

Transgenerational Trauma & Resilience


A Historical Perspective of Maternal Disparities in the African American Community & Considerations for Leveraging Resilience


Presenter: Dr. Sayida Peprah
Licensed Clinical Psychologist & Birth Doula



1

My Family





2

Who is in the room today?



3

Overview



- Review of Disparities in Maternal/Infant Health
- What we know about Transgenerational Trauma
- Impacts of Trauma on Mental and Physical Health
- How Trauma is passed down through Generations
- Historical Trauma among African Americans
- Historical Reproductive & Maternal Health Traumas
- Resilience in the African American Community
- Discussion
- Recommendations and Leveraging Resilience


4





5

Maternal Health Disparities in the US



- Black women are 2 to 6x more likely to die from complications of pregnancy than white women.
 - Even after controlling for socioeconomic status
 - Hemorrhage, Pregnancy-induced hypertension, Embolism
- Preterm birth is 50% higher for black infants in the US (CDC, 2016)
- Black infants 2x as likely to die before first birthday
 - 43% of black infant deaths were due to complications associated with preterm birth nationally (March of Dimes, 2010)

6

Maternal Health Disparities in the US



- Black women more likely to have C-Section, less likely to have successful VBAC in many states
- Black women have a higher rate of perinatal mood disorders (~44% compared to ~31% for white women with PD).
- The CDC noted that “from 2011 to 2015, the percentage of women who initiated breastfeeding was 64.3% for African American, 81.5% for Whites, and 81.9% for Hispanics (NIMHD, 2017).”



7

Why Discuss Historical Trauma and Impacts of Racism



8

Relevance



American Psychology Association (APA) RESOLUTION AGAINST RACISM

- ...racism has been shown to have negative cognitive, behavioral, affective, and relational effects... to increase anxiety, depression, self-defeating thoughts and avoidance behaviors, and is linked to a host of medical complications in ethnic minority individuals...
- ...racism negatively affects the cognitive and affective development of members of the dominant group by perpetuating distorted thinking... can promote anxiety and fear in the dominant group members whenever they are in the presence of, or anticipating the presence of, marginalized group members, often leading to acts of hostility and aggression toward ethnic minority individuals;
- ... the American Psychological Association... will call upon all psychologists to speak out against racism, and take proactive steps to prevent the occurrence of intolerant or racist acts...

9

Relevance

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

STATEMENT OF POLICY ON RACIAL BIAS

Without acknowledging the historical context from which these disparities grew, and examining these disparities through a lens that takes into account race, gender, and class, an equitable health care system that serves all women cannot be realized (ACOG, 2015)

10

SANKOFA

“Go back and fetch it”

“Reach back and get it”

11

What we know about trauma...

12

Types of Trauma

- Type 1- Single Incident Trauma
 - Resilience high
 - ~75% recover
- Type 2- Repeated/Complex Trauma
 - Disruptive to mind, body, spirit= Symptoms, Disorders
 - ~75% sustain continuous symptomology
- Type 3- Transgenerational/Intergenerational Trauma
 - “Collective, cumulative emotional wounding across generations resulting from cataclysmic events (Walters, 2015).”
- Complex Transgenerational Trauma (Peprah, 2015)
 - Ongoing, reactivating traumas, societal triggers

13

Trauma Symptoms & Trauma Transmission

14

How Does Trauma Present?

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (DSM-V)

PTSD can result from: **direct, threatened** or close family member/friend **exposure** to death, serious injury or sexual violation.

Causes **clinically significant distress or impairment** in the individual's social interactions, capacity to work or other important areas of functioning.

Symptoms:

Reliving event/ Avoidant behaviors/ Negative feelings and beliefs towards others and self/ Hypervigilance/ Severe Anxiety/ Self-destructive Behavior/ Emotional Detachment/ Insomnia

15

Impact of Trauma on the Brain and Body



16

Epigenetic Transmission of Trauma-Related Stress Response



Epigenetics- The study of heritable changes in gene expression caused by life experiences, life choices and environmental factors, not underlying DNA sequence.

