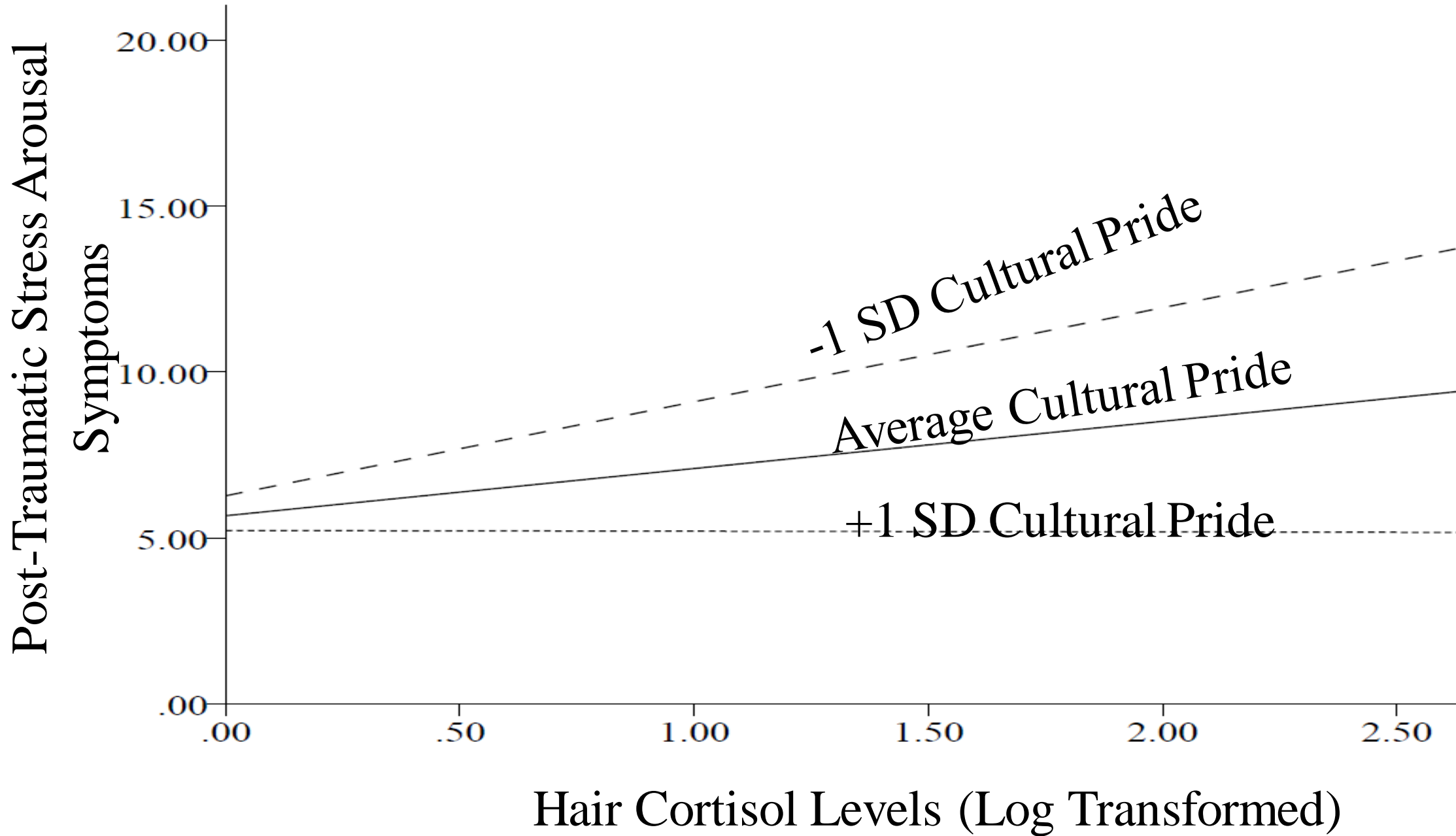
To raise healthy children, we have to return to original instruction, focus on relational restoration, and engage in narrative embodied transformation (Walters et al. 2020)



