

What happened to you? An Assessment Strategy to Assist Families and Pre-Schools with Black and Brown Boys Pre-School Suspensions

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Abstract

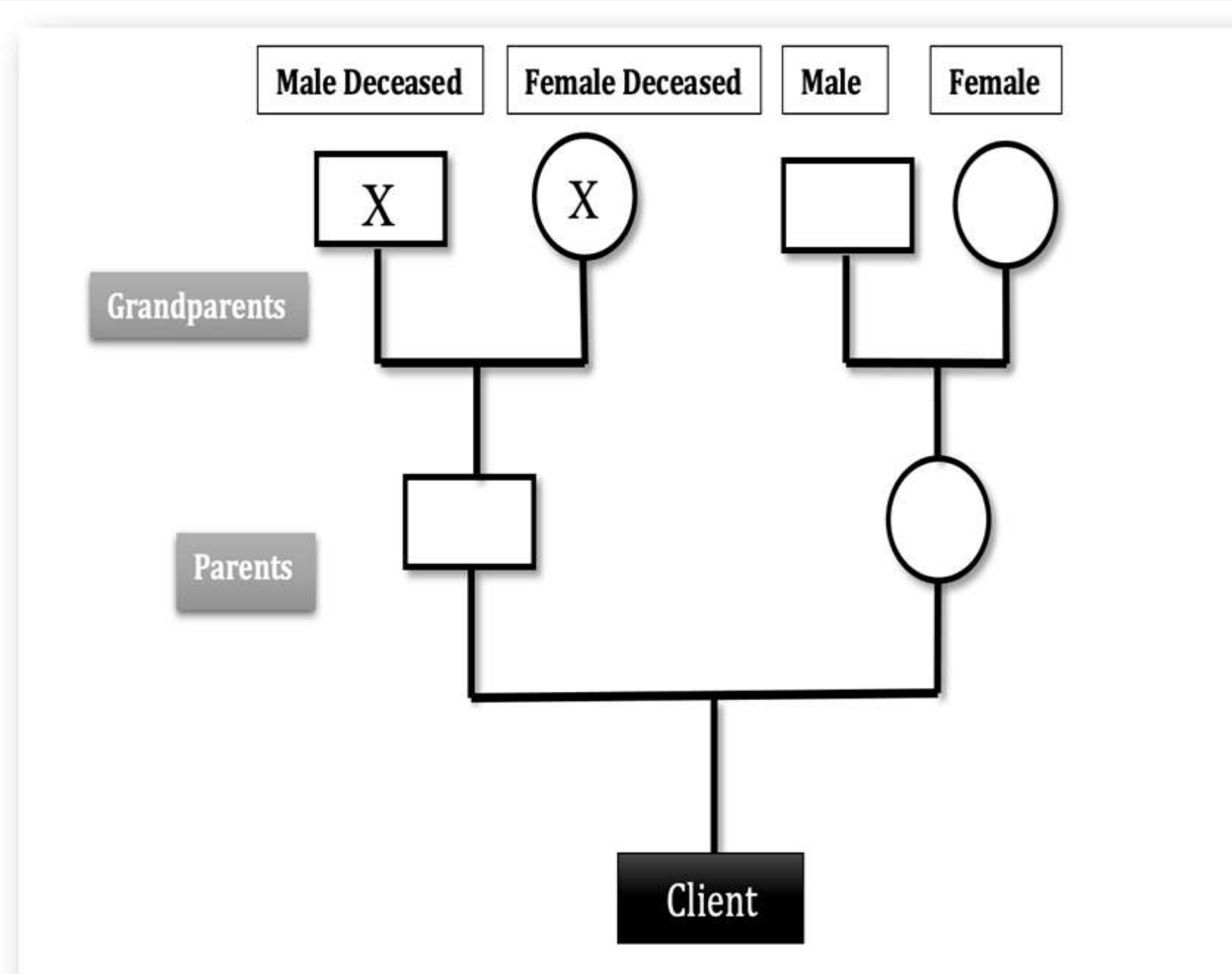
Addressing early childhood education in a diverse and culturally sensitive manner involves preserving a sense of personal identity despite necessary changes (Casey Family Programs, 2000). **Research supports that meaningful assessment of young learners within their contextual environment enhances school readiness, academic success, and reduces behavioral challenges (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hyson, 2008; Lidz & Gindi, 2003; Pena, 2001).** Quality education significantly influences community health and well-being. Black boys often face trauma directly or by witnessing others' victimization (Smith Lee & Robinson, 2019; Motley & Banks, 2018; Fein, Wade, & Cronholm, 2013). They are suspended and expelled at disproportionately high rates in public schools (Gilliam, 2005), with exposure to direct and complex trauma contributing to these suspension rates. **When families share these experiences authentically, early childhood educators and social workers can reframe and address these issues, reducing suspensions and expulsions (Koralek, Nemeth, & Ramsey, 2019).** Black boys also encounter significant barriers to mental health assessment and treatment, termed "obstructed use" by Burkett (2017). This concept includes historical trauma, environmental toxicity, culturally bound economic insecurity, and cultural mistrust, which together impede mental health help-seeking behavior. DeGruy (2017) highlights the importance of considering post-traumatic slave syndrome for African Americans with ancestors who endured enslavement.

