

Concepts of Transgenerational and Genocidal Trauma and the Survivors of ISIS Terror in Yazidi Communities and Treatment Possibilities

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Abstract:

After the attack of the terrorist organization ISIS in 2014 and the systematic attempt to destroy the religious group of the Yazidi, the topic of transgenerational, collective and individual trauma has become a focus of attention in regard to this group. Since the Yazidi have been victims of 74 genocidal attempts for more than 800 years, the theory and discussion of group and Transgenerational Trauma models will be important for both research and long term treatment planning. In general, models rest on the assumption that some ethnic and religious groups have in the past been exposed to mass trauma as a result of colonialism, slavery, war and genocide over longer historical periods. Due to collective traumatic experiences, the secondary and subsequent generations have passed on the trauma of their forbears to the following generations and, in doing so, repeatedly transformed it. Being passed down between generations, this traumatic experience is a trauma shared by all members of a group and made up of elements from the past and of the present. Even several generations after the original trauma, an increased level of psychological symptoms have been observed, though mechanisms of impact have not been identified with certainty in spite of numerous proposed models, including, most recently, epigenetic mechanisms. A proper understanding of the way transgenerational trauma can affect the present psychic health of ethnic or religious collectives may help to identify new paths to explore and new insights on how best to provide effective treatment for psychic traumas in groups exposed to repeated and severe violence and persecution. Our article aims at summarizing the different aspects and models of transgenerational transmission of trauma and their potential application to the Yazidi genocide, resulting treatment needs, and propose the category of genocidal environment to

describe this and similar situations that are becoming more frequent in spite of comprehensive international human rights standards.

the sense of control over situations and effect on actions, the ability to cope with stressful incidents as well as the ability to cultivate or nurture close personal relationships. Traumatized individuals are often also much more susceptible to the development of trauma related but unspecific disorders and reactions such as depression, and complications such as drug abuse, but also to trauma specific disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [2] or culture specific trauma reactions such as nightmare death [3] and other idioms of distress. Early attempts to conceptualise trauma transfer among different family generations were inspired by studies from the 1960s which examined continuous traumata experienced by family members whose parents survived the Holocaust. Continuously since the 1960s, numerous studies have drawn attention to two main findings. Part of this ongoing traumatic stress are frequently efforts of denial of historical reality by perpetrators and the impunity of perpetrators that can be seen as a continuous attack on the identity of the victim group [23,24]. Some countries, such as Austria, have anchored the prohibition of denial of the holocaust in specific or even constitutional laws in the understanding that social and psychological peace cannot be achieved without truth. Countries like South Africa