Post-Traumatic Stress Arousal
Symptoms



Childhood Stressful Life Events



Youth Voices

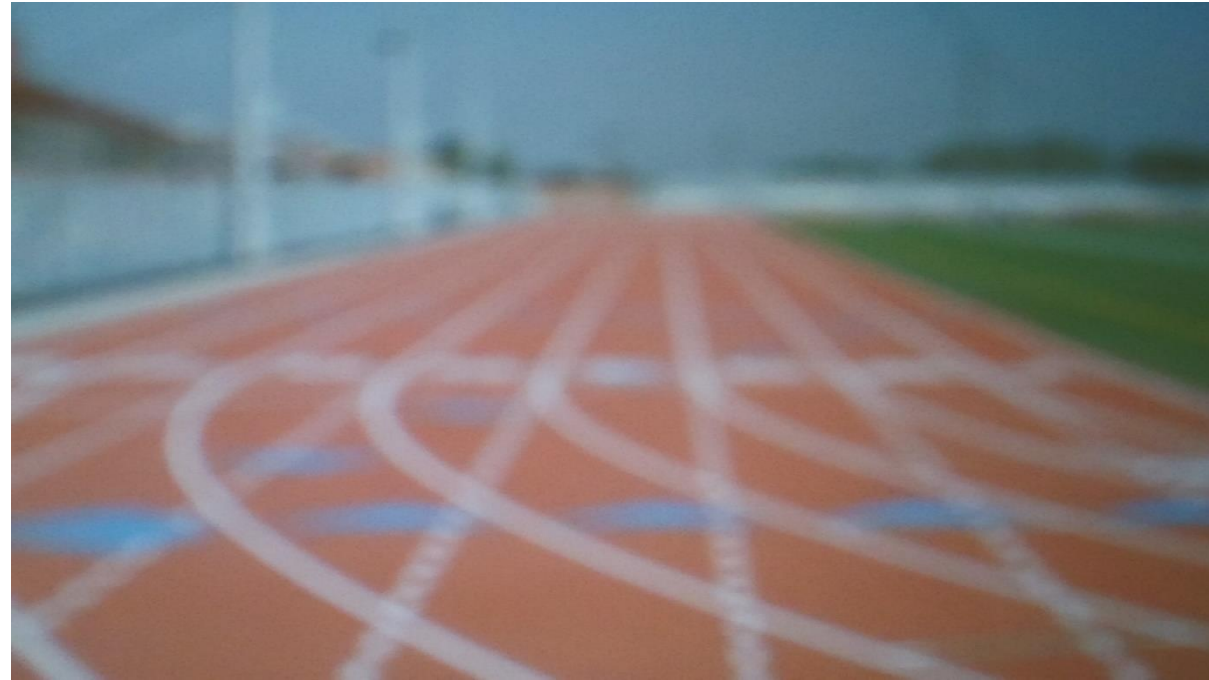
The Importance of Culture

My grandma and my grandpa (teach me about culture). They are both (Nation). They went to the boarding school when they were little kids. They told us that it was like teaching you the ways of how outside really looks like. They both teach my family and I to make sure to keep the generation alive of (Nation). They pass it down. They teach us some words, take us outside, tell us that we're not always going to be city girls.

The tribe is about—I think it's about my culture, who I am, and be myself but... you can miss whatever you liked in the past or something but my grandma tells me something about our culture and I really like our culture too because it makes me feel strong in my culture.

Running is cultural.
Running has always been a part of us.
We always run and we always find our ways
and we all have our own beliefs.

You just run for like everything. You just run for... I guess it kind of reminds me of when you start that's when negativity comes but when you start pushing yourself you're getting more positive thoughts, you're getting like flashbacks of how people have positive thoughts on you and you just keep running. It's like you're on a shore but you started to walk on water and you can't see the shore but when you turn back. You see how far you've gotten and how you got strong and how you could manage it. You can see that you can do the impossible.



This picture shows my (grandmother's) hogan and it makes me feel strong because it is home to me and its where I go to think and relax most of the time.





This picture shows a sign from family culture night. This makes me feel strong because I can be with my family and eat food.

I: Every six months you have a blessing?

C: Yeah.

I: When you're at school and you're feeling challenged, does it help you to know that you have those prayers?

C: Yeah because the blessings are for me to do well in school.



Well when I'm feeling challenged, I want to put my mind on something. I want to have good thoughts so I will start moving or start knitting and putting my good thoughts into there and forgetting about the old ones. I remind myself that this is the person who I am. This is my life. They have no idea who I am. They have no right to tell me what to say or what to do.





- Do you think being (tribe) influences who you are as a person?
- C: yeah
- I: How?
- C: Like I can . . . every time when I go to a powwow it like just looks amazing - what we used to be.
- I: We still are.
- C: Yeah, we still are.



Thank You

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