



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).
- Although most Native Americans alive today are many generations removed from the violent ethnic cleansing of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many are very much in tune with the historical loss of their people (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004).

Betrayal Trauma

- Betrayal Trauma refers to a traumatic event or series of events that violates the trust formed within a dependent relationship (Freyd, 1996).
- This theory explains why some individuals do not acknowledge their trauma and/or have no memory for trauma—because they need to maintain an attachment to the caregiver who is also a perpetrator
- Betrayal Trauma Theory has since been more broadly applied to other dependent relationships such as political entities and citizen counterparts where the citizens do not acknowledge political betrayals (Zurbriggen, 2005).
- Betrayal Traumas occurred historically between government employed caregivers at boarding schools and Native American children, through countless documentations of sexual, physical and emotional abuse (Tafuya & Del Vecchio, 1996).

Reported Trauma

- Past research has indicated that Native American populations experience high rates of trauma (Robin, Chester, & Goldman, 1996).
- Some studies have reported rates as high as 80% of Native Americans reporting sexual abuse (McEvoy & Daniluk, 1995).

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

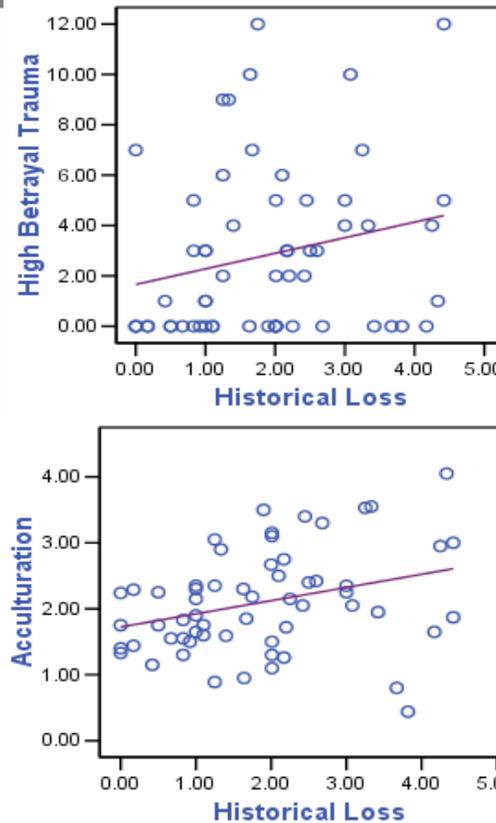
- N=60
- Thirty eight participants were recruited through the University of Oregon Human Subject Pool, 10 through University of Oregon Native American Student Union, and 12 through Native American community of Portland.
- All participants identified as Native American.
- Ages ranged from 18 to 67 years ($M = 27.53$, $SD = 12.99$). The median age was 21.
- 65.2% identified as female.

Materials

- The Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (Goldberg & Freyd, 2003, under review)
- Native American Acculturation Scale (Garrett & Pichette, 2000)
- Historical Losses Scale (Whitbeck et al., 2004)

Procedures

- UO Human Subject Pool (HSP) participants were selected based on a prescreening question about Native American blood quantum. Participants who indicated they were at least 1/8 Native American were invited to participate in the study.
- UO Native American Student Union (NASU) participants were recruited through an email list-serve.
- Portland community participants were a nonrandom sample who attended a Native American New Years gathering and who willingly completed the survey on their own time, returning them via mail.
- Informed Consents were given.
- Measures were placed in random order.
- The completion of the survey took less than 10 minutes and was followed by a written debrief.
- HSP participants received credit towards research credit requirement.
- \$10 was donated to NASU, \$1 for each participant.



References

- Freyd, J. J. (1996). *Betrayal Trauma: The logic of forgetting childhood abuse*. Harvard University Press, MA: Cambridge.
- Garcia, R. L., & Ahler, J. G. (1992). Indian education: Assumptions, ideologies, strategies. In J. Reyhner (Ed.), *Teaching American Indian Students* (pp. 13-32). Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Garret, M. T. & Pichette, E. F. (2000). Red as an apple: Native American acculturation and counseling with or without reservation. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78, 3-13.
- Goldberg, L.R. & Freyd, J.J. (under review) Self-reports of potentially disturbing experiences in an adult community sample: Gender differences and test-retest stabilities of the items in a Brief Betrayal-Trauma Survey.
- Manson, S., Beals, J., O'Neil, T., Piasecki, J., Bechtold, D., Keane, E., & Jones, M. (1996). Wounded spirits, ailing hearts: PTSD and related disorders among American Indians. In A. J. Marsella, M. J. Friedman, E. T. Gerrity, R. M. Scurlfield (Eds.), *Ethnocultural Aspects of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (pp. 255-283). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- McEvoy, M., & Daniluk, J. (1995). Wounds to the soul: The experiences of aboriginal women survivors of sexual abuse. *Canadian Psychology*, 36(3), 221-234.
- Robin, R. W., Chester, B., & Goldman, D. (1996). Cumulative trauma and PTSD in American Indians Communities. In A. J. Marsella, M. J. Friedman, E. T. Gerrity, R. M. Scurlfield (Eds.), *Ethnocultural Aspects of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (pp. 239-253). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Tafuya, N. & Del Vecchio, A. (1996). Back to the future: An examination of the Native American Holocaust experience. *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, 45-54.
- Whitbeck, L. B., Adams, G. W., Hoyt, D. R., & Chen, X. (2004). Conceptualizing and measuring historical trauma among American Indian people. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 33(1/4), 119-130.
- Yellow Horse Braveheart, M. & DeBruyn, L. M. (1998). The American Indian Holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *The Journal of American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 60-82.
- Zurbriggen, E. L. (2005). *Life in a time of threat. Betrayal blindness and the 2004 U.S. presidential election. Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 5(1), 1-8.

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
- Significant correlations were found between acculturation and high Betrayal Trauma ($r = -.260$, $p < .05$). Low levels of acculturation with Western Society was correlated with high levels of reported Betrayal Traumas.

Historical Loss and Trauma

- Significant correlations were found between historical loss and reported trauma ($r = .270$, $p < .05$), 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.

Acculturation and Historical Loss

- Significant correlations were found between acculturation and historical loss ($r = .346$, $p < .01$). Low levels of acculturation to Western Society was correlated with more frequent thoughts of historical loss.

Discussion

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

- Results are congruent with contemporary literature (Manson, Beals, O'Neil, Piasecki, & Bechtold et al., 1996; McEvoy & Daniluk, 1995; Robin et al., 1996), which indicate that reported trauma is high among Native American people.

High reported trauma is correlated with low acculturation to western society and with frequent thoughts of historical loss.

- Results suggest that low acculturation to Western Society and thus, associating more fully with Native American traditional customs and beliefs, is related to higher reports of trauma, including those high in betrayal.
- One way to interpret results is that participants who are aware and willing to report their trauma history are also more aware and in tune with historical trauma of their people.
- The level of acculturation to dominant white society is related to thoughts of historical loss. Lower acculturation is correlated to more frequent thoughts of historical loss.
- This research expects to bring additional recognition and validation that the devastating and ongoing traumas of such events are still present in the minds of many Native Americans.

Future Research

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

Acknowledgments

This research was supported in part by the Trauma and Oppression Research Fund at the University of Oregon Foundation

Thanks to Michael Gray and UO Native American Student Union
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
November 2-5, 2005