

Historical Trauma, Ethnic Experience, and Mental Health in a Sample of Urban American

Indians: Summary

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American Indians are dealing with mental health issues that are disproportionate to other ethnicities. American Indians are more likely to suffer from a mental disorder such as substance use, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and more. This population is suffering due to historical trauma. Historical trauma as a result from generations of displacement, confinement, massacres, suppression, and more. It is important to realize that the mental illnesses experienced are due to the significant historical trauma that they have faced, in order to treat it the correct way. The experiences that AIs have witnessed is hard to understand, because many of us were not treated that way.

The concept of historical trauma began by looking at events such as the holocaust, and the great depression, and in the late 90's they began to apply these concepts to American Indians. I think it is very clear that throughout history this group was suppressed and discriminated against from the start of the United States. A group was asked questions for analysis. These questions included historical loss, cultural loss, race consciousness, stereotypes, discrimination, and positive practices. Many noted historical loss related to family members being forced into a boarding school which translated into large distrust that traveled down many generations and a loss of tradition. Many also expressed cultural loss related to loss of traditions, generational respect, and the culture not being adequately taught in public schools. Many expressed feelings of not being Indian enough, but also not being white enough. They are stuck in these cross hairs where you have no place in society. These people are also facing a wide number of stereotypes and discrimination. Many which may be able to be drawn back to the education system. I'm sure we can all remember learning about Indians that live in teepees, and not about the different

cultures and how it has evolved too today. Overall, I believe that as nurses we need to beware of historical trauma so that we can adequately care for this population.