

An abstract, stylized illustration featuring several women in historical or traditional clothing. The figures are rendered in a flat, graphic style with bold outlines and a limited color palette of muted blues, greys, reds, and earthy tones. The composition is layered, with some figures appearing more prominent than others, creating a sense of depth. The overall mood is somber and contemplative, reflecting the themes of the text.

The Effects of Historical Trauma on Learned Helplessness and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

A Conceptual Paper for UNESCO and
The United Nations Community

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Lyzberthe Chery

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Foreword

We are excited to present this important, and very timely, conceptual paper to the UNESCO, UN, and global communities of educators as we continue to pursue the goal of Education for All. As we collectively strive to achieve this goal, this paper highlights the reality that access to education is only part of the much bigger solution to educational equity.

Most often efforts toward educational equity often focus on increasing student-teacher ratios, curriculum access, school building, and advances in educational technology. Far less frequently is attention given to the context, history, and environment in which students find themselves being exposed to knowledge, education, and learning. This is particularly important when the impacts of historical traumas and long-standing, collective inequalities are present. These present massive challenges and obstacles to learning both at the individual and organizational level. Without addressing these, efforts to provide education for all will be thwarted.

We must remember that education is not achieved simply with the presence of schools and the teachers placed within them. Even in the best of settings, if the environment is not conducive to, and tailored to the lives of students, an environment of helplessness, discouragement, self-fulfilling prophecies and structure educational failure are likely to quickly set in.

While this paper focuses on educational equity in the context of the United States, but its message and recommendations for application are timeless and globally applicable. Regardless of the location, for education to be effective and embraced, the learning environment must be inclusive, equitable, representative, and based in the shared experiences and cultures of the students.

We know how important education is in countless ways from the individual to the societal level. Educational attainment is among the most critical of achievements and biggest predictor of overall health, well-being, and security. At the aggregate level, communities that embrace education and make active efforts to pursue education for all are more functioning, innovative, resilient, stable and just. All speak to the critical need to ensure that all efforts are made to embrace the diversity and uniqueness of our students, and more important acknowledge the wrongs, traumas, and historical barriers that have thwarted educational equity and opportunity.

With such efforts, we can start to move forward toward an educational system that empowers and advances the human condition. We hope this paper, and the detailed understanding presented, sparks a program and policy debate to truly advance Education for All.



Mark Brennan
UNESCO Chair for Community, Leadership, and Youth Development
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Introduction

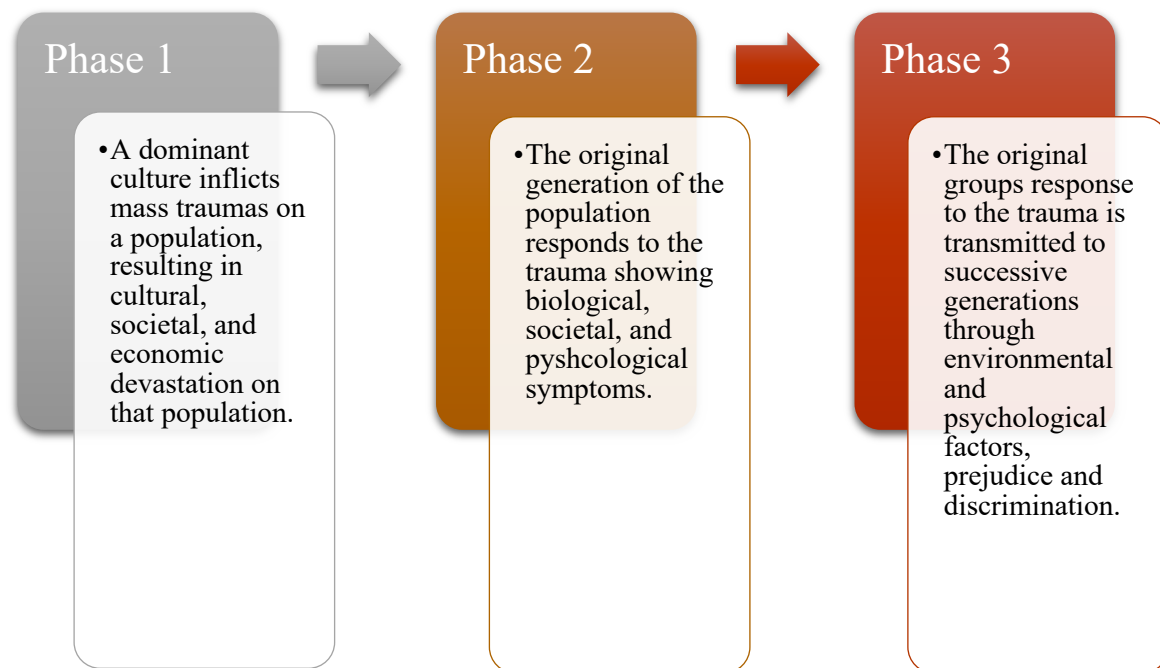
One of the greatest fallacies that has ever been constructed is that of the “American Dream.” The idea that anyone, no matter that person’s background, can escape the confines of poverty and disadvantage through hard work and determination has been rooted in American culture since the arrival of European settlers. But what the last 200+ years have taught us is that for many, the United States is not the land of equal opportunity. Let us draw two parallels: for one group--i.e. white Americans violent colonization and treatment of minorities resulted in the benefit of upward mobility and privilege, whereas groups such as Native Americans and African Americans were subjected to genocide, slavery, and years of discrimination and racism that impeded their ability to prosper in this country and benefit from the same privileges as white Americans. What the “American Dream” and those who still believe in it fail to realize is that we all have different starting points. We all have different and unique obstacles to overcome, and for a large majority of minorities, particularly those living in low-income areas and who have faced historical trauma, the finish line cannot be seen with the naked eye. Through no fault of their own, many minorities, particularly those in the Black community and Native American community, are still suffering from historical trauma and racism (institutional and internalized) that is responsible for cultivating a plethora of community issues such as generational poverty, food and employment deserts, lack of access to quality education, health issues, violence, etc. Aggravating these issues are the phenomena of *learned helplessness* and *self-fulfilling prophecy*, both consequences of historical trauma. This conceptual paper will analyze and describe these two psychological concepts and suggest policy recommendations that can reduce their negative impacts on communities of color, thereby advancing those who are more likely to experience historical trauma to a place of prosperity.

Historical Trauma: A Brief Overview

The term *historical trauma* was first used by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart in the 1980s to convey “the collective and compounding emotional and psychological injury over the lifespan that is multigenerational and resulting from a history of genocide” (Administration for Children & Families, n.d.). It is defined as multigenerational trauma that is experienced by a specific culture, race, or ethnic group. It happens when major events (that were responsible for oppressing a particular group of people because of their status), have the intention of genocide or

ethnocide and therefore, result in the sustained annihilation or disruption of one's culture and/or identity (Administration for Children & Families, n.d.). Past literature has targeted at least four distinct assumptions that have supported and laid out the foundation for historical trauma: (1) mass trauma is deliberately and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a subjugating, dominant population; (2) trauma is not limited to a single catastrophic event, but continues over an extended period of time; (3) traumatic events reverberate throughout the population, creating a universal experience of trauma; and (4) the magnitude of the traumatic experience derails the population from its natural, projected historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social and economic disparities that persists across generations (Sotero, 2006). Michelle Sotero, whose research in 2006 examined how historical trauma influenced the health status of racial/ethnic populations in the U.S. was able to provide a conceptual model (see Figure 1) of the historical trauma experience that included three successive phases (Brown-Rice, n.d.).

