Betrayal Trauma, Acculturation and Historical Grief among Native Americans

Introduction

Acculturation
• The term “acculturation” refers to the cultural change that occurs within an individual, as a result of two or more cultures in constant interaction (Garcia & Ahler, 1992).

Historical Loss and Grief
• Historical grief refers to the current emotions experienced as a result of the unacknowledged loss of Native American people (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Betrayal Trauma
• Betrayal Trauma refers to a traumatic event or series of events that violates the trust formed within a dependent relationship (Freyd, 1996).

Results

Scatter plot (top) illustrates that High Betrayal Trauma correlates with thoughts of Historical Loss. Scatter plot (bottom) illustrates that level of Acculturation correlates with thoughts of Historical Loss.

 Reported Trauma
• 88% reported experiencing at least one trauma.
• 58% reported at least one high Betrayal Trauma (sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse by someone with whom the participant was very close).

Acculturation and Trauma
• Significant correlations were found between acculturation and reported trauma ($r = .467, p < .001$). Low acculturation with Western Society was correlated with high levels of reported trauma. Note: higher numbers on the acculturation scale mean less acculturation to dominant western culture.

Discussion

Reported Trauma, Betrayal Trauma and frequency of thoughts of historical loss are high.

Acculturation and Historical Loss
• Significant correlations were found between acculturation and historical loss ($r = .346, p < .05$), including traumas of high Betrayal ($r = .414, p < .01$). Frequent thoughts of historical loss was correlated with high reports of reported trauma and Betrayal Trauma.

How is reported trauma, including those of high betrayal, related to the level of acculturation and amount of grief experienced by Native Americans?

Method

Participants
• N=60
• Thirty eight participants were recruited through the University of Oregon Human Subject Pool, 10 through University Of Oregon Native American Student Union, and 12 through Native American community of Portland.

Materials
• The Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (Goldberg & Freyd, 2003, under review)
• Native American Acculturation Scale (Garrett & Pichette, 2000)
• Historical Loss Scale (Whitebeck et al., 2004)

Discussion

This study suggests that we have a responsibility to further investigate why particular ethnocultural populations and cultures report higher rates of trauma.

Future Research

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Please address correspondence to:
Mary E. Gray
4034 SW Hamilton St., Portland, OR 97221
margray@gmail.com
International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Toronto ON, Canada
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