



The Relationship of Acculturation to Historical Loss Awareness, Institutional Betrayal, and the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma in the American Indian Experience

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Lisa DeMarni Cromer¹, Mary E. Gray², Ludivina Vasquez¹,
and Jennifer J. Freyd³

Abstract

The terms *historical trauma* and *intergenerational transmission of trauma* have been used interchangeably in the literature, yet may be theoretically distinct. The confusion in nomenclature may mask different underlying mechanisms for understanding trauma. The current study applies institutional betrayal trauma theory as a means for understanding awareness of historical losses and examines the intergenerational transmission of trauma through family systems. In a diverse sample ($N = 59$) of American Indians, we find support for the idea that institutional betrayal may be at the heart of historical loss awareness. The more participants in the current study were acculturated, or identified with White culture, the less they were aware of historical losses. For the entire sample, regardless of acculturation, we found that family history of boarding school experiences, having parents and grandparents who lived in boarding schools, predicted interpersonal childhood trauma but not noninterpersonal childhood trauma.

Keywords

historical trauma, betrayal trauma, native American, acculturation

The genocide of American Indians is often referred to as historical trauma (Brave Heart, 1998), and the multigenerational effects of the American Indian experience are considered analogous to the multigenerational effects of the Jewish Holocaust, sometimes called “Shoah” (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995; Legters, 1988; Stannard, 1992; Thornton, 1990). *Historical trauma* and *intergenerational trauma* are terms that have been used interchangeably in the literature; however, they are

¹The University of Tulsa, OK, USA

²RMC Research Corporation, Portland, OR, USA

³University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA

Corresponding Author:

Lisa DeMarni Cromer, The University of Tulsa, 800 South Tucker Drive, Tulsa, OK 74134, USA.

Email: lisa-cromer@utulsa.edu

theoretically distinct (Gone, 2013). Historical trauma relates to a collective experience of trauma that is perpetrated against members of a group due to their group membership, and the trauma is within that collective consciousness. In contrast, intergenerational transmission of trauma is about the secondary impact of trauma, from one generation to the next, at the individual level, whether or not the precipitating trauma occurred within a collective (Gone, 2013). Intergenerational trauma typically occurs within family systems. In reviewing the extant literature, Vasquez, Ocean, Cromer, and Borntrager (2014) determined that intergenerational transmission of trauma occurs through parenting, possibly inadequate parenting, and through relationship dysfunction within the family unit. In the American Indian experience, this could be that forced removal of children from homes, resulting in breaking up of families (Noriega, 1992), not only traumatized individuals within the families but also lost healthy parenting practices, such that individuals in families related to each other in ways that were dysfunctional and transmitted trauma onto future generations. If one's only experience of having been parented was abusive and traumatic (e.g., being raised in a boarding school), then, plausibly, the model for raising one's own children would be dysfunctional and possibly traumatic. The current article reviews the concepts of historical trauma and intergenerational transmission of trauma and proposes a way to test these theories within a sample of American Indians who ranged in age from 18 to 67 years old and who identified as being affiliated with 19 different tribes.

Historical Trauma and Institutional Betrayal

Historical trauma is defined as mass trauma directed toward a group that shares an identity or affiliation and which has effects that transcend generational boundaries (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Implicit in the concept of historical trauma is that memories and consciousness of atrocities, such as the Trail of Tears (Coates, 2014), have multigenerational negative effects on group members (Jervis, Beals, Croy, Klein, & Manson, 2006) and that becoming cognizant of atrocities even if this is a new awareness of the past can initiate one's experiences of historical trauma (Brave Heart, 2000). Arguably, if one becomes more culturally affiliated with a group that experienced historical trauma, one may also begin to psychologically experience the historical trauma through historical consciousness. The effects of historical trauma transcend intergenerational boundaries (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Gone, 2013; LaFromboise, Albright, & Harris, 2010), and they can be cyclical and cumulative (Duran & Duran, 1995; Gone, 2013).

