

**Mini review***Copyright © All rights are reserved by Jesus Jaime-Diaz*

# Considering Intergenerational, Historical & Chosen Traumas in Schooling: A Review

**Jesus Jaime-Diaz\****College of Education, University of Arizona, USA.*

**\*Corresponding author:** Jesus Jaime-Diaz, Outreach Coordinator, College of Education, University of Arizona, USA.

**Received Date:** February 10, 2021

**Published Date:** March 11, 2021

**Abstract**

This mini review of literature focuses on intergenerational, historical and chosen traumas. I advise that the three be utilized as critical tools for inquiry in further problematizing the genealogy of schooling, in particular the deculturalization of minoritized groups through coercive assimilation such as Americanization and Anglo conformity. Through such tools of inquiry as a society we will be able to better understand normalized traumas that continue to reproduce social inequity within the context of schooling.

**Introduction**

In her autobiography, Angela Davis argues that the field of psychology historically as a discipline has failed to reach the root causes of mental illness because of its reluctance to recognize its social origins [1]. Further advised is that in understanding the historical oppression of minoritized groups is to critically interrogate the plague of racism and its centric position with historical trauma embedded within normalized social structures [2,3]. This mini review of literature focuses on intergenerational, historical and chosen traumas. I argue that the three be utilized as critical tools for inquiry in further problematizing the genealogy of schooling, in particular the deculturalization of minoritized groups through coercive assimilation such as Americanization and Anglo conformity [4,5].

**Intergenerational Trauma**

The origins of intergenerational trauma originate in the works of Canadian psychiatrist Vivian M Rakoff in 1966, where she described the great physical and psychological pain amongst Holocaust survivors. Such experiences had ramifications on survivors for decades through the display of emotional scars and substandard of living in relation to the general population [6].

Moreover, it was found that the children of trauma survivors can be impacted by what their ancestors survived. This occurs through the handing down of family and cultural stories that are connected to shame, fear and pain [7]. Maligns that have been linked to intergenerational trauma survivors have been depression, depleted coping ability, substance abuse and substance dependence.

Such internal conditions can impact the mental processing and strategic psychological survival techniques [8-10]. In respect to the intersecting schooling experiences of minoritized groups in the U.S. it has been found that racism and discrimination pose a health risk by way of insidious trauma by those victimized by such oppressive practices [11]. Importantly noted as an effective treatment in intergenerational trauma and substance abuse has been spiritual healing practices that have been utilized to recover ancestral traditions, beliefs, philosophies by applying them to contemporary issues in society [12].

**Historical Trauma**

Historical trauma was first identified by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart in the 1980's to explore the impact of on-going colo-

nization perpetuated against a community [13]. Suggested is that Historical Trauma Response (HTR) will be manifested through emotions or actions deriving from the perceived trauma [14]. This has been observed in the historical experiences of Native peoples through violence and the boarding school experience in the Americas, which attempted to exterminate language, culture and identity in the name of progress through coercive assimilation to Anglo US cultural identity [15-17]. Enforcers of such policies aimed to "kill the Indian in the child." Thus, in addressing historical trauma it is necessary to recognize a group's collective history in order to understand contemporary health and social conditions [18]. Such memories also serve as a venue to disrupt the normalization of oppressive conditions perpetuated by structural violence and inequalities amongst racial/ethnic populations [19-21].

### Chosen Trauma

A shared collective mental representation of a traumatic experience suffered at the hands of an aggressor was framed as a "chosen trauma," by Turkish psychiatrist Vamik D. Volkan M.D. Such experiences often link groups together in relation to colonization, slavery, genocide and other instances of conflict [22,23]. As time passes such traumatic experience undergoes a change of function in collective group identity with a persistence to a sense of sameness [24,25]. Volkan found that understanding chosen trauma entails interrogating the mental representations of an event that caused a collective group to feel helpless, victimized or humiliated by another group. This often creates a physical and psychological border in relation to what is perceived as a threat from 'the other' [26,27].

Also suggested is that chosen traumas with time are diluted but can be retrospectively reactivated subsequently as they remain woven into the canvas of a large group or ethnic tent [28]. In relation to trauma within education it should be considered how historically psycho-social, and political dimensions of historical traumatic events are ever present with teachers, curriculum and pedagogical approaches. Advised is that communal translations of trauma be revisited through critical emotional praxis that heal intercultural conflict [29].