Introduction/Background

This poster focuses on assessing historical trauma using a genogram, a tool that graphically depicts family system dynamics to identify and trace trauma contributions. This assists early childhood educators and social workers in understanding family contexts and formulating early interventions (Azzi-Lessing, 2010). The process involves constructing and utilizing ITHxT (Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Trauma), a concept coined by Butler-King (2020). The genogram helps assess ITHxT, revealing how African American family systems adapt to daily and significant stressors. Early identification of ITHxT in a child's ecological or school system informs and/or empowers parents, pediatricians, and educators to develop interventions.

Methods

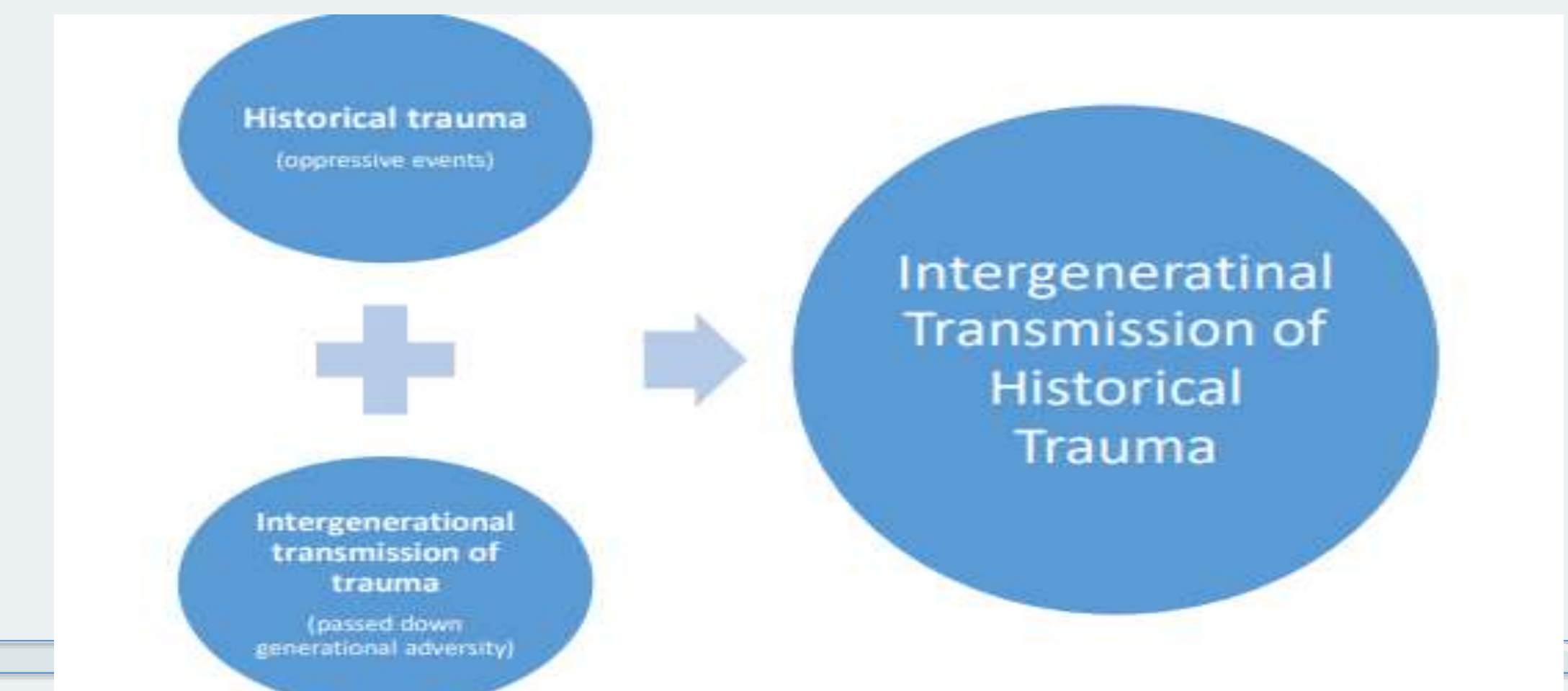
This is an experimental research design that allowed the researcher to draw conclusions about cause and effect relationships between an intervention and an outcome. The Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Trauma (ITHxT), a concept coined by Butler-King (2020). The genogram helps assess for ITHxT, revealing how African American family systems adapt to daily and significant stressors.



Early identification of ITHxT in a child's ecological or school system informs and empowers parents, educators, and pediatricians to move toward intervention development. This research explored the genogram's effectiveness as a psychosocial assessment tool, enhancing the understanding and support for a young child's well-being in early childhood programs.

RESULTS

The Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Trauma (ITHxT)



Early Childhood Systems

When families share these experiences authentically, early childhood educators and social workers can reframe and redress these issues, reducing suspensions and expulsions (Koralek, Nemeth, & Ramsey, 2019).

Family engagement