Cultural oppression and marginalization are part of the American Indian historical trauma experience (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003) and are sometimes referred to as historical losses. *Historical loss* is a term used by Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, and Chen (2004) to characterize one's thoughts about losses experienced due to ethnic cleansing, oppression, and colonization. Whitbeck and colleagues noted that historical loss includes "daily reminders of loss: reservation living, encroachment of Europeans on even their reservation lands, loss of language, loss and confusion regarding traditional practices, loss of traditional family systems, and loss of traditional healing practices" (Whitbeck, Adams, et al., 2004, p. 121). Researchers have found strong associations between awareness of historical loss and depression, substance use, anger, and guilt, evidencing that historical trauma can impact one's mental health (Walls & Whitbeck, 2012; Whitbeck, Adams, et al., 2004; Whitbeck, Walls, Johnson, Morrisseau, & McDougall, 2009). The social problems among American Indians have outpaced social ills in other cultures and have resulted in further American Indian marginalization as well as a legacy of loss due to alcohol-related accidents, suicide, homicide, and generations of abuse and neglect (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Walters et al., 2011). There is a long-standing question about why colonization created economic, political, and social dependence on the colonizing government (Gagné, 1998; Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014). Subsequent to colonization,

American Indians have been caricatured, discriminated against, and marginalized (Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, & Adams, 2004). Scholars have suggested that colonial peril and marginalization account for generations of American Indians doing worse than generations of Shoah survivor offspring (Kirmayer et al., 2014). Colonization eliminated American Indian self-determination and economically disadvantaged American Indians through unequal trading and strategically manipulating them into debt (Gagné, 1998). Laws established colonial control of American Indians' family structure, marriages, and hunting rights (Gagné, 1998). The designation of reservations established long-lasting economic dependence on the government (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Sutton & Broken Nose, 1996). Government policies overtly sought ethnocide (Grinde, 2004). Colonization created an enduring dependent relationship.

Betrayal trauma theory (Freyd, 1996) posits that betrayal trauma, which is trauma that is perpetrated within a close or dependent relationship, is more harmful than other kinds of trauma because of the violation of trust. For example, being beaten by someone who is expected to provide safety, such as a caregiver, is more traumatic than being beaten by a stranger. For Indian children in boarding schools, caregivers within the boarding school system who abused or neglected the children, particularly if the children had bonded with the caregiver, would have perpetrated a betrayal trauma. Institutional betrayal occurs when betrayal trauma is perpetrated by an institution toward individuals who are dependent on that institution, including failure to prevent or to respond supportively to wrongdoings by individuals who act within the context of the institution (Freyd & Birrell, 2013; Smith & Freyd, 2014). Governments are institutions which should act on behalf of those who are governed; therefore, government policies that forced American Indian dependence on the government and which enforced oppression and ethnic cleansing are examples of institutional betrayal perpetrated against American Indians by the U.S. government.

Betrayal blindness is the idea that one may cope with trauma by keeping out of one's consciousness awareness of wrongdoing or harm that one experienced, to maintain dependence on, or a harmonious relationship with, the individuals or institution that was the source of the trauma (Freyd, 1996; Freyd & Birrell, 2013). Betrayal trauma theory explains the enduring negative impact of colonization. Trauma that occurred to colonized people who were forced into a dependent relationship with their oppressors exacerbates the traumatic impact because of a need to maintain closeness for survival. Theoretically, examining institutional betrayal trauma across generations would find that more acculturated individuals would have less historical loss awareness because they closely identify with the perpetrators. We review the concepts of enculturation and acculturate below to expound on this idea.

Enculturation and Acculturation

Enculturation is the "lifelong learning of one's own culture," (Garcia & Ahler, 1992, p. 23) and refers to the degree to which individuals associate with and maintain their ancestors' values, customs, and beliefs (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Enculturation is not based on a blood quantum or ancestry; it represents the degree of life experiences and individual choices and preferences that align with traditional ways (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Enculturation can occur traditionally over the course of one's life, or it can be "pantraditional" when it is the "conscious choice to return to the 'old ways'." (Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 6). Enculturation lies on a continuum whereby the more one is enculturated, the less one is acculturated.

