Historical Trauma:
Reclaiming the Narrative

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”
George Santayana, philosopher

COLLECTIVE TRAUMAS

Collective & Cultural Traumas

- Collective Traumas are caused by events that target a group of people, and the effects are passed down through the generations.

- Cultural trauma involves the destruction of the culture of origin by the disruption of language, economic, sociopolitical, and spiritual systems through oppression and imposition of the ideology of a foreign culture, causing loss of identity, community, and worldview.
Intergenerational Trauma

- Intergenerational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next.
- Intergenerational trauma was first observed in 1966 by clinicians alarmed by the number of children of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust seeking treatment in clinics in Canada.

Historical Trauma

- Historical Traumas is an example of intergenerational trauma. It's caused by events that target a group of people. Thus, even family members who have not directly experienced the trauma can feel the effects of the event generations later.
- Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD, conceptualized historical trauma in the 1980's, as a way to develop stronger understanding of why life for many Native Americans is not fulfilling "the American Dream".

P.T.S.S.

- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome is a condition that exists as a consequence of centuries of chattel slavery followed by institutionalized racism and oppression have resulted in multigenerational adaptive behavior, some positive reflecting resilience, and others that are harmful and destructive.
- Theory of P.T.S.S. was developed by Dr. Joy DeGruy as a result of twelve years of quantitative and qualitative research.
Historical Trauma

NATIVE AMERICAN TRAUMA EXPERIENCE
“The Only Good Indian Is A Dead Indian.”
Gen. Philip Sheridan 1869

Six Phases of Historical Unresolved Grief
• 1st contact (Colonization 1492-1776)
  • Life shock
  • Genocide: disease, killing the bison
  • No time for grief
• Economic Competition
  • Sustenance loss (physical/spiritual)
  • Strong beliefs against wasting food
• Invasion War Period
  • Extermination: used food to punish
  • Refugee symptoms

Six Phases of Historical Unresolved Grief
• Subjugation and Reservation Period
  Allotment and Assimilation (1887-1943)
  • Confined/translocated
  • Lack of security
• Boarding School Period (1879-1935)
  • Destroyed cultural practices and family
• Forced Relocation and Termination Period (1945-1968)
  • Transfer to urban areas
  • Prohibition of religious freedom

Reclaiming the Narrative
Effects of Historical Trauma

• First Generation
  • Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

• Subsequent Generations – Historical Unresolved Trauma Survivor
  • Guilt, Depression, Anger
  • Psychic numbing
  • Victim identity/death identity
  • Thoughts of suicide
  • Nightmares
  • Preoccupation with trauma
  • Relational problems
  • Physical symptoms including diabetes and other disease associated with high stress hormones

Tribal Perspective: Study on Adverse Childhood Exposures

• Boarding School, Foster Care and Adoption perspectives added

• 86% participants experienced one or more categories of exposure (ACE 64%)

• 33% reported four or more categories (ACE 12%)

• Strong relationship between childhood sexual abuse and subsequent drinking problems

AFRICAN AMERICAN TRAUMA EXPERIENCE

"My cattle at home are better cared for than these unfortunate persons."
Col. Frank S. Nickerson, U.S. Army

Six Trauma Points

• American Chattel Slavery (1619-1865)
  - bought & sold as commodities
  - 1808 African slaves import Ban

• Jim Crow - South, (1865-1965)
  - Slavery Abolished The 13th Amendment 1865, except as a punishment for crime...
  - Ku Klux Klan & Share Cropping
  - Lynching (often included castration)

• "Great Migration" and Ghetto (1915-68)
  - Leaving share cropping and the abuse.
  - Menial and industrial manufacturing jobs

Six Trauma Points

• Ghetto and welfare (1968-1975)
  - Welfare rules "no men allowed".
  - Decrease in manufacturing jobs.
  - Drugs and crime took a heavy toll on inner city.

• Hyperghetto and Prison (1975-1990)
  - extreme concentration of poverty
  - Blacks are 20 times more likely going to Jail.
  - major impact on the women and children.

• Institutionalized Generation (1985 -)
  - Generation after the crack era
  - Enriched with services providers
  - Inferiority and dependent mindset.

Reclaiming the Narrative

Duluth, MN
June 15, 1920
Survival Stress Management

- A process of adapting to stressful situations by acting or reacting without thinking of the consequences of our choices; immediate satisfaction or instant self-gratification; resulting in increased stress and/or depression:
  - Judgmental and distorted thoughts and feelings, impatience, exploitation, aggression, abuse and violence directed against one's self or others.
  - Addictive substances and behavior (i.e., drugs, alcohol, sex, shopping, fast money, gambling, food, video games, etc.) produces a limited sense of relief requires repetitions.