Figure 1: Sotero's model of historical trauma's impact on population health.



(Brown-Rice, n.d.)

Examples and Implications of Historical Trauma

Historical trauma has and can be perpetrated in many ways. Examples of traumatic events resulting in historical trauma include the Holocaust, forced migration, slavery, the violent colonization of Native Americans, etc. Even though there are some people within a particular group that may not feel the effects of historical trauma, most others may experience some of its negative implications, such as low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse and addiction, health complications, high rates of suicide, PTSD, generational poverty, etc. A lot of research has been done on the effects of historical trauma particularly within the Native American community. Notably, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart led a study which found that the repeated massacres and forced removal of children to federal and mission boarding and day schools initiated severe historical trauma (Administration for Children & Families, n.d.). Although African Americans have experienced generations of slavery, massacres, segregation, the assassinations of prominent civil rights leaders, and institutionalized racism that have contributed to physical, psychological, and spiritual trauma, the resulted historical trauma within the African American community has been less directly studied (DeAngelis, 2019).

Studies About the Transmission of Historical Trauma

The transmission of historical trauma across generations is a fairly new topic of study. However, there has been research that has illustrated historical trauma's transferability to succeeding generations through biological, psychological, and environmental means. Lidewyde H. Berckmoes, Ph.D., of the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement in Amsterdam, along with colleagues, did a qualitative study in which they spent five months researching 41 mothers and their teenage children who had lived through the 1994 Rwandan genocide (DeAngelis, 2019). Through observations and interviews, the research team found direct ways in which the mothers communicated with their children about the trauma, such as maintaining silence or expressing hope that an event that catastrophic would never happen again (DeAngelis, 2019). The research team also observed indirect effects of how the genocide affected second generations (the teenagers); these effects included heightened poverty, greater family burden, and compromised parenting (DeAngelis, 2019). When analyzing how the second generation felt about these effects, they said they felt that poverty rendered them unable to attend school and forced them to work harder to help keep their families' finances stable.

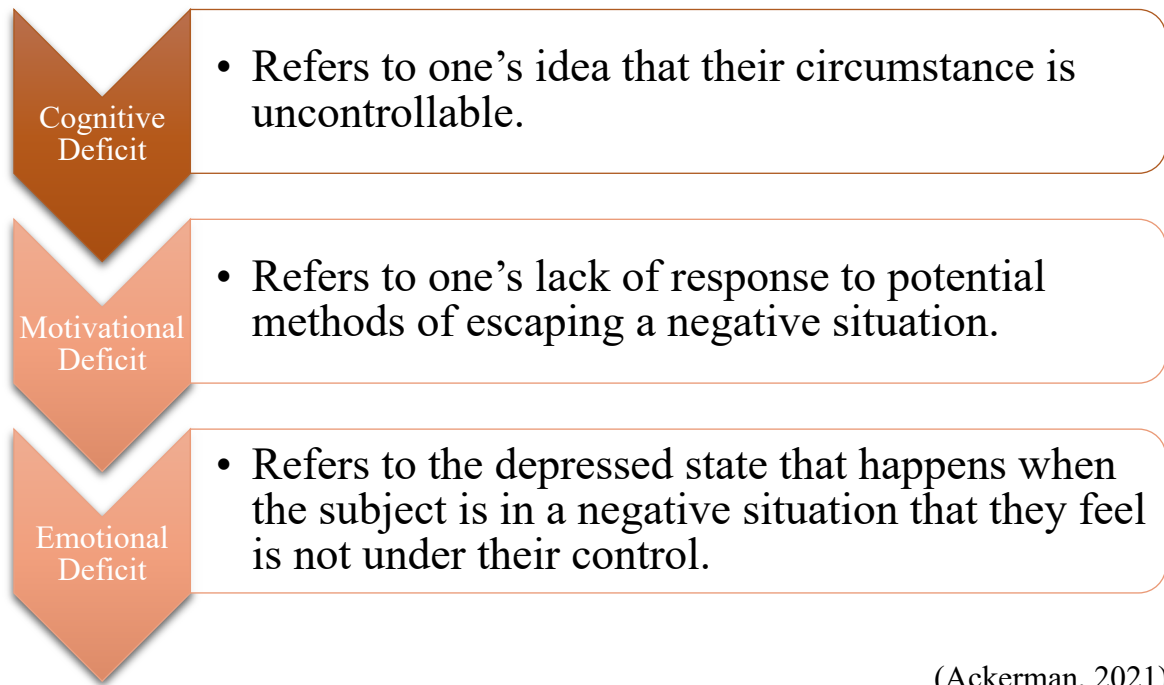
A trauma psychologist named Elena Cherepanov, Ph.D., of Cambridge College in Boston who had been researching how survivors' initial reactions to an event may affect future generations had drawn a similar conclusion to that of the Rwandan study. She had discovered that living in oppressive situations can lead parents to construct "survival messages" that they pass onto their children and grandchildren. These messages include "Don't ask for help—it's dangerous" (DeAngelis, 2019). Although initially these messages had provided short-term benefits and helped people stay alive, they lacked long-term benefits. Instead in the present these "survival messages" may have contributed to an increase in people's interpersonal vulnerability (DeAngelis, 2019). This has in turn cultivated a fear of personal disclosure and a distrust of key term mental health care providers, thus often making it hard for trauma survivors to seek and accept support.

When discussing the transmission of historical trauma through biological means, epigenetics is often the key term that scientists use to explore this phenomenon. Epigenetics is the study of how behaviors and the environment can cause changes that affect the way your genes work (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Epigenetic changes--unlike genetic changes--are reversible and do not change your DNA sequence but can change how your body reads a DNA sequence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). When tying that to historical trauma, a psychologist named Rachel Yehuda, Ph.D., director of the Traumatic Stress Studies Division at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York, along with her colleagues, found that children of Holocaust survivors with PTSD have lower rates of methylation (a type of epigenetic mechanism) in a particular stress-related glucocorticoid receptor, the GR-1F, than children of survivors who did not have PTSD (DeAngelis, 2019). More recently, the research team has been looking directly at epigenetic changes across generations. In a study comparing methylation rates in 32 Holocaust survivors and 22 of their children with matched controls, the team found that Holocaust survivors and their children showed changes in the same location of the same gene (FKBP5), a stress-related gene linked to PTSD and depression (DeAngelis, 2019). Dr. Yehuda and her team concluded that trauma changes an individual's genes in small but specific ways that can be inherited and passed down, causing similar behavior and physical effects to those individuals' offspring (DeAngelis, 2019). For example, normal PTSD causes the amygdala, a structure in the brain, to overwork when exposed to dangerous situations. However, continued overactivity of the amygdala can cause genetic changes that become an inheritable trait and can lead to feelings of danger for future generations.