Acculturation is a process that can occur when cultures interface (Williams & Berry, 1991). Acculturation can be directional (Berry, 1990) but is influenced by the degree to which one adapts characteristics of a dominant or surrounding culture (Garcia & Ahler, 1992; Garrett et al., 2014). Adaption of such characteristics can involve integrating beliefs, customs, forms of dress,

foods, social customs, and other behaviors (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Flynn, Olson, & Yellig, 2014). In relation to American Indians, acculturation can be viewed as the transformative effect of being forced to adapt values and characteristics from a predominantly White European American culture (Flynn et al., 2014). American Indian acculturation was systematically orchestrated for over a century through colonization that explicitly and overtly sought ethnic cleansing and racial genocide (Walters, 1999). The most salient aspect of American Indians historical assimilation was the vast reduction in the American Indian population to less than 10% of its original size (Oswalt, 1988, as cited in Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 4). Disease, warfare (Sutton & Broken Nose, 1996), and relocation to small parcels of barren land thwarted autonomy, self-determination, traditional economy, lifestyle, and sustenance.

American Indian acculturation to European culture occurred at the institutional level throughout the history of European–American Indian contact. During initial colonization period (1492–1787), a time of tribal independence (Pevar, 2012), there was cultural tension between American Indians and Europeans with violence between the nations. Trading and contact between cultures, and the decimation of the Indian population through disease and war, and the Indian loss of land through these wars, began a process of cultural change (Pevar, 2012). As treaties were signed and laws created (but not enforced) to protect Indian land, Indian life continued to be impacted as Europeans continued to take Indian land.

Cultural genocide was orchestrated through relocation. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act forcibly relocated eastern Indians to the western lands of the United States; for Indians who survived the long marches, they experienced a complete loss of home, community, and culture (Pevar, 2012). During the relocation period of 1828–1887, over 200 boarding schools were established for Indian children, and 14,000 Indian children were forcibly removed from their homes (Pevar, 2012). Boarding schools are cited as having a substantial influence of absorbing Indian children into European American culture and indoctrinating them with European American values such as individual (instead of communal) ownership and adopting Christian rather than traditional spiritual practices (Herring, 1989). Children were taken from their natal homes with the explicit intent of removing “Indian” identity to solve “the Indian problem” (Noriega, 1992) and to take the “Indian” out of the Indian students (Eder & Reyhner, 1988). Children were forbidden to speak Native tongues, and institutions ingrained children with shame for Native language and customs (Bombay et al., 2014; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Dussault & Erasmus, 1996; Gagné, 1998; Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Sutton & Broken Nose, 1996; Tafoya & Del Vecchio, 1996). Children were systematically victimized with neglect and mental, physical, and sexual abuse (Bombay et al., 2014; Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). The extent of abuse is not yet understood. For example, in 2014, 31 unexplained mass graves on residential school grounds were found (Waduge, 2014). It was only in 1978 that The Indian Welfare Act gave Indian parents the right to refuse placement of their children in off-reservation schools.

The period from 1887 to 1934 was marked by U.S. government policies that overtly forced assimilation of Indians to colonial culture and The Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 distributed land for individual ownership to destroy tribal life and remove Indians from traditional territories, a solution to what was infamously called “the Indian Problem” (Otis, 2014). The Dawes Act promoted adaption of White society and initiating efforts to “civilize” American Indians by parceling their land into individual ownership and homesteads and intentionally destroying communal living (Otis, 2014; Pevar, 2012). U.S. federal laws dictated policies which eradicated American Indian languages, land, religion, and customs (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Otis, 2014).

U.S. government policies in the 20th century were paternalistic toward American Indians and were designed to dilute American Indian culture. The period from 1934 to 1953, during which time the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) was in effect, Indian land was finally protected and Indians were permitted to engage in self-government; however, the IRA was ethnocentric due to

the government ultimate goal of Indian assimilation into European American culture (Pevar, 2012). When the IRA was terminated in 1953, the period that followed through to 1968, continued to see relocation programs for Indians; however, this time, it was presented as training and housing assistance for anyone leaving reservation lands (Pevar, 2012). Although tribal self-determination became government policy from 1968 to the present day, attempts by the government to improve the social and economic life of Indians continued a process of assimilation in the types of opportunities supported (Pevar, 2012).

Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

The intergenerational transmission of trauma is defined as the unconscious passing of a trauma onto the next generation (Bradfield, 2013). In the literature, this definition has been taken to mean the transmission of trauma symptoms, vicarious traumatization, and trauma perpetuated within family systems (Vasquez et al., 2014). Inconsistent definitions have resulted in confusion about possible mechanisms of transmission (Vasquez et al., 2014). In the current manuscript, we take the view that interpersonal trauma can be transmitted to the next generation through diminished parenting capacity due to trauma that occurred to American Indians (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Danieli, 1982; Walls & Whitbeck, 2012; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt & Chen, 2004). In particular, parenting was negatively impacted in mass traumas experienced by American Indians because family systems were intentionally targeted; healthy traditional parenting practices were lost within a generation of boarding school relocations that decimated family units (Abadian, as cited in Herring, 1989; Lambert, 2008; Libby et al., 2008). The forced removal of children to boarding schools had a far-reaching systemic impact. The loss of family units meant that traditional parenting practices were lost (Horejsi, Craig, & Pablo, 1992); if and when children were returned home, the children not only were strangers to the home culture and traditional ways, but the individual family members experienced trauma from the forced separations. As the generations of Indians who experienced boarding schools had children, theoretically, they would be more vulnerable to experiencing interpersonal betrayal trauma within their families, for example, childhood physical, emotional, or sexual abuse (Freyd, 1996), because they had not only lost traditional practices but were often victimized themselves at boarding schools and were introduced to dysfunctional behaviors such as severe punishment in child-rearing practices and children sexual abuse at the boarding schools (Horejsi et al., 1992).

The Current Study and Predictions

The current study had two aims. The first aim was to empirically examine American Indian historical trauma through a lens of institutional betrayal by investigating the association between enculturation to American Indian culture and awareness of historical trauma experienced by American Indians. We hypothesized that participants who more closely identified with White culture (were more acculturated) would be less aware of American Indian historical losses. We also wanted to test an alternative hypothesis that strength of American Indian ancestry could predict awareness of historical loss. If ancestry predicted awareness of historical loss, it would run contrary to a betrayal trauma hypothesis. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a multiple regression analysis where level of acculturation was the first predictor and strength of ancestry as indexed by participants' number of grandparents who were American Indian as the second predictor; awareness of historical losses was the dependent variable.

The second aim of the study was to empirically examine whether intergenerational transmission of trauma occurred through family systems. Because boarding schools are believed to have resulted in the loss of family structures and healthy traditional parenting practices,

(Herring, 1989; Lambert, 2008; Libby et al., 2008) we indexed damage to the family system with number of years that parents and grandparents spent in boarding schools. We hypothesized that family boarding school history would predict participants' experiences of interpersonal childhood trauma. In other words, we expected that if parent and grandparent boarding school experiences were associated with impaired family systems such as the loss of parenting knowledge and behaviors within the family system (Horejsi et al., 1992), that participants in the current study will have been more likely to have experienced betrayal trauma within the family system. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a simple linear regression with family boarding school history as the predictor variable and childhood betrayal trauma as the dependent variable.

An alternative hypothesis could be that some individuals may be more negative and likely to report more of all kinds of trauma or that common method variance would result in a spurious correlation (Spector, 2006). If there was a spurious correlation, we would expect that reported boarding school history would also predict nonbetrayal trauma childhood trauma (e.g., natural disaster). To test this alternative hypothesis, we conducted a simple linear regression with family boarding school history as the predictor variable and childhood nonbetrayal trauma history as the dependent variable.