- Loss of a narrative resiliency

THREAT RESPONSE AND TRAUMA EFFECT

Threat Response Cycle

Charge:
- Muscle contraction
- Adrenalin and Cortisol secretion
- Increased heart rate
- Survival energy production

Discharge:
- Tingling
- Trembling
- Tears
- Completion of defensive movements

Adapted from Somatic Experiencing®, a school of somatic (i.e., body-focused) therapy for healing trauma.
Threat Response Interruption

Some Causes:
- Not wanting to feel out of control: stop ourselves “get a grip (literally)” and “Just get over it,”
- Situational priorities: (attend to a child’s needs)
- Ongoing threats (recurring abuse/violence, racial microaggressions, oppression)
- New situations that prompt more Threat Responses: (denial of traumatic events by others)

Stuck in Fight/Flight or Survival

PTSD: “re-living” and “hyper-arousal”
- Anxiety, agitation, hypervigilance, irritability, anger outbursts
- Difficulty with staying engaged in relationships/jobs/projects
- Difficulty relaxing, resting or sleeping, insomnia, nightmares
- Tendency to connect the dots that do not belong together (S/he must be cheating on me,” “he is disrespected me,” etc.)
- In Children: Hyperactivity, difficulty sitting still/concentrating, compulsive talking, truancy, runaway, bullying

Community Trauma Response
- Having to work hard to manage anger/fear in daily encounters with prejudice, discrimination and lack of equality
- Conscious/unconscious expectations of being treated unfairly because of one’s race, sexual orientation, gender, etc.
- Distrust/judgment against people in one’s own community (i.e., internalized oppression)
Struck in Freeze and Dissociation

PTSD “avoidance”

• Depression, feelings of emptiness, detachment and difficulty defending self or facing conflicts

• Inability to connect the dots that are right in front of them (fails to notice child is missing for hours)

• In Children: difficulty processing information, “loner,” excessive shyness/fearfulness, clinging

Adapted from Somatic Experiencing®, a school of somatic (i.e., body-focused) therapy for healing trauma.

9/28/2014

AA Historical Trauma

Struck in Freeze and Dissociation

Community Trauma Response

• Hopelessness/powerlessness and resignation about prejudice, discrimination and inequity (a conscious/unconscious belief that things/people cannot change)

• A pattern of not speaking up about prejudice, discrimination and inequity followed by a sense of resentment/shame/self-blame.

• Indifference, withdrawal from relationships in one’s own community

Adapted from Somatic Experiencing®, a school of somatic (i.e., body-focused) therapy for healing trauma.

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Trauma Alters Development With Enduring Effects

COGNITIVE

• Slowed language development

• Attention problems (ADD/ADHD)

• Speech delay

• Poor verbal memory/recall

• Poor spatial memory/recall

SOCIAL

• Aggression & violent outbursts

• Poor self-control of emotion

• Can’t modifying behavior in response to social cues

• Social isolation—can’t navigate friendship

MENTAL HEALTH

• Poor social/emotional development

• Substance use — vulnerable to early initiation, abuse

• Adolescent & adult mental health disorders—especially depression, suicide, dissociative disorder, borderline personality disorder, PTSD

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Trauma Alters Development With Enduring Effects

**PHYSICAL**
- Challenges navigating physical space
- Limited peripheral perception
- Vulnerable to injury, victimization

**CHRONIC DISEASE**
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Immune disorder ...And more...

**PRODUCTIVITY**
- Education interrupted
- Days unable to do usual activities
- Unemployment

**STATUS**
- Adult homelessness
- Adult incarceration
- Social/Emotional isolation
- Divorce
- Poverty

ACEs + Historical Trauma

Obstacles to Healing
Community Beliefs

- Strong cultural stigma attached to mental illness and trauma: “what goes on in here stay in here.”
- Loyalty to the community and family
- Mistrust of health professionals in particular rooted in history
- Distrust of institutions

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Community/Provider/Leadership

- Tell our story/our history by acknowledge and name what happened (no time to reflect), address the pain and begin the healing
- Institutions, community leaders and health professionals educate the community about health stress management and what is normal in the aftermath of trauma.
- Fund research to consider historical trauma and racism as a form of trauma that could account for health disparities.
- Be aware not to add to the trauma with your beliefs (it’s just excuse, they should know better.) BE WILLING TO LISTEN!!!
- Compassionate Accountability
Compassionate Accountability

- Two OPPOSITES that when they are linked becomes a vision for anyone seeking to lead at a higher level and leave others empowered without blame and excuses.

- Two ACTIONS that when balanced help us seek truth, understanding, forgiveness, justice and humility.

  Compassion makes change (and obstacles to change) visible and invites people into the change process.

  “There will never be peace until someone softens what is rigid in their hearts” Pema Chödrön

Building Resilience

- Recognize early signs of stress and connect people to resources

- Develop a trusting relationship and provide support

- Good cognitive skills, which predict academic success and lead to rule-abiding behavior.

- The ability to self-regulate attention, emotions, and behaviors.

- Look for and point out inner strengths

Pain Can Last a Lifetime... But They Don’t Have To

- Break chains of societal silence


- Instead of asking: “What's wrong with you?”

  Let's ask, “What happened to you?”
Questions and Answers

“The village that hides the truth cannot expect to heal but to pass on the pain.”

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References & Resources

Movies and Documentaries:
- The Slavery by Another Name: a searing examination of how the enslavement of African Americans persisted deep into the 20th century based on the book Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II by Pulitzer-Prize winning Douglas A. Blackmon (2012) PBS Programming

Websites:
- North American Indian History Sites By Phil Konstanine is an extensive source of links for Native American historical facts, not usually taught in school, also has a monthly newsletter http://americanindian.net/links9.html
- SAMHSA’s National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC): www.samhsa.gov/nctic/
- Somatic Experiencing®: www.traumahealing.com
- White Bison is the center for the Wellbriety movement, with the vision of bringing 100 communities into healing. http://www.whitebison.org/index.php

References

References & Resources