Learned Helplessness: Brief Overview

Learned helplessness (LH) is a concept that was originally discovered by psychologist Martin Seligman alongside his associates (Cherry, 2021). It was used to describe helpless behavior that Seligman had observed among dogs, during an experiment. In this experiment, several dogs had been classically conditioned to expect a shock after hearing a tone. The dogs had been placed in a box that contained two chambers, (one side was electrified while the other was not) that were separated by a low barrier. Seligman and his team found that even though the dogs had been given an opportunity to escape, the dogs that had been subjected to the classical conditioning failed to escape even though all they had to do to avoid the shock was to simply jump over a small barrier (Cherry, 2021). Learned helplessness has also been observed in humans. In a study conducted in 1974, Seligman and his colleagues had divided human participants into three groups: one group was subjected to a loud and unpleasant noise by pressing a button four times; the second group was subjected to the same noise, but the button was not functional; and the third group was subjected to no noise at all. During the study, the human participants had to hear a loud noise and were given a box with a lever which when manipulated would turn off the sound. Similar to the animal experiment, those who had no control of the noise in the first part of the experiment did not even try to turn off the noise, while the rest of the participants were able to figure out how to turn off the noise. Seligman and his team concluded that subjecting participants to situations in which they had no control resulted in three deficits: motivational, cognitive, and emotional (Ackerman, 2021). These three concepts are described in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Seligman's model of the three deficits that occur when uncontrollable situations are initiated.



(Ackerman, 2021)

Key Terms

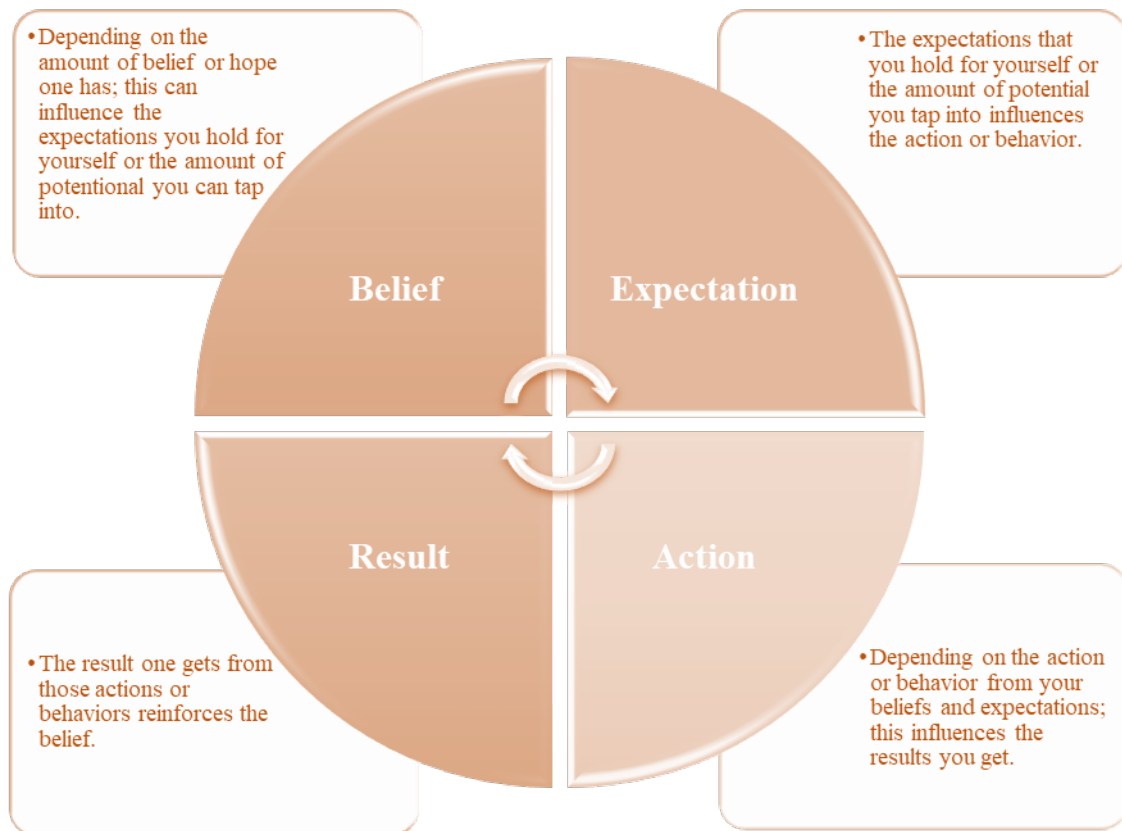
Universal helplessness: A type of learned helplessness that is known to be external. With this type of learned helplessness, one believes nothing can be done about their situation.

Personal helplessness: A type of learned helplessness that is known to be internal. One may believe others could find a solution or avoid the pain or discomfort but believes that they personally are incapable of doing this.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: A Brief Overview

Self-fulfilling Prophecy (SFP) is a psychological concept that was first derived by Robert K. Merton in 1948. It is described as “a false definition of the situation evoking a behavior which makes the originally false conception come true.” To put this in basic terms, self-fulfilling prophecy is when one has a false reality or misrepresentation of reality. This causes their behaviors to elicit this false construct of reality that then may actually come true. Merton proposed that SFP was such a powerful process that it was capable of causing social and societal problems such as war, economic downturns, academic underachievement, and racial disparities.

Figure 3: Cycle When Self-fulfilling Prophecies are in Effect



(Schaedig, 2020)

A common example of self-fulfilling prophecy is the placebo effect. In the placebo effect two cohorts are split up: one receives a treatment while another receives the placebo treatment (a treatment that is perceived to be real but in reality, has no therapeutic effect). Those in the placebo group may start to show improvements even though there was no active treatment. In this case, the beliefs that the placebo group had led to that prophecy being fulfilled. Another common example is the stereotype effect, which refers to how one's negative actions may fulfill a negative cultural stereotype of one's group. For example, in past research and statistics that was done on African Americans, researchers drew the conclusion that they were less intelligent compared to other racial groups due to lower test scores being reported on standardized tests (Schaedig, 2020). This research was then used to justify the admission of a smaller percentage of African Americans at colleges and universities. Since other individuals' expectations of African Americans were lower, they fulfilled their expectations (Schaedig, 2020). It was thought that the

negative stereotype surrounding African Americans, led them to become anxious about taking tests which led to poorer results than what they were actually capable of.