Method

The procedures used in this study were approved by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The administration of the Native American Student Union (NASU) and Native Elders helped facilitate the data collection process. All responses were anonymous. Anonymity was guaranteed by providing self-addressed stamped envelopes and by not asking for any identifying information. Informed consents were distributed but not returned. We stressed the voluntary nature of the study and detailed how anonymity was facilitated. The community participants did not complete measures in the researcher's presence so we did not track individuals who took packets. Human Subjects Pool (HSP) participants completed measures online. The consent explained that the computer system provided a random ID code for participants and that their identities were unavailable to researchers.

Participants

Participants were recruited from Eugene and Portland, Oregon. Of the 60 participants, 37 were recruited from a University HSP and 23 community participants were recruited through the University NASU ($n = 10$) and the Native American community ($n = 13$). One HSP participant was deleted for all analyses because he indicated being of Asian in origin and left half of the questions blank. We believed that this individual erroneously screened into the data. The final total sample we used for this study was 59, with 36 being retained in the HSP sample.

Participants were 18 to 67 years old ($M = 27.66$, $SD = 13.06$, $Median = 21.0$). There were 40 females, 18 males, and one person declined to answer the question about gender. Three participants in the community sample and 17 participants from the HSP did not specify tribal affiliation. Six participants indicated being descendants of two or more tribes and the remaining 33 participants identified as being descendants of 19 different tribes. Modal tribal affiliation was six Cherokee and five Sioux. No participants were currently living on a reservation. Ten (17%) participants had lived on a reservation at some point during their lives; number of years on a reservation ranged from 1 to 22 years, $M = 11.5$ years, $Median = 6.5$ years. Ten community and seven HSP participants ($n = 17$; 29%) had at least one grandparent or parent who had attended a government-mandated boarding school.

Materials

Native American Acculturation Scale (NAAS). The NAAS (Garrett & Pichette, 2000) measures Native American acculturation. It was created with the help of “expert judges” from several tribes (Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 10) and modeled after The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans which has been shown to have good 1 month test–retest reliability $r = .80$ (Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso as cited in Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Twenty Likert-type scale questions queried level of acculturation to language, identity, friendship, behaviors, attitudes, and geographic background of White culture. An example of a language item is “Do you . . .” 1 = *read only a tribal language*, 2 = *read a tribal language better than English*, 3 = *read both a tribal language and English about equally as well*, 4 = *read English better than a tribal language*, and 5 = *read only English*. An identity question is “How much pride do you have in the Native American culture and heritage?” with responses choices 1 = *extremely proud*, 2 = *moderately proud*, 3 = *a little pride*, 4 = *no pride, but do not feel negatively toward the group*, and 5 = *no pride, and do feel negatively toward the group*. An identity question is “How would you rate yourself?” 1 = *very Native American*, 3 = *bicultural*, and 5 = *very non-Native American*. Friendship questions queried extent to which one associated with Native Americans. Behavior questions queried cultural preferences (e.g., ceremonies, music) and food. There is limited research on the psychometric properties of the NAAS; however, there is evidence of good structural validity, such that factor correlations range from .40 to .62 (Reynolds, Sodano, Ecklund, & Guyker, 2012). Cronbach’s alpha in earlier research is .91 (Garrett & Pichette, 2000). Cronbach’s alpha in our sample is .92. Means for the NAAS represent a continuum of scores from 5 = *full acculturation* to 1 = *full enculturation*. Mean scores of 3 is *bicultural* (Garrett & Pichette, 2000).

Historical Losses Scale (HLS). The HLS (Whitbeck, Adams, et al., 2004) is a 12-question instrument that documents American Indian perceived historical loss. It was developed in collaboration with Native American elders, advisory boards, and tribal members. The HLS queried frequency of thoughts regarding historical losses. Questions begin with “How often do you think of . . .” followed by a specific loss, such as land, language, family ties, culture, spirituality, and respect. Several items used specific context, such as “loss of family ties because of boarding schools.” Responses were provided on a scale of 0 = *several times a day*, 1 = *daily*, 2 = *weekly*, 3 = *monthly*, 4 = *yearly or at special times*, to 5 = *never*. Analyses used scale means. The HLS demonstrates good construct validity, such that perceived loss accounts for 58% of variance and all 12 items loading significantly, ranging from .62 to .86 (Whitbeck, Adams, et al., 2004). Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample is 0.95, which was consistent with Whitbeck, Chen, et al. (2004).

The Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS). The BBTS (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006) is a 12-item inventory of low to high betrayal trauma. Three items comprise the “low” betrayal category (Items 1, 2, and 4). Items low in betrayal are those which have no interpersonal relational element between a victim and perpetrator but which nonetheless can be traumatic. An example of low betrayal trauma was having been in a major earthquake, fire, and flood that resulted in significant loss of property or serious injury or fear of death. A high betrayal trauma example is “You were made to have some form of sexual contact, such as touching or penetration, by someone with whom you were very close (such as a parent).” Scoring used a 3-point scale for event frequency where 0 = *never*, 1 = *once or twice*, 2 = *more than that*, about experiences before the age of 18. High betrayal included five items in the current study; these included witnessing domestic violence and personally experiencing physical or psychological abuse (Items 3, 5, 6, 8, and 10). The BBTS reportedly has good test–retest reliability (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006) and good construct validity (Freyd, DePrince, & Zurbriggen, 2001). Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample is .89.

Procedures

HSP participants were eligible to participate if in a prescreen they indicate having at least one Native American grandparent. When they signed up for the study, HSP participants were blind to the purpose or content of this study, including the fact that the study was related to their American Indian heritage. Eligibility simply meant that the study appeared on list along with other studies. Participants were not informed that it was due to a prescreen question. Participants earned course credit for participation.

Community participants were a convenience sample. Ten participants were recruited through the NASU listserv at the University. The e-mail invited participation in a Native American life experiences and cultural identity survey. One dollar was donated to NASU for each completed survey. Six participants returned the survey to the NASU campus office and four mailed surveys back. Other community participants were recruited at an American Indian winter gathering. After hearing a brief description of the study, anyone interested was invited to take a consent letter and survey package. Sixteen individuals took a package; 14 were returned anonymously via prepaid post.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

As part of a HSP prescreen, all participants answered demographic questions prior to study participation. We matched the data of the HSP participants to their demographic data via anonymized identification codes. Of the 36 HSP participants, who reported having at least one Native American grandparent, only four selected Native American on the demographics questionnaire. Nineteen identified as Caucasian, four selected a different ethnic identity, four selected "other," and six declined to answer.

American Indian Ancestry was determined by a demographics query about the number of grandparents participants had, who identified as American Indian. The range is 1 to 4 (sample $M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.11$). To determine whether the community and HSP participants were similar in terms of number of grandparents who identified as American Indian, we conducted chi-square tests of independence with community or HSP as one independent variable and number of American Indian grandparents as the second (four class) independent variable. The test indicated that the difference was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 59) = 6.97, p = .07$.

Scores of trauma that had occurred by the age of 18 ranged from 0 (*none*) to 2.00 (*experienced more than two times*). For the high betrayal trauma subscale, $M = .61$ ($SD = .64$), *Median* = .40. For the low betrayal trauma that had occurred by the age of 18, $M = .51$ ($SD = .56$), *Median* = .30, and the scores ranged from 0 to 1.80. Seventy five percent of participants reported having experienced at least one betrayal trauma in their lives; 71.2% experienced betrayal trauma before the age of 18. Chi-square tests of independence found no difference between the community and HSP samples for proportion who experienced any childhood sexual abuse, $\chi^2(1, n = 57) = .04, p = .85$ (two participants declined to answer). Chi-square tests of independence revealed that the community group was more likely than the HSP group to experience physical abuse before age 18, $\chi^2(1, N = 59) = 10.67, p < .01$. Most participants (88.3%) reported having experienced childhood trauma. Compared with other studies that utilized the same measure, a higher proportion of individuals in the current study experienced childhood trauma. For example, Goldberg and Freyd (2006) reported that in a predominantly Caucasian community, sample in Oregon ($N = 726$), about 60% had experienced childhood trauma. Similarly, in a large college sample in Oregon ($N = 735$, 79.6% Caucasian), Barlow and Cromer (2006) found that 63.7% reported childhood trauma.