- Epigenetic tags found in both Holocaust survivors and their children born post-holocaust
- Lower levels of stress reducing hormones



17

Impacts of Transgenerational Trauma on Physical Health



- Trauma stress, awakes the Fight or Flight Response (i.e. Autonomic Nervous System Response)
 - Adrenaline/Cortisol/Norepinephrine hormones travel through blood stream during stressful periods
 - Damages cells & changes brain, impairing the:
 - Immune System
 - Digestive System
 - Cardiovascular system
 - Musculoskeletal system
 - Reproductive system
 - Endocrine system

18

PTSD Connected to Premature Births in Black Women



- 2005-2008 research study included 839 women (41% African-American)
- Study found that women with PTSD, who suffered abuse during childhood, were more likely to have premature babies and give birth to babies who weighed less.
- Study also found that African-American women are 4x more likely than white women to remain affected by PTSD at the time of pregnancy, thus impacting maternal health outcomes.

19

How Trauma is Passed Down Through Generations



20

How Trauma is Passed Down Through Generations



- Vicarious Trauma
 - Experiencing trauma through hearing stories of trauma
- Transmission Theory
 - Transmitting trauma symptomology, not necessarily trauma
 - Parent to Child, Child to future Children
 - Emotionally limited
 - Low distress tolerance
 - Avoidant practices
- Social Learning Theory
 - Humans learn through observation



21

How Trauma is Passed Down Through Generations

- Non-treatment, Non-acknowledgement = transmission
 - 1st generations traumatized preoccupied with survival not healing
- Internalization
 - We are damaged, Life is struggle for us...
- Culturalization
 - Culture of silence around the traumas
 - Trauma behaviors, reactions, perceptions, interwoven into the "culture"
 - 2nd+ generations, the root causes are lost and it's just "the way Mom, grandma, us Black people, Africans... are."



22

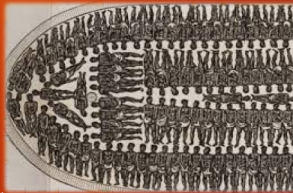
Historical Traumas Affecting African Americans



23

Historical Traumas Affecting African Americans

- Kidnappings
- Middle Passage (12.5 million)
- Cultural Eradication
 - Separation of tribes
 - Loss of indigenous languages
 - Loss of traditional spiritual/religious practices
 - Loss of generations of healing practices
 - These are key to resilience in a community!



24

Historical Traumas Affecting African Americans

- Enslavement (245+ years)
- Dehumanization and violence of slavery
 - Beatings, disfigurement, murders
 - Rape
 - Forced "mating"
 - Forced wet nursing
 - Selling off of children



25

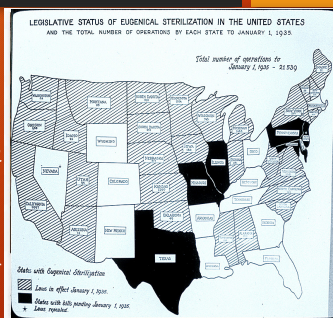
Maternal & Reproductive Historical Traumas

26

Maternal & Reproductive Historical Traumas


Harmful and Traumatic Medical Practices:

- Performing experimental gynecologic surgery on enslaved women in the mid-1800s (Dr. James Marion Sims, aka "father of gynecology" for curing vesico-vaginal fistula).
- Sterilizations by force, coercion or without lawful consent (1930's+).
- Testing of high-dose hormonal contraceptives on women of color in the 1950s.




27

Ongoing Triggers= Ongoing Trauma Symptomology



1. Institutionalized- Systematic and legalized racism and oppression (Jim Crow, Voting restrictions)
2. Personally mediated- interpersonal prejudice and discrimination, race-related micro stressors (KKK, Police Brutality)
3. Internalized- acceptance and endorsing of negative self concepts (Light vs. Dark skin, Good vs. Bad hair)




28

Resilience: Culture-Based Strengths and Survival Mentality




29

A Culture of Resilience



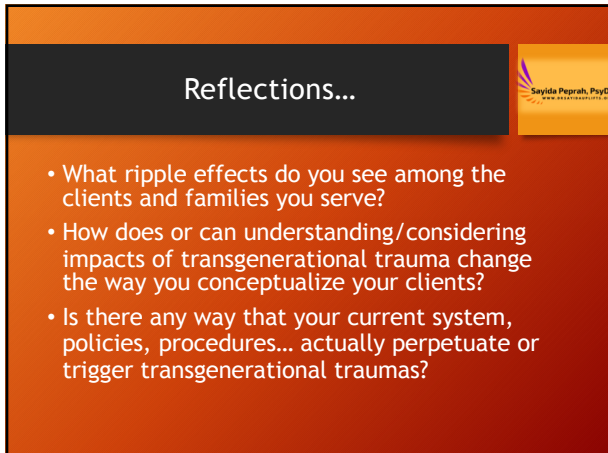
- Empowering Spirituality
- Remembering/ Reclaiming Powerful History
- Stress-Reducing Healing Arts
- Resilient/Flexible Family & Social Supports