There are also different types of SFP, one being self-imposed prophecy, which is when one's own expectations influence one's actions or behavior. Another type is other-imposed prophecy, which is when others' expectations of another individual affect the behavior of that individual. Other-imposed self-fulfilling prophecies typically lay out the foundation for racial and gender stereotyping and discrimination. When a person has certain expectations of a person belonging to another race or gender, they will treat them as such, thereby possibly positioning the person in a place of conformity to a particular stereotype. In a research study that was done in 1997 by Claude Steel, he examined high-achieving African Americans and top-ranked female math students. What he found was when students worried that their own poor academic performance could unintentionally confirm a negative stereotype of their social group, they actually performed poorly, thus confirming that stereotype (Schaedig, 2020). These findings have profound positive and negative impacts that can often go beyond the classroom and affect people in other facets of life. This can then perpetuate another type of other-imposed self-fulfilling prophecy called the Pygmalion effect.

Pygmalion Effect

The Pygmalion effect is another type of other-imposed self-fulfilling prophecy that states that the way in which a person is treated can have a direct impact on how the person behaves (Schaedig, 2020). In 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobsen conducted a famous study to better understand the Pygmalion effect by examining whether student achievement could be self-fulfilling based on the teacher's expectations. Rosenthal and Jacobsen gave elementary school children an IQ test and then told their teachers which children were going to be average and which children were going to be 'bloomers,' i.e., the twenty percent of students who showed "unusual potential for intellectual growth" (Schaedig, 2020). They found that the teachers had low expectations for the average children and gave all their attention to the bloomers. The teachers had also created a nicer environment for the bloomers, called on them for answers more often and gave them more detailed feedback when they got something wrong. However, unbeknownst to the teachers, these students were selected randomly and therefore may or may not have had an increased potential for intellectual growth. After eight months, the researchers

came back and retested the children's intelligence. The results showed that the bloomers IQ scores had risen significantly higher than the average students, even though these bloomers were chosen at random. The bloomers gained an average of two IQ points in verbal ability, seven points in reasoning, and four points in overall IQ. The experiment showed that teacher expectations worked as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The teachers' expectations had altered the way the children were treated, and as a direct result, affected their ability. According to the Pygmalion effect, the other-imposed expectations forced on the students by the teachers were internalized and became such a big part in the student's self-perception that they acted accordingly to their internal beliefs.

The Pygmalion effect can also affect the household and the workplace. When examining a household, if parents choose to treat their children as intelligent, talented, independent human beings, according to the Pygmalion effect, they are more likely to internalize these attitudes and act accordingly. However, on the other hand, if a parent views their child as incapable and/or unintelligent, that individual will most likely lower their standards and act according to those expectations. In the workplace, if a manager raises their expectations for the performance of workers, this can result in an increase in worker performance and productivity.

Linking Historical Trauma, Learned Helplessness, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

One of the more damaging long-term effects of historical trauma is generational poverty. Generational poverty, which differs from situational poverty, often initiates learned helplessness (LH). When experiencing LH, the prospect of a financially independent and sustainable life does not seem achievable, and many people become unaware that they can improve their conditions (Michigan Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity, 2015). Under these conditions, there is no value or very little value placed on certain skills, such as money management, planning, and maintaining relationships, and skills like problem solving end up being based on survival rather than self-improvement (Michigan Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity, 2015). When people experience poverty, they are less confident in their ability to succeed, often leading to decreased professional and educational attainment, depression, and anxiety. They may experience the “negative self-stereotyping” effect, which occurs when people in long-term poverty internalize media stereotypes of people

receiving government benefits or facing unemployment as being “low in warmth and competence” (Foster, 2015). As a consequence, people tend to view themselves as fundamentally flawed, so any achievement that they receive is neutralized by a lack of confidence and subconscious self-loathing (Foster, 2015). This is especially true for children in poverty, who often underestimate their intelligence and capability. A recent Institute of Education study found that teachers also attribute negative characteristics to children in poverty and perceive them as less capable (Foster, 2015). If children internalize the negative stereotypes projected onto them, it does nothing to aid in attaining a better quality of life; instead, these children behave according to those stereotypes and a self-fulfilling prophecy is cultivated.

Linking Historical Trauma, Learned Helplessness, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy from the Black Perspective

Racial discriminatory practices can initiate historical trauma which can then produce learned helplessness. When situations are governed based on racial discrimination, the outcomes for the Black population are the same regardless of whether they respond appropriately, inappropriately, or not at all. This racial discrimination then causes Black people to perceive themselves to be helpless and in turn will probably exhibit universal helplessness. Personal helplessness can also be experienced if the Black individual perceives themselves to be helpless as a product of their own lack of intelligence, skills, competencies, or ability to utilize opportunities. Some Black individuals may also perceive themselves to be helpless due to a combination of their inabilities and the racist system in America; thus, there is no reason to gain appropriate skills since these skills may be useless in affecting outcomes in racially governed situations. These lack of skills or competencies can be both *perceived* by members of the Black community due to negative stereotyping and can be also actual realities due to generations of racial discrimination, which has limited self-advancement opportunities for the Black community.

Education

In educational settings, young Black children may be subjected to racially discriminatory practices, thus resulting in learned helplessness. Existing evidence indicates that teachers have differential expectations in respect to the performance levels of Black and white children. Previous data had suggested that white teachers believe that white students will perform

significantly better than Black students (Green, 1982). In this situation, Black children might learn that the outcomes of their performances are not dependent on their quality or level of academic performance, but more on the teacher's perception of their racial status (Green, 1982). These perceptions can have long-lasting consequences on the future achievements of Black children by creating a sense of helplessness to the way in which the world perceives them as Black individuals.

Employment and Housing

Employment issues and living conditions that were perpetuated by racially discriminatory policies, such as blockbusting and redlining, still have profound impacts present-day. These practices had forced a large percentage of Black people to live in low-income and resource-poor areas, depriving them of equal access to economic opportunities, healthcare, and giving rise to food and employment deserts. Currently, we still see a high concentration of Black people living in low-income and resource poor areas, suffering from inadequate nutrition and health care, and facing high rates of disease and early death (Green, 1982). The unemployment rate for Black people is also almost twice the unemployment rate for whites and living below the poverty level forces many Blacks into the welfare system (Ajilore, 2020). Immobility, stagnation, apathy, indifference, and defeatism are the results of this racial discrimination and learned helplessness. Low income, joblessness, welfare, and the physical state of the places they live in may restrict many Black individuals' choices, and frequently expose them to outcomes independent of effort (Green, 1982). For example, even today, an other-imposed self-fulfilling prophecy may arise when loan lenders and landlords who hold negative stereotypes and regard Black individuals as depreciating the value of a neighborhood may deny such individuals housing and financial opportunities. This may cause the individuals to devalue themselves which then perpetuates this feeling of helplessness within the Black community.

Key Terms

Blockbusting: The practice of introducing African American homeowners into previously all-white neighborhoods to spark rapid white flight and housing price decline. Real estate speculators have historically used this technique to profit from prejudice-driven market instability. After placing an African American homeowner onto the block, speculators solicited

white homeowners with tales of impending depreciation. Fearful, residents often sold their homes to these speculators below market value. As a result, white residents began to leave in great numbers, thus depressing housing prices in a self-fulfilling prophecy ("Blockbusting," 2021).