Table 1. Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Variables Used in Regression Analyses.

	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ancestry ^a	-.60***	.38**	-.22	.46**	.43**
2. Enculturation ^b		-.47**	.35**	-.53**	-.39**
3. Family boarding school history ^c			-.23	.21	.31*
4. Historical loss awareness				-.45**	-.34**
5. Low childhood betrayal trauma					.44**
6. High childhood betrayal trauma					

^aNumber of grandparents who were identified as American Indian.

^bNative American Acculturation Scale.

^cTransformed variable.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2. Regression Analysis Summary for Enculturation and Ancestry Predicting Historical Loss Awareness.

	95% CI	β	t	p
Enculturation	[0.04, 0.34]	.34	2.14	.04
Ancestry ^a	[-0.32, 0.29]	.02	0.12	.91
$R^2 = .12$, $R = .35$, $N = 59$, $p = .03$				

Note. CI = confidence interval for beta.

^aNumber of grandparents who were identified as American Indian.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Summary for Family Boarding School History Predicting High and Low Betrayal Trauma.

	95% CI	β	t	p
High betrayal trauma	[0.02, 0.26]	.31	2.24	.02
$R^2 = .09$, $R = .31$, $N = 59$, $p = .02$				
Low betrayal trauma	[-0.01, 1.36]	.21	1.64	.11
$R^2 = .05$, $R = .21$, $N = 59$, $p = .11$				

Note. CI = confidence interval for beta.

Scores on the NAAS ranged from 1.95 (*enculturated*) to 4.85 (*very acculturated*), $M = 3.84$ ($SD = .69$), *Median* = 3.95. A histogram indicated a slight skew ($skew = -.81$), which is an acceptable range. Scores on the HLS ranged from 1.25 (*thinking about losses daily*) to 5.0 (*never thinking about losses*), $M = 3.55$ ($SD = 1.12$), *Median* = 4.0.

Family boarding school history was determined by a sum of number of years mother, father, grandmother(s), and grandfather(s) had spent in boarding schools. Forty two (71.2%) participants indicated either no family boarding school history or that they did not know of any, and those were also scored 0. For the remaining 16 participants, the sum of years family members (parents and grandparents) had spent in boarding schools ranged from 0 to 24 years (two family members who had spent 12 years each in boarding schools); $M = 8.5$ ($SD = 7.04$), *Median* = 8.0, *Mode* = 8.0.

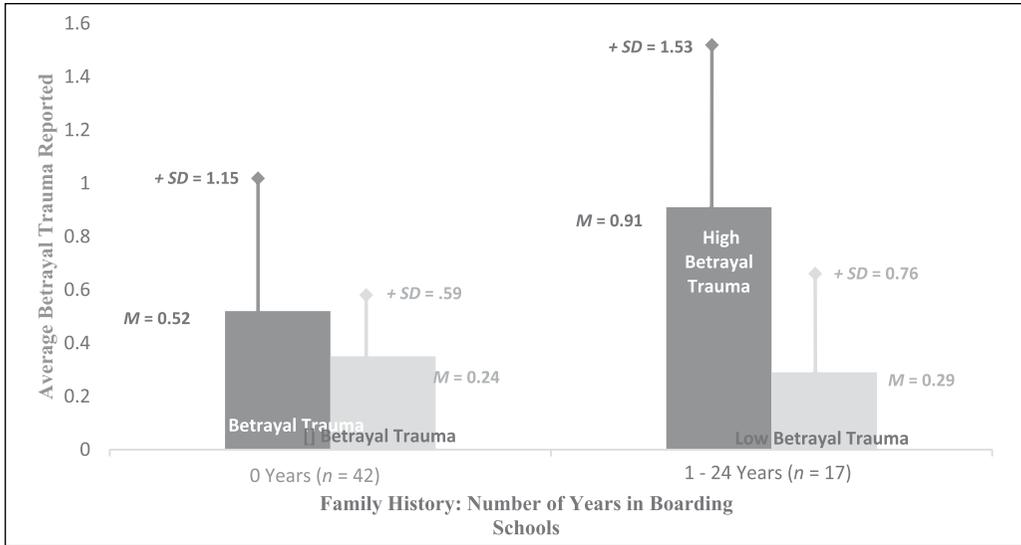


Figure 1. Mean number of childhood traumas reported on the Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey predicted by participants' family boarding school histories.

