Gender, Depression, Anxiety, and Betrayal Trauma

Gender Differences in Depression and Anxiety: The Mediating Role of Betrayal Trauma

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Men typically report higher overall rates of exposure to traumatic experiences. Yet, women consistently exhibit higher rates of anxiety, PTSD & depression (2:1).

Betrayal Trauma Theory

- Traumas perpetrated by someone close to the victim are more likely to cause dissociation and unawareness than those perpetrated by someone not close (Freyd, 1994).
- Traumas with high betrayal significantly correlate with number of physical illness, anxiety, dissociation, and depression symptoms (Freyd, Klest, & Allard, 2005; Goldsmith, 2004).

Betrayal Trauma Theory (Freyd, 1994)

- Examples:
  - High betrayal: emotional abuse by caregiver
  - Low betrayal: earthquake, auto accident, physical, sexual, emotional abuse by someone not close

Observed Gender Differences Categorized by Degree of Betrayal (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Betrayal Trauma</th>
<th>Women Report More of This Trauma (p&lt;.001)</th>
<th>High Betrayal Items (8 Items)</th>
<th>Medium Betrayal Items (12 Items)</th>
<th>Low Betrayal Items (6 Items)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse Adult***</td>
<td>Not close Sex Abuse Child***</td>
<td>Not close Sex Abuse Child***</td>
<td>Not close Sex Abuse Adult***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child***</td>
<td>Close Sex Abuse Child***</td>
<td>Close Sex Abuse Child***</td>
<td>Close Sex Abuse Adult***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse Child***</td>
<td>Witness someone close attack</td>
<td>Witness someone close attack</td>
<td>Witness someone close attack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observed Gender Differences Categorized by Degree of Betrayal (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006)

Betrayal Trauma Examples

- Higher Betrayal: physical, sexual, or emotionally abuse by someone to whom you are close.
- Lower Betrayal: earthquake, auto accident; physical, sexual, emotional abuse by someone not close.
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Summary: Some Important Gender Differences (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006)

- The majority of men experience traumas with low betrayal
- The majority of women experience betrayal traumas

Purpose of Study

- Does betrayal trauma mediate the gender difference in severity of anxiety, depression, and dissociation?

Surveys Administered

1. Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS; Goldberg & Freyd, in press)
2. Revised Civilian Mississippi PTSD Scale (Norris & Pentia, 1996)
3. Trauma Symptom Checklist
   1. Depression
   2. Anxiety
   3. Dissociation subscales

Demographics (N = 471)

170 Male, 299 Female, 1 'Other'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>372 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>39 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>19 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>9 (1.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Age: M = 19.67, sd = 3.30; Range: 16-54 |

Mean differences in Symptom Scores by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.69 (.48)</td>
<td>.87 (.51)</td>
<td>-3.64</td>
<td>&lt;.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>.66 (.45)</td>
<td>.79 (.49)</td>
<td>-2.83</td>
<td>&lt;.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td>.74 (.52)</td>
<td>.83 (.54)</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>23.82 (6.62)</td>
<td>23.98 (5.69)</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Betrayal by Gender
Gender, Depression, Anxiety, and Betrayal Trauma

**Lower Betrayal**

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**BBTS and symptom scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Dissociation</th>
<th>PTSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBTS</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td>.50***</td>
<td>.43***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.78***</td>
<td>.66***</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>.72***</td>
<td>.50***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td>.50***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .0001

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**Does betrayal trauma mediate gender difference in depression?**

- High Betrayal
  - Gender: .12
  - Depression: .33

- Low Betrayal
  - Gender: .12 (.17)

Sobel test = 2.56, p = .01

Tentative Yes!

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**Does betrayal trauma mediate gender difference in anxiety?**

- High Betrayal
  - Gender: .13
  - Anxiety: .28

- Low Betrayal
  - Gender: .09 (.13)

Sobel test = 2.37, p < .05

Tentative Yes!

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**Limitations**

- University sample
- Young age of participants
- Limited ethnic diversity

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**Conclusions**

- Betrayal trauma partially explains the higher rates of depression and anxiety consistently found among women
- Dissociation and PTSD results unclear due to lack of gender difference in this sample
- Future study to include community (non-university) samples, improved measure of PTSD