Redlining: The practice of denying mortgages to people, mostly people of color in urban areas, preventing them from buying a home in certain neighborhoods or getting a loan to renovate their house. As a result, bankers and other mortgage lenders would reject loans from creditworthy borrowers based strictly on their race or where they lived. The term comes from the way lenders would identify neighborhoods they deemed as high or low risk. For example, they would use red ink to outline on paper maps, the parts of the city that were considered at high risk of default (meaning neighborhoods predominantly occupied by Black and/or Latino residents), or more “desirable” neighborhoods for approving a loan (Brooks, 2020).

Legal System

It is possible that the Black population's low level of trust in the legal system is a result of learned helplessness in certain situations. There is a long history of Black people receiving unjust trials and subsequent sentences in court, and to make matters worse, often the police appear unresponsive to their needs. For many of the aforementioned reasons of racial discrimination and historical trauma, black people are also more likely to be overrepresented in jail and prison populations. These problems are exacerbated by frequent arrests, improper searches, unjustified convictions, and racially biased decisions when the problems involve interracial conflicts (Green, 1982). Under these conditions, any legal outcome for Black persons appears largely independent of their behavioral performance and much more a function of their race and socioeconomic status (Green, 1982). This inability to control their own legal outcome probably leads to universal helplessness since the controlling factors are external and are often also perceived as external (Green, 1982).

Recommendations

Mentorships

Mentorships are powerful and can provide guidance and prepare young people to navigate the demands and complexities of their personal and professional lives. Research shows that mentoring can help people academically, emotionally, and socially; it can steer them away from trouble and toward higher education, a career, and an overall better quality of life (Gordon, 2016). Mentoring is especially important as they allow communities that are not widely represented and come from low-income backgrounds, to gain a sense of optimism that people who look like them or share the same cultural backgrounds can succeed and prosper. However, even though mentorships are important and are in strong demand, there are nowhere near enough mentors available. Not only that, the most potent form of mentoring, natural mentoring (non-parental adults that are chosen within a youth's already existing community who serve as listeners, advisors, and advocate), is unequally distributed, with younger people from higher-income households more likely to have access to caring adult support systems outside of the family ("Mentoring Gap," 2018). We need mentoring interventions that help mobilize community resources and networks, facilitate youth's capacity to draw on natural support, and encourage all adults to take a more active role in the lives of youth.

Increasing the Presence of Counselors, Social Workers, Nurses, and Psychologists in Schools, While Decreasing the Presence of Police in Schools

One of the keyways of reversing the effects of LH and SFP is through mental health interventions, specifically that of integrating positive psychology and cognitive behavior therapy. When children are sick, stressed, traumatized, or are exhibiting behavioral issues, school counselors, nurses, and school psychologists are often the first people that these children see (Whitaker et al., n.d.). Data suggests that 1 in 5 youth will develop mental health difficulties that will eventually call for a diagnosis. The data also suggests that 1 in 10 youth will be impacted by their mental health needs enough that they may require additional support from schools (Whitaker et al., n.d.). These mental health concerns can have serious impacts on students as they progress through school, and it contributes to nearly half of the youth eventually dropping out. Up to 80 percent of youth in need of mental health services do not receive services in their communities because existing mental health services are inadequate, and of those 80, 70 percent

of youth receive their mental health services in their schools (Whitaker et al., n.d.). This is especially true for children who live in low-income communities where such resources are scarce. However, in many communities, particularly low-income communities, there is a lack of available mental health resources and staff within public schools. This puts a strain on teachers, as they are often not equipped to deal with the special needs of students with disabilities, and historically marginalized students, who may attend schools with fewer resources and support. When there are no accessible behavioral resources, some teachers request help from law enforcement, which results in an increased criminalization of the youth.

To put it in better context, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) found that schools with police reported 3.5 times as many arrests as schools without police, with many states having reported 2 to 3 times more police officers in schools than social workers, and five states having reported more police officers in schools than nurses (Whitaker et al., n.d.). These funding decisions end up becoming a burden for vulnerable populations. As a result, students with disabilities and students of color are most frequently criminalized. Consider these statistics in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Student Arrests Among Various Racial/Ethnic Groups

Pacific Island/Native Hawaiian and Native American students were arrested at a rate 2 times that of white students.

Black students were arrested at a rate 3 times that of white students; In some states, they were 8 times as likely to be arrested.

Students with disabilities were arrested at a rate 2.9 times that of students without disabilities; In some states, they were 10 times as likely to be arrested than their counterparts.

Latinx students were arrested at a rate 1.3 times that of white students.

Black girls made up 16 percent of the female student population but were 39 percent of girls arrested in school.

Black girls were arrested at a rate 4 times that of white girls.

(Whitaker et al., n.d.,)

The presence of permanent school police often shifts the school environment from being a place of learning and supporting students to over-disciplining and criminalizing them. Roughly 25 percent of school police surveyed by the newspaper *Education Week* stated that they had no experience with youth before working in schools (Whitaker et al., n.d.). Police are trained to focus on law and order, not a student's social and emotional well-being and development. Being arrested and detained, with the possibility of being sent to a juvenile detention center can be traumatizing. Kids are impressionable, and when a traumatizing event such as an arrest or detainment happens, the window of opportunity to change behavioral issues closes and a positive outlook on life decreases. For many kids, they think of it as another SFP, recognizing that their racial/ethnic group is historically accustomed to this kind of treatment, and therefore will continue down that path unless an intervention is done.

Note: It is vital that school staff like nurses, teachers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors understand that historical trauma permeates all domains of existence (e.g., personal identity, interpersonal relationships, collective memory, cultural and spiritual worldviews).

Implementing Attractor and Magnet Programs in Public Schools

Colleges and universities seek students that have pushed themselves with rigorous course offerings and hands-on experience. In addition, today, there are many high school programs that are available to students that allow them to earn college credits while also using the skills that they have learned in the classroom by applying them to hands-on experiences. These programs are especially important as they allow students to narrow their choices as to what career they may want, whilst also keeping children, especially those who come from low-income backgrounds busy, preventing them from engaging in troubling behavior such as drug use, gang-violence, etc. With that being said, it is especially important that all these programs be at no monetary cost to the students, and that transportation is provided. The reason being is that if these programs are not free of charge and if transportation is not provided, you would have a higher concentration of middle- to high-income children participating in these programs, and therefore you would have a huge discrepancy as those of low-income backgrounds (particularly minorities as they are more likely to identify as low/middle income) would not be able to benefit from these programs.

Examples of these programs can be seen in my home county of St. Lucie. They offer attractor, magnet, and vocational programs in middle and high school at no cost to the family while also providing transportation. Figure 5 shows an extensive list of their available programs as well as their descriptions.

Figure 5: Examples of Educational Programs Offered in St. Lucie County.