### Conclusion

In centering such traumas within future educational research it is imperative to understand the cultural and linguistic violence aimed at the historical schooling of minoritized groups through a critical understanding of the effects of coercive assimilation through notions of Americanization and Anglo-conformity as colonial projects [5,30,31]. Within endured traumas in different epochs of human history there is a need to heal from such experiences. There must be responsible accountability for a movement towards social justice within the classroom [32,33]. Scholars whom have focused on trauma in schooling have advised that such effects should be responsive to students' lived experiences. However, in order to heal from such sociohistorical oppression, efforts should be dialogical in engaging individual, social and collective trauma [34,35].

An approach advised in the healing of trauma from a holistic standpoint in cultivating empathy and reconciliation has been to utilize alternative or counternarratives [36-38]. A "language in the flesh" coined by Latina feminist scholar Dr. Roberta Hurtado has been moved forward through Decolonial Theory as a way to communicate where flesh experiences are the sources of truth within the context of colonial subjugation. Argued is that historical traumatic experiences not be accepted as life sentences, but as biological responses to stressful situations by way of inherited ancestral resiliency [39,40]. Chicana feminist scholar Méndez-Negrete [41] has furthered such conversations on healing within the context of schooling by teachers engaging self and other in interaction through pedagogical *conocimientos*. Such self-reflexive methodology entails the unpacking of historically internalized prejudices and traumas associated with family legacies of immigration, language, work, education and religion. This approach requires vulnerability in humanizing the learning experience between student and teacher as a community of learners.

As such, conversations are moved forward and considered in relation to intergenerational, historical and chosen traumas within the context of schooling. We must remember what critical multicultural educators have argued. The boarding schools that were designed to civilize Native Indigenous children did not end with their closure but became a fundamental normalized routine in the deculturalization of minoritized groups and perceived difference through schooling [42-44].

### Acknowledgements

None.

### Conflict of Interest

None of the authors have a conflict of interest.

### References

1. Davis A (1988) *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*. International Publishers.
2. Bryant Davis T, Ocampo C (2005) The trauma of racism: Implications for counseling, research, and education. *The Counseling Psychologist* 33(4): 574-578.
3. Healey JF, Stepnick A, O'Brien E (2018) *Race, ethnicity, gender, and class: The sociology of group conflict and change*. Sage Publications.
4. Ball SJ (2013) *Foucault and education: Disciplines and knowledge*. Routledge.
5. Spring J (2016) *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States*. Routledge.
6. Connolly A (2011) Healing the wounds of our fathers: Intergenerational trauma, memory, symbolization and narrative. *J Anal Psychol* 56(5): 607-626.
7. Pickering J (2012) Bearing the unbearable: ancestral transmission through dreams and moving metaphors in the analytic field. *J Anal Psychol* 57(5): 576-596.
8. Bombay A, Matheson K, Anisman H (2009) Intergenerational trauma: Convergence of multiple processes among First Nations peoples in Canada. *International Journal of Indigenous Health* 5(3): 6-47.