30

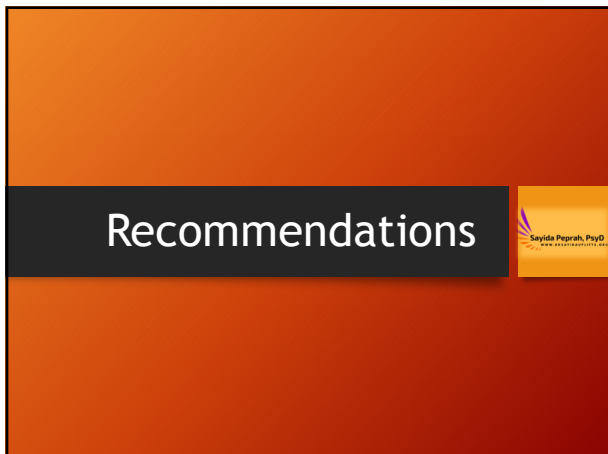


31



- What ripple effects do you see among the clients and families you serve?
- How does or can understanding/considering impacts of transgenerational trauma change the way you conceptualize your clients?
- Is there any way that your current system, policies, procedures... actually perpetuate or trigger transgenerational traumas?

32



33

Recommendations for Conceptualizing



- The problem is not the trauma itself, but the coping/resilience.
- Conceptualize/Reframe the past as a source of strength, not a prognosis of complications and high risk
 - See clients with HT as survivors and perseverers
 - Expectations have a +/- impact
- Consider
 - Historical Trauma, ACEs and Resilience

34

Recommendations for Interventions



- Utilize trauma informed care models
- Utilize community-based, cultural empowerment, culturally responsive therapeutic models.
- Be aware that race-related micro-stressors are ongoing triggers
 - Monitor implicit biases
 - Deconstruct power dynamics
 - Establish strong rapport and respect

35

Recommendations for Working with Mothers



- Examine self-care habits and encourage responsiveness to health and emotional concerns
 - Deconstruct the Strong Black Woman Syndrome
- Assess risks for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) and provide active support (in home options and group support models recommended)
- Process any birth traumas (mental health)
- Promote, provide, prescribe stress reduction techniques
 - Mindfulness, sound healing, dance, drumming, yoga...

36



“Breast-feeding is one of the most cost-effective interventions for improving maternal and child health”

~Dr. Georges C. Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.”

Sayida Peprah, PsyD
www.DrSayidaUplifts.org

37

Contact Information

Sayida Peprah, PsyD
(626) 531-1031
Email: DrSayidaUplifts@gmail.com
Visit Website:
www.DrSayidaUplifts.org
Facebook: DrSayida Uplifts

Sayida Peprah, PsyD
www.DrSayidaUplifts.org

38

References

- ACOG Committee Opinion No. 649: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Obstetrics and Gynecology. *Obstet Gynecol* 2015;126(6):e130-4. <https://www.acog.org/-/media/Statements-of-policy/Public-Statements-of-policy/94RacialBias201722.pdf?mce=1&tc=701706911002&487750>
- APA Resolution Against Racism and in Support of the Goals of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance. *Approved as an Emergency Action by The American Psychological Association Board of Directors on June 10, 2001.* <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/racism.aspx>
- Belanger, K., Costello, D., Epperson, N., Forray, A., Lin, H., Smith, M., Yonkers, K. (2014). Pregnant Women With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Risk of Preterm Birth. *JAMA Psychiatry* 1; 71(8): 897-904. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4134979/>
- Black, M. C., Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Walters, M. L., Merrick, M. T., Stevens, M. R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 summary report. Retrieved from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf
- Black Women's Blueprint, "The Truth Commission on Black Women and Sexual Violence," 2012