Aerospace & Engineering Academy	In partnership with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, students are able to take college courses at Embry-Riddle in order to advance their interest and potential career in aerospace and/or engineering.
International Baccalaureate (IB)	IB is a rigorous, prestigious pre-university course of study leading to examinations. Students will work toward the full IB diploma. Although IB students are do a full diploma IB program.
Marine Oceanographic Academy (MOA)	For students who are interested in marine biology, MOA allows students to take college level classes through Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment while also working with scientists in field experiences at Florida Atlantic University's world-renowned Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution.
Agri-Technology	Through the Agri-Technology program students get hands-on experience in the agricultural field by working with live farm animals and participating in competitions. Students completing the program earn college credit through Indian River State College and may be eligible for Gold Seal scholarships. In addition, students may earn industry certification as an Agricultural Technician.

Computer Science	<p>This program engages students in interdisciplinary activities that not only build knowledge and skills in computer science, but also empower students to develop essential skills such as problem solving, critical and creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and perseverance.</p> <p>Additionally, the computer science program infuses components of Esports, providing students experience in coding and game design. Students have the opportunity to earn Career Technical Education (CTE) certifications in information technology related to the field of Computer Science.</p>
Pharmacy Technician	<p>The Pharmacy Technician program, in partnership with Walgreens Pharmacy, offers a sequence of courses which prepare students for education and careers in the Health Science field. The program is designed to prepare students for employment as pharmacy technicians. St. Lucie Public School's Allied Health programs offer students opportunities for certifications that lead to entry-level jobs in healthcare, as well as college credit to continue their educational and career pathway at the college level.</p>

Robotics & Engineering	<p>The robotics and engineering program provides students with the knowledge, skills, and technically oriented experiences in the study of principles and applications of robotics and engineering. Students discover and explore manufacturing processes, product design, robotics, and automation, and then apply what they have learned to design solutions for real-world manufacturing problems and have the opportunity to earn various Career Technical Education (CTE) certifications including Robotics 1-Mircosoft (MTA)- Introduction to Programming Using Python, Robotics 2-AutoDesk-AutoCAD, and Robotics 3-AutoDesk-Inventor.</p>
Veterinary Science	<p>Students in the veterinary program work with live animals learning medical procedures preparing them for a future in the field or with the skills and knowledge they need that will give them an advantage in college. Students may earn an industry certification as a Certified Veterinary Assistant that qualifies them for entry level positions in the field.</p>
Dual Enrollment	<p>Dual Enrollment is an advanced academic program that allows students to take college courses at Indian River State College. Students that choose this program can receive college credit as well as high school credit, which contribute to meeting graduation requirements.</p>

Our programs. (n.d.)

Mandatory Life Skill Courses from K-12

Life skills are the skill sets that enable people to live happy and meaningful lives while reaching their full potential. By learning life skills, one can achieve mental wellbeing, self-awareness, and skills for appreciating humanity in others as well as working towards wellbeing in one's community. When discussing how life skills would be carried out amongst a student body, life skill classes would incorporate topics such as historical trauma; prevention of and response to common adolescent problems such as bullying, sexual abuse, self-harm, etc. Financial literacy would also be taught and include topics such as how to pay taxes and open a bank account. Life skill education is based on research and methodology for positive pedagogy and positive education developed alongside positive psychology (Pentikäinen, 2017). Positive psychology is a keyway to treat LH and SFP, so these courses would be able to guide students, increase confidence, and bring awareness to certain topics.

Community Workshops

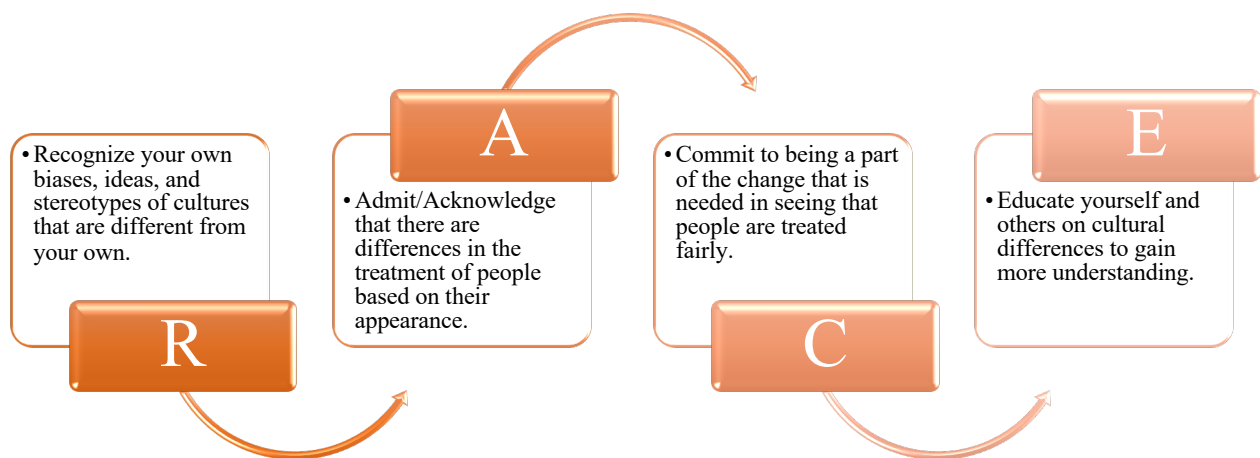
Community workshops would be similar to the life skills courses, but directly target the adult population. These workshops would cover topics such as financial literacy, entrepreneurship, overcoming addiction, domestic violence prevention and intervention, and navigating behavior/psychiatric problems for one's own self and in loved ones. Additionally, historical trauma, self-esteem issues, crisis interventions, self-harm, sexual abuse, health, gang violence, parenting skills, and strengthening interpersonal relationships could all be possible topics of workshops depending on community needs. They would also be incentivized by providing childcare, meals and clothes, so that more people are likely to come. It is also really important that leaders in the community, as well as representatives (local and state-wide), attend these community workshops and work alongside community members to actually implement certain solutions to issues that community members may be facing, such as low access to healthcare and childcare, food deserts/unemployment deserts, police brutality, low quality of public education, limited public transportation, etc.

Better Training for Teachers

By not empowering students, not challenging students, believing certain biases, and being lackadaisical about teaching, some educators can perpetrate learned helplessness. However, there are also ways that educators can prevent students from experiencing learned helplessness. One

way is through cultural competency training. The National Education Association describes cultural competence as “having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families” (Farmer, 2020). When educators fail to acknowledge their own biases and assumptions, that can hinder a student’s developmental process. If the students come from a low-income background, educators are more likely to perpetuate the bias of their inability to learn. Children of color are likely to suffer from this bias as they are more likely to be in low-income communities compared to white children. Having good intentions is not sufficient; the actions of educators are what will be seen and felt by students. For individuals to become competent in another culture, they must first understand their own biases and stereotypical ideas. This recognition allows people to become more aware of their thoughts and actions towards others who do not look like them and how these biases--whether intentional or not--are racist and/or classist and can contribute to learned helplessness and self-fulfilling prophecy. Educators must understand people's history and how that perpetuates trauma. They must undergo biweekly training instead of one training per year. Figure 6 shares a few tips and visuals to help educators increase their cultural awareness, as well as prevent learned helplessness among children.

