Gender Differences in PTSD:
The Mediating Role of Betrayal Trauma

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The Puzzle: Gender Differences in Traumatic Experiences

- Men often report higher overall rates of exposure to traumatic experiences than women (Breslau et al., 1998; Kessler et al., 1995)
- Yet women consistently exhibit higher rates of anxiety, PTSD & depression (2:1)
- Types of traumas experienced differ (Breslau et al., 1998; Kessler et al., 1995)
  - Men more likely to experience accidents, physical assault, being threatened with a weapon
  - Women more likely to experience sexual molestation, sexual assault, child abuse
  - Girls more likely to experience sexual abuse by family member and boys by a non-family member (Finkelhor, 1994)

Betrayal Trauma Theory

- Context of trauma and relationships may in part explain gender differences
- 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 correlated with number of physical illnesses, anxiety, dissociation, and depression symptoms (Freyd, Klest, & Allard, 2005; Goldsmith, 2004)

Betrayal Trauma Theory (Freyd, 1994)

Observed Gender Differences Categorized by Degree of Betrayal

(Godbourn & Freyd, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Betrayal Items (6 items)</th>
<th>Medium Betrayal Items (12 items)</th>
<th>Low Betrayal Items (6 items)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women Report More of This Trauma (p&lt;.001)</td>
<td>Emotional Abuse Adult*** Close Sex Abuse Child*** Emotional Abuse Child***</td>
<td>Not-close Sex Abuse Child*** Not-close Sex Abuse Adult*** Witness someone close attack family member Adult ***</td>
<td>Witnessed not-close Death Adult*** Accident Adult*** Witness Not-close Attack Child***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Report More of This Trauma (pc&gt;68%)</td>
<td>Not-close Attack Child*** Not-close Attack Adult***</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose of Study

- High betrayal (HB) experiences will be significantly associated with PTSD, depression, and anxiety; these associations will also be stronger than those for medium betrayal (MB) and low betrayal (LB) potentially traumatic experiences
- Women will report significantly higher rates of HB experiences than MB and LB experiences.
- Experiences of HB trauma will mediate the relationship between gender and PTSD symptoms
Surveys Administered

- Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS; Goldberg & Freyd, in press)
- Revised Civilian Mississippi PTSD Scale (Norris & Perilla, 1996)
- Trauma Symptom Checklist
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Dissociation subscales

Demographics (N = 1240)

College & Community sample
406 Male (33%), 834 Female

Ethnicity
- European American 79%
- Asian/Asian American 8.3%
- Latino/a 4%
- Native American 1.4%
- African American 1.1%
- Other 5.1%

Age: M = 19.67, sd = 3.30; Range: 16-68

Comparisons of Correlations of HB, MB, and LB Traumas Using Steiger’s Z Statistic

- Depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms more strongly associated with HB trauma than with MB and LB trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HB and MB Trauma</th>
<th>HB and LB Trauma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>5.06**</td>
<td>4.54**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 1240)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>4.35**</td>
<td>2.93**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 1240)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>2.89**</td>
<td>2.58**</td>
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<tr>
<td>(n = 741)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rates of Trauma Types Reported by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB Trauma</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med BT</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High BT</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rates of Trauma by Gender

- Women reported significantly more HB trauma than men (Mann-Whitney U = 176,566, z = 1.92, p = .03)
- Women reported approximately 45% more sexual abuse by someone close and about a third more sexual abuse by someone not close.
- Conversely, men experienced two-and-a-half times more physical assault by not close others and witnessed one-third more attacks.

Mediation of Gender and PTSD Reexperiencing Symptoms by HB Trauma
Limitations

- Largely university sample
- Young age of participants
- Limited ethnic diversity

Conclusions

- Women more likely to have experienced HB traumas than men
- Traumas high in betrayal are more strongly associated with symptoms of posttraumatic stress than traumas lower in betrayal
- Betrayal trauma partially explains the higher rates of PTSD reexperiencing symptoms among women