Develops a strong understanding of cultural safe context/self-regulated learning, instruction/reasoning skills and assessment/self-evaluation (Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hernandez-Sheets, 2005).

Social-Emotional

Research supports that meaningful assessment of young learners within their contextual environment enhances school readiness, academic success, and reduces behavioral challenges (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hyson, 2008; Lidz & Gindi, 2003; Pena, 2001).

Parental Resilience

Strengthening families protective factors.

Project Program Model

What you do matters: A 6-week program that examines aspects of the African American culture and intergenerational transmission of historical trauma as a reframe for challenging the families systems engagement to impact early childhood suspension(s).

Future Directions

An experiential research design for early childhood daycare and/or school-based systems that support families, teachers, and social workers serving high risk populations for suspension and expulsion. A community-based longitudinal study - focused on following pregnant women and their families, as well as brown & black boys who are identified in early childhood programs with social/emotional/behavioral challenges with intervention support services. (Yang, Sawhney, McHugh, & Leyro, 2022)

Key References:

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- Koralek, D., Nemeth, K. & Ramsey, K. (2019). Families & educators together: Building great relationships that support young children. Copyright 2019 by National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C.
- Min-Jeong Yang, Vyom Sawhney, R. Kathryn McHugh & Teresa M. Leyro (2022) Examination of the indirect effect of childhood emotional trauma on internalizing symptoms through distress intolerance, *Journal of American College Health*, 70:5, 1347-1353, DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2020.1810053