Figure 6: Strategies for Increasing Cultural Competency Among Educators.



(Farmer, 2020)

Tips	Descriptions
Know the Community You Serve	Teachers sometimes work in communities where they do not live. The biggest mistake with this practice is when educators fail to educate themselves about the community in which they serve (Farmer, 2020).
Identify Areas for Growth	Everyone has a past and upbringing that has shaped the way they view the world. Those experiences themselves are not negative, but when these experiences skew the way a person views someone else, an adjustment may be required (Farmer, 2020).
Listen and Observe	The beginning of understanding is listening. When one is constantly talking there is no room for listening. Districts and educators fail at cultural awareness because listening has not been initiated. Listen to the parents, listen to the students, listen to your peers, listen to your staff. When what you hear corroborates what you see, act. Far too often districts fail to see because they fail to listen (Farmer, 2020).
Develop Cross-Cultural Skills	One of the biggest mistakes made across cultures is the attempt to try to fit in. Fitting in leads to offensive words that can cause a strain in relationships (Farmer, 2020).

(Farmer, 2020)

Here are also a few strategies that teachers can use to prevent students from acquiring learned helplessness:

- Teachers should provide praise and encouragement based on the student's abilities (e.g., "You're good at math," or "You have a knack for this subject, I can tell.") to help them believe they are good at certain tasks or subjects.
- Teachers can incentive school attendance as children from low-income backgrounds are more likely to miss school.
- Training teachers on how to access proper resources to better aid students who may suffer from homelessness, inadequate nutrition, domestic violence, etc.
- Teachers should provide praise and encouragement based on the student's efforts (e.g., "Your hours of hard work paid off on this test!") to help them believe their effort will make a difference.
- Teachers should work on smart, individual goal setting with students to help them learn that goals can be achieved and that outcomes are often within their realm of influence.
- Teachers should create and guide students to learning resources (which include people, books, websites, community organizations, etc.) to help students become comfortable with not knowing the answer and with looking for the answer in the right places (Miller, 2015).
- Teachers should use questions for learning rather than about learning (e.g., use questions that encourage the student to think about his own learning and thought patterns instead of just thinking about what he knows) (Miller, 2015).
- Teachers should stop giving students the answers. Instead, help them learn it at their own pace and through their own method as they will be more likely to remember it this way (Miller, 2015).
- Teachers should allow their students to fail. Failing and trying again is vital for children. Educators should be there to support children through their failures and teach them healthy ways to cope with disappointment (Miller, 2015).

Have Courses or Lessons that Accurately Depict Indigenous History, Black history, as well as the History of Other Minorities.

Most students across the United States do not get comprehensive, thoughtful, or even accurate education, especially when that education has to do with historically marginalized and under-represented communities. A 2015 study by researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that 87 percent of the content taught about Native Americans only includes history pre-1900. In addition to this, 27 states did not name a single individual Native American in their history standards (Diamond, 2019). Teaching comprehensive Native American history is important as it allows us to better understand the impact that forced migration and violent colonization had on the Native American community. This would make us less susceptible to inaccurate narratives and depictions and efficient when responding to Native American issues. Additionally, when education on the Native American community is all pre-1900, students develop the false impression that indigenous culture is antiquated and Native communities no longer exist. This can perpetuate harmful stereotypes against the Native community, deny the vitality of indigenous communities and the existence of the current issues they are facing, and impact Native students' self-image and sense of pride in their culture.

One way to fix this issue is for school districts to partner up with The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and use their Native Knowledge 360 Degrees (NK360°) lesson plans. The museum's national education initiative, first launched in February 2018, and has more than a decade of work at the museum. The multi-part initiative aims to improve how Native American history and culture is taught in schools across the country by introducing and elevating indigenous perspectives and voices (Diamond, 2019). These lessons offer a deeper look at the innovations of the Inka Empire, investigate why some treaties between Native American tribes and the U.S. government failed, and provide an in-depth exploration into the context and history of the Cherokee removal in the 1830s (Diamond, 2019). The material brings the history into the present by including Native voices and perspectives through interviews with community members whose families were part of that removal as well as current leaders of those communities who are still dealing with the effects of nation rebuilding.

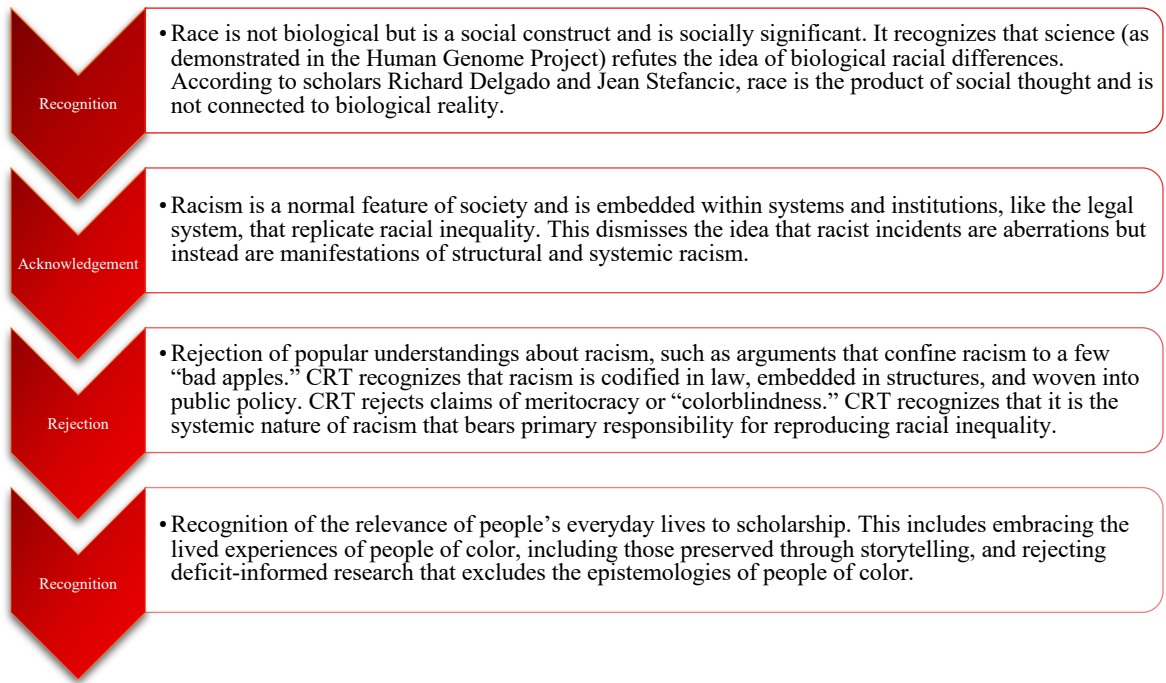
Not only is there a lack of education on Native American history, but there is also inadequate Black history education throughout our school system. In history courses, the most

many children learn about Black history is isolated to the month of February, Black History Month. It is often limited to the civil rights movement and slavery, and the people of color that are discussed are the typical five to six individuals that are taught from elementary school to high school (Fasano et al, 2021). It's important to teach comprehensive Black history that moves beyond slavery and discusses key events like Black Wall Street, the Tulsa Race Massacre, etc., as well as notable Black figures that are not restricted to Martin Luther King Jr, but also discuss the significance of Malcolm X. It's also important to diversify reading notable works by famous Black authors such as Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Langston Hughes, etc. By seeing Black people represented in a multidimensional way that highlights that rich cultural history, Black students can cultivate a sense of optimism. We have to move beyond courses that only have a Eurocentric perspective by including a perspective that really highlights Black and brown excellence.

