

Historical Proxy

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Historical proxy is a concept that provides a framework for understanding the transmission of social traumatic events like Historical Trauma, across family and community members who have not experienced in person those specific traumatic events.

The theory claims that Historical Trauma is communicated to others thru the effects of Historical Proxy, defined as a symbolic representation of the traumatic experience which is communicated to individuals and communities in both explicit and subliminal ways.

In other words, the symbolic representation of a traumatic event can be provided by the explicit narrative in a tale, novel, movie etc., and/or be perceived by individuals and communities by exposure to symbols with a consistent relation to traumatic events (i.e. ruins, monuments, current social issues, psychological and physical distress).

Arguably, the concept of Historical Trauma helps with bridging the gap between historical traumatic events and the emotional distress in individuals who have not personally witnessed and experienced them, but have been exposed to explicit, less explicit, and subliminal symbols representing them.

Moreover, the concept of Historical Proxy, can be viewed both separately from, and in the context of epigenetic theories, which claim that the transmission of traumatic events happens as a consequence of the effects of trauma on the individual epigenetic make up causing negative intergenerational psychological distress.