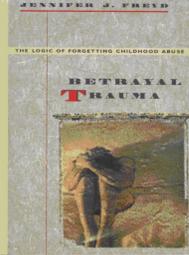


Betrayal Trauma and Borderline Personality Characteristics: Gender Differences

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Abstract

Borderline Personality Disorder has been associated with both trauma and insecure attachment styles. Betrayal Trauma Theory proposes survivors of interpersonal trauma may remain unaware of betrayal in order to maintain a necessary attachment. This study attempts to replicate the association between self-reported betrayal trauma experiences and borderline personality characteristics found by Kaehler & Freyd (2009) but using a community sample instead of a college sample. Using multiple regression, all three levels of betrayal and gender were significant predictors of borderline personality characteristics. Separate regression analyses were conducted for each gender to explore the levels of betrayal trauma on these traits. For men, all three levels of betrayal trauma were significant predictors; for women, only high and medium betrayal traumas were significant. These findings suggest trauma may be a key cause of borderline personality disorder, with differential effects for betrayal and gender.

Introduction

- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) associated with insecure attachment styles (Levy, 2005)

- Caregiver maltreatment threatens attachment (Baer & Martinez, 2006).

- Childhood maltreatment linked to development of BPD (Battle et al., 2004).

- Betrayal Trauma Theory (BTT) as a framework for understanding BPD

- A betrayal trauma is a type of trauma involving a violation of a trust necessary for survival, e.g., between caregiver and child (Freyd, 1996).

- Kaehler & Freyd (2009) found betrayal was significantly associated with BPD characteristics. Trauma with high-betrayal was the largest contributor to borderline traits and trauma with medium betrayal was also a significant predictor. However, trauma low in betrayal was not associated with BPD features. These results stand even after controlling for gender.

- This study attempts to replicate Kaehler & Freyd 's (2009) findings using an older sample of community members

Methods

- N=749 (57% women; 80% married) (M_{age} = 50.7, SD = 12.6).

- Predominately Caucasian (96.0%).

- Completed the Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS; Goldberg & Freyd, 2006) and a modified version of the Borderline Personality Inventory Leichsenring, 1999) online.

- BBTS: a 12-item, self-report measure of major traumatic events

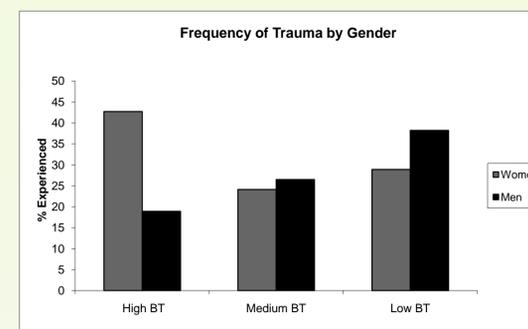
- Each item is classified as having one of three levels of betrayal: low, medium, and high.

- Non-interpersonal traumas (e.g., natural disasters) are low-betrayal
 - Interpersonal traumas (e.g., being attacked) are medium or high-betrayal

- BPI : a 53-item self-report measure evaluating characteristics typical of those diagnosed with BPD

Results

- 51.4% of sample experienced at least one type of first-hand trauma
- 35.8% experienced at least one high-betrayal trauma.



- A multiple regression modeling including gender and the three levels of betrayal trauma significantly predicted a portion of the variance in borderline traits, $F(4, 581) = 21.2, p < .001, \text{adjusted } r^2 = .122.$

Table 1: Multiple Regression for Betrayal Trauma Predicting BPI (N=749)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Gender	3.71	1.53	0.99*
High BT	1.74	0.37	0.20***
Medium BT	4.01	0.95	0.18***
Low BT	2.24	0.71	0.13**

Note. $R^2 = .128, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .122, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.$

- Separate regression models were conducted for men and women.

Table 2: Multiple Regression with Betrayal Trauma Predicting BPI for Men (N=317)

Variable	B	SE B	β
High BT	1.92	0.76	0.15*
Medium BT	4.15	1.27	0.20***
Low BT	2.75	0.97	0.17**

Note. $F(3, 264) = 14.4, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .131, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.$

Table 3: Multiple Regression with Betrayal Trauma Predicting BPI for Women (N=432)

Variable	B	SE B	β
High BT	1.73	0.43	0.23**
Medium BT	3.63	1.44	0.14*
Low BT	1.58	1.05	0.08

Note. $F(3, 314) = 13.0, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .102, *p < .05, **p < .001.$

Figure 2: Betrayal Trauma and standardized Male BPI score using standardized β

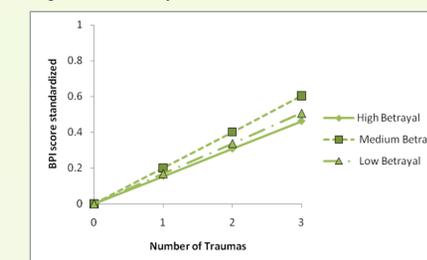
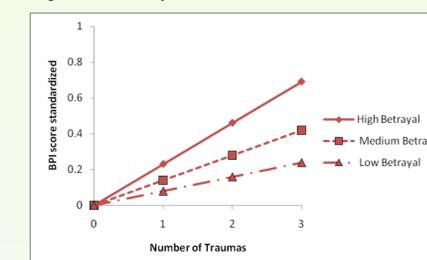


Figure 3: Betrayal Trauma and standardized Female BPI score using standardized β



Conclusion

- Supporting Kaehler & Freyd (2009), betrayal traumas predicts borderline personality traits
- Contrary to Kaehler & Freyd (2009), gender was a significant predictor
 - For men, all types of trauma predict, with medium BT as the strongest
 - For women, only interpersonal trauma, with high BT as the strongest

References

- Kaehler, L.A., & Freyd, J.J. (2009). Borderline personality characteristics: A betrayal trauma approach. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1, 261-268.
- Goldberg, L. R., & Freyd, J. J. (2006). Self-reports of potentially traumatic experiences in an adult community sample: gender differences and test-retest stabilities of the items in a brief betrayal-trauma survey. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 7, 39-63.