Implementing CRT in Multiple Institutions (Legal System, Education System)

Critical race theory (CRT) is the practice of cross-examining the role that race and racism have in society (George, 2021). It critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that puts people of color at the bottom (George, 2021). Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term CRT, notes CRT does not have a strict, static, and narrow definition (George, 2021). Instead, CRT is a malleable practice that is continuously evolving. While recognizing the evolving and malleable nature of CRT, scholar Khiara Bridges outlines a few key principles of CRT, including:

Figure 7: Principles of Critical Race Theory.

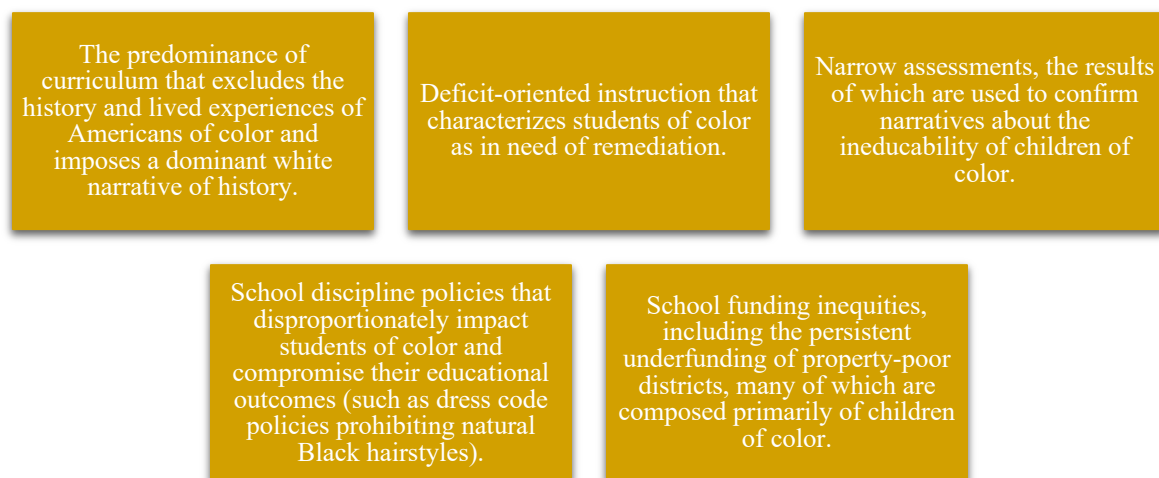


(George, 2021)

Education System

When relating CRT's relevance to education, Gloria Ladson-Billings, a leading scholar in applying CRT to education, explains the replication of racial inequality in schools:

Figure 7: Racial Inequalities that are Perpetrated in the Educational System.



(George, 2021)

In the education system, viewing things from a CRT perspective helps students recognize how racial inequality can be perpetuated through laws and policies—from the Jim Crow laws and de facto policies that maintained school segregation to contemporary policies like exclusionary admissions policies or discriminatory school discipline policies. In addition, CRT also helps students understand how racism has endured past the civil rights era through systems, laws, and policies—and how those same systems, laws, and policies can be transformed. The result is that you will have an empowered generation that will become leaders in that transformation, and hopefully solve key issues that are responsible for the inequalities that people of color face.

Legal System

From a legal standpoint, there have been many legal interventions that have permeated the education system. One example is the Supreme Court Case of *Milliken v. Bradley*. In 1974, 20 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, a woman by the name of Verda Bradley along with other parents were seeking to desegregate Detroit's schools. With

representation from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the parents alleged that Michigan maintained a racially segregated public school system through policies that enabled white flight and isolated Black students within the city's public schools (George, 2021). In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court rejected a desegregation plan that encompassed Detroit's public schools and the surrounding all-white suburbs. The Court stated that they were not required to be part of the desegregation plan because district lines had not been drawn with "racist intent" and the surrounding suburbs were not responsible for the segregation within the city's schools (George, 2021). In his prescient dissent, Thurgood Marshall stated, "The Detroit-only plan has no hope of achieving actual desegregation Instead, Negro children will continue to attend all-Negro schools. The very evil that Brown was aimed at will not be cured but will be perpetuated" (George, 2021).

Fast-forward to 2016 in the case of Gary B. vs. Whitmer, students in several Detroit schools describe deteriorating facilities that included: unqualified educators, no heat, and vermin infestations (George, 2021). Due to the 1973 Supreme Court case *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* that held there was no federal right to education; the Gary B. plaintiffs brought a new claim alleging that they were entitled to a minimum level of education that enabled them to achieve at least a basic level of literacy (George, 2021). The decision of the Court of Appeals in favor of the plaintiffs was ultimately set aside, and the state of Michigan settled with the plaintiffs. From a CRT perspective, the *Milliken v. Bradley* case illustrates how the law can elicit racial inequality. Due to the Court, rejecting a desegregation plan that would've restricted racial divisions imposed by discriminatory housing practices, racial and economic inequality persisted. CRT recognizes the inevitability of the racially isolated and under-resourced schools at issue in the Gary B. litigation were due to decisions made in the *Milliken* case decades earlier.

To counteract the negative effects the legal system has on people of color, we must adopt a CRT framework that involves interrogating and reordering the systems and structures in which we live, especially since many of our nation's systems and structures—including the legal system—were created when people of color were denied full participation in U.S. society. Instead, we need to recognize that these individuals have stories, histories, and knowledge that are worth acknowledging, learning about, and centering. It requires the abandonment of a lackadaisical approach that perceives those impacted by unjust laws and policies as deficient,

defective, or helpless. But most of all, CRT demands challenging the racial inequality that has persisted in this nation for far too long and exploring how policy change can put an end to it.

Conclusion

As aforementioned, not everyone has equal opportunity to prosper in the U.S. Through no individual's fault, some people have massive obstacles that hinder their development depending on their racial and/or ethnic background and socioeconomic status. However, if we wish to terminate the key issues that historical trauma perpetrates like generational poverty, learned helplessness, etc., we need to re-examine every institutional space in American society. In schools, for example, we have to examine explicit biases and the school-to-prison pipeline that can perpetrate learned helplessness and the self-fulfilling prophecy. We have to stop unequal and inadequate resource disbursement in educational spaces and teach comprehensive history about people of color. Based on the complexity of historical trauma and its ability to breach and affect many aspects of one's life, there is obviously no universal solution; however, it is important to use this opportune time to make these changes and allow our actions to reflect our words.

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