Abstract:

Recent literature has begun to examine the mechanisms which might facilitate the transmission of trauma to subsequent generations, including epigenetic changes in the DNA of survivors, the parenting practices of survivors, or the narratives utilized to describe the traumatic event to successive generations. Intergenerational trauma has been increasingly studied, but there is a need to investigate the intergenerational effects of a mother’s experience with sexual violence. This study examines the possible effects of sexual violence on mothers and their children within the Mexican-American community. This literature review was conducted with the hope of developing an intervention to disrupt the transmission of a trauma to future generations.

What is Historical Trauma?

Historical trauma connects a historically traumatic event experienced by a group of people to the present-day experiences of a community. The descendants of the original group continue to experience the consequences of the original trauma, which may affect their psychological or physical health.

Research Questions:

• Focusing specifically on Mexican-American women, how might a woman’s experience with sexual violence prior to motherhood affect successive generations?
• What is the role of religion and culture in an individual’s interpretation of the trauma?

Mitigating Factors:

• Sense of spirituality
• Focus on community
• Engagement in cultural rituals
• Family cohesion
• Communal healing rituals

Gaps in Literature:

• Literature focuses mostly on childhood sexual abuse
• Lack of studies focusing on intergenerational trauma in Mexican-American communities
• Very little research on the transmission of trauma symptoms following sexual violence
• Need to focus on resilience as a mitigating factor

Future Directions:

• Partnership with DARCC Clinical Team
• Focus group to build sense of community
• Client-led focus group
• Hope for communal and individual healing

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