Sayida Peprah, PsyD
www.DrSayidaUplifts.org

39

References



- Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume 1*. Washington, DC: CASSP Technical Assistance Center, Center for Child Health and Mental Health Policy, Georgetown University Child Development Center
- Degruy, J. (2005). Post traumatic slave syndrome: America's legacy of enduring injury and healing. Milwaukie, Oregon: Uptone Press. <https://youtu.be/XRQ-Ci6IwVw>
- Dombeck, M., Mills, H. & Reiss, N. (2008). The Log-Term Consequences of Negative Stress. www.MentalHealthStress.net
- Flanders-Stepans, M. B. (2000). Alarming Racial Differences in Maternal Mortality. The Journal of Perinatal Education, 9(2), 50-51. <http://doi.org/10.1624/105812400X87653>, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1595019/>
- Flores, L. (2014). Impact of Trauma in Latino Families: Implications for Practice and Policy. 9th Annual Latino Health Forum, Seattle, WA. <http://www.slideshare.net/bernardogabriel378/04-40129248>
- Collins, J. W., David, R. J., Handler, A., Wall, S., & Andes, S. (2004). Very low birthweight in African American infants: The role of maternal exposure to interpersonal racial discrimination. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(12), 2132-2138.

40

References



- Isaacs, M. & Benjamin, M. (1991). *Towards a culturally competent system of care, volume II, programs which utilize culturally competent principles*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.
- Kaulukukui, M. (2014). Cultural Factors in Work with Hawaiians: Module 2: Cultural Trauma: History and Care. University of Hawaii - Manoa, Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work. <https://youtu.be/mr629YK6E>
- Kramer, M. R., and Hogue, C. R. (2009). What causes racial disparities in very preterm birth? a biosocial perspective. *Epidemiologic Reviews* 31, 84-98.
- Kuzawa, C. W. (2008). Epigenetics and the embodiment of race: Developmental origins of US racial disparities in cardiovascular health. *American Journal of Human Biology*, Monteiro, N & Wall, D., (2011). African Dance as Healing Modality Throughout the Diaspora: The Use of Ritual and Movement to Work Through Trauma. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4(6). https://www.academia.edu/7440848/African_Dance_as_Healing_Modality_Throughout_the_Diaspora_The_Use_of_Ritual_and_Movement_to_Work_Through_Trauma
- Mustillo, S., Krieger, N., Gunderson, E. P., Sidney, S., McCreath, H., & Kiefe, C. I. (2004). Self-reported experiences of racial discrimination and black-white differences in preterm and low-birthweight deliveries: The CARDIA study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(12), 2125-2131.
- Oparah, Arega, Hudson, Jones, Oseguera (2017). Battling Over Birth: Black Women and the Maternal Health Care Crisis. www.RWB.I.org

41

References



- Portney, C. (2003). Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma: An Introduction for the Clinician. Comorbidity In Psychiatry, Dissociative Identity Disorder, Trauma and Violence. <http://www.psychiatristimes.com/articles/intergenerational-transmission-trauma-introduction-almitcham>
- Seng, J., Low, L., Sperlrich, M., Ronis, D., Liberzon, I. Post-traumatic stress disorder, child abuse history, birthweight and gestational age: a prospective cohort study. *BJOG* 2011; DOI: 10.1111/j.1471-0528.2011.03071.x.
- Solanto, J. (2008). Intergenerational Trauma & Healing Workshop. <https://youtu.be/QMCI0XrVbQo>
- Tervalon, M. and Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competency: a critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. [Editorial Research Support, Non-U.S. Government P.H.S. Review]. *JHealth Care Poor Underserved*, 9(2) 117-125.
- Trauma May be Woven into DNA of Native Americans (2016) <https://youtu.be/AXTRCA7PbDw>
- Trevino, S. (2014). Latino Immigration, Cultural Trauma and Cultural Complex Webinar. <https://youtu.be/FFvtd-BUgk>
- Walters, K. (2015). University of Minnesota Extension Conference on Historical Trauma and Cultural Healing. UMN Extension CYFC Lessons from the Field. <https://youtu.be/AVmK31dNvIs>
- Walton, Q. & Olubunmi B.O-G. (2017). The Case for #BlackGirlMagic: Application of a Strengths-Based, Intersectional Practice Framework for Working With Black Women With Depression. *Affilia*. 32(4) 461 - 475.

42