9. Cavalli A (2012) Transgenerational transmission of indigestible facts: from trauma, deadly ghosts and mental voids to meaning-making interpretations. *J Anal Psychol* 57(5): 597-614.
10. Isobel S, Goodyear M, Furness T, Foster K (2019) Preventing intergenerational trauma transmission: A critical interpretive synthesis. *J Clin Nurs* 28(7-8): 1100-1113.
11. Heberle AE, Obus EA, Gray SA (2020) An intersectional perspective on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and state-perpetrated violence. *Journal of Social Issues* 76(4): 814-834.
12. Marsh TN, Coholic D, Cote-Meek S, Najavits LM (2015) Blending Aboriginal and Western healing methods to treat intergenerational trauma with substance use disorder in Aboriginal peoples who live in Northeastern Ontario, Canada. *Harm Reduct J* 12(1): 1-12.
13. Brave Heart MYH (1999) Gender differences in the historical trauma response among the Lakota. *J Health Soc Policy* 10(4): 1-21.
14. Brave Heart MYH, Chase J, Elkins J, Altschul DB (2011) Historical trauma among indigenous peoples of the Americas: Concepts, research, and clinical considerations. *J Psychoactive Drugs* 43(4): 282-290.
15. Fast E, Collin-Vézina D (2010) Historical trauma, race-based trauma and resilience of indigenous peoples: A literature review. *First Peoples Child & Family Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal Honouring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews* 5(1): 126-136.
16. Gone JP (2009) A community-based treatment for Native American historical trauma: prospects for evidence-based practice. *J Consult Clin Psychol* 77(4): 751-62.
17. Brave Heart MYH (2000) Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the historical trauma of the Lakota. *Tulane Studies in Social Welfare* b21(22): 245-266.
18. Gone JP (2013) Redressing First Nations historical trauma: Theorizing mechanisms for indigenous culture as mental health treatment. *Transcult Psychiatry* 50(5): 683-706.
19. Kirmayer LJ, Gone JP, Moses J (2014) Rethinking historical trauma. *Transcul Psychiatry* 51(3): 299-319.
20. Sotero M (2006) A conceptual model of historical trauma: Implications for public health practice and research. *J Health Disparities Research Practice* 1(1): 93-108.
21. Whitbeck LB, Adams GW, Hoyt DR, Chen X (2004) Conceptualizing and measuring historical trauma among American Indian people. *Am J Community Psychol* 33(3-4): 119-130.
22. Murer JS (2009) Constructing the enemy-other: Anxiety, trauma and mourning in the narratives of political conflict. *Psychoanalysis Culture & Society* 14(2): 109-130.
23. Smith J (2016) The First Fleet: Australia's Unconscious 'Chosen Trauma' and its impact on our Asylum Seeker Policies Socioanalysis. 18: 15-32
24. Volkan VD (2019) Large-group identity, who are we now? Leader-follower relationships and societal-political divisions. *Am J Psychoanal* 79(2): 139-155.
25. Volkan VD (2009) Large-group identity: 'Us and them' polarizations in the international arena. *Psychoanalysis Culture & Society* 14(1): 4-15.
26. Stein H (2014) "Chosen Trauma" and a Widely Shared Sense of Jewish Identity and History. *J Psychohist* 41(4): 236-257.
27. Volkan VD (2018) Refugees as the other: Large-group identity, terrorism and border psychology. *Group Analysis* 51(3): 343-358.
28. Volkan VD (2001) Transgenerational transmissions and chosen traumas: An aspect of large-group identity. *Group Analysis* 34(1): 79-97.
29. Zembylas M (2008) The politics of trauma in education. In *The Politics of Trauma in Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
30. Spring J (2018) *The American school: From the Puritans to the Trump era*. Routledge.
31. Spring J (2017) *American education*. Routledge.
32. Tembo NM (2015) Paranoia, 'Chosen trauma' and Forgiveness in Leah Chishugi's a Long Way from Paradise. *English Academy Review* 32(2): 70-87.
33. Zembylas, M, Bekerman Z (2008) Education and the dangerous memories of historical trauma: Narratives of pain, narratives of hope. *Curriculum Inquiry* 38(2): 125-154.
34. Howard JA (2019) A systemic framework for trauma-informed schooling: complex but necessary! *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma*, 28(5): 545-565.
35. Karcher OP (2017) Sociopolitical oppression, trauma, and healing: Moving toward a social justice art therapy framework. *Art Therapy* 34(3): 123-128.
36. Méndez-Negrete J (2015) *A life on hold: Living with schizophrenia*. UNM Press.
37. Méndez-Negrete J (2006) *Las hijas de Juan: Daughters betrayed*. Duke University Press, USA.
38. Zembylas M (2007) The politics of trauma: Empathy, reconciliation and peace education. *Journal of Peace Education* 4(2): 207-224.
39. Hurtado R (2019) *Decolonial Puerto Rican Women's Writings: Subversion in the Flesh*. Springer.
40. Hurtado R (2017) *Language of the Flesh: Colonial Violence and Subversion in the Poetry of Judith Ortiz Cofer*. *Chiricù Journal: Latina/o Literature, Art, and Culture* 1(2): 107-124.
41. Méndez-Negrete J (2013) Pedagogical conocimientos: Self and other in interaction. *Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands*: 226-250.
42. Bombay A, Matheson K, Anisman H (2014) The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural psychiatry* 51(3): 320-338.
43. Graff G (2014) The intergenerational trauma of slavery and its aftermath. *J Psychohist* 41(3): 181-197.
44. Sleeter CE, Zavala M (2020) *Transformative ethnic studies in schools: Curriculum, pedagogy, and research*. Teachers College Press New York, United States.