Analyses

Pearson's correlations for all the regression variables are presented in Table 1. Tables 2 and 3 present standardized beta weights, confidence intervals, and model summary statistics for the regressions that follow. Aim 1 tested two competing hypotheses. The first regression that examined the impact of two variables, first, one's level of enculturation and second, strength of American Indian ancestry, on awareness of historical losses, was statistically significant, $F(2, 56) = 3.79, p = .03, R^2 = .12$. Level of enculturation significantly contributed to the model, $p = .04$, whereas strength of American Indian ancestry did not, $p = .91$. Multicollinearity diagnostics were acceptable with tolerance = .65 for both variables.

Aim 2 was to examine whether intergenerational transmission of trauma occurred through family systems. We hypothesized that family boarding school history would predict participants' experiences of childhood betrayal trauma. Family boarding school history had a positive skew = 2.71, so before conducting regressions, data were transformed using a square root function. After the transformation, the skew = 1.50, $SE = .311$, which is well within an acceptable range. The hypothesis that family boarding school history would predict childhood betrayal trauma (emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse, and witnessing domestic violence) was supported, $F(1, 57) = 6.65, p = .02, R^2 = .09$. The alternative hypothesis, that common method variance (Spector, 2006) would result in a spurious correlation between family boarding school history and low betrayal trauma, was not supported, $F(1, 57) = 2.70, p = .11, R^2 = .05$. Figure 1 presents the distribution of high and low betrayal trauma for participants with family boarding school history grouped into categories.

Discussion

The terms *historical trauma* and *intergenerational transmission of trauma* have been used interchangeably in the literature and yet appear to be theoretically distinct (Gone, 2013; Vasquez et al., 2014). Confusion in nomenclature could mask the idea that there may be different mechanisms involved in historical trauma and in the intergenerational transmission of trauma. The current

study examined the theory that historical trauma is related to institutional betrayal, whereas the intergenerational transmission of trauma is related to trauma within family systems.

To test the idea that historical trauma is related to institutional betrayal, we examined the association of enculturation and awareness of historical losses. If institutional betrayal trauma explained the negative impact of historical trauma, then the more participants identified with the perpetrators of historical losses, the less participants would be aware of those losses. This hypothesis was supported; the more one identified with American Indian culture, the more he or she thought about historical losses, and the more one identified with White culture, the less he or she thought about historical losses. This relationship between enculturation and historical loss awareness suggests that institutional betrayal trauma is an underlying mechanism in the negative impact of historical trauma. As an alternative to an institutional betrayal trauma explanation, we tested the hypothesis that strength of American Indian ancestry would predict historical loss awareness. Ancestry was evaluated based on number of one's grandparents who identified as American Indian. One could have a strong ancestry yet be fully acculturated to White culture. The multiple regression did not support the alternative hypothesis. Ancestry did not relate to awareness of historical loss. These findings are consistent with earlier research that has found that awareness of historical losses and enculturation were related (Jervis et al., 2006; Whitbeck, Chen, et al., 2004) and supports the idea that institutional betrayal trauma explains the harm resulting from historical trauma.

Enculturation, when it has a focus on community and traditional practices, is believed to provide a pathway for American Indians resilience and healing (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Kirmayer et al., 2003; Whitbeck, Chen, et al., 2004). American Indian communities have found that traditional practices are protective against alcohol abuse (Walters, Simoni, & Evans-Campbell, 2002; Whitbeck, Chen, et al., 2004) and are associated with resilience (Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012). Yet institutional betrayal trauma theory suggests that as one moves from acculturated to enculturated, one may start to experience the effects of historical trauma as his or her awareness of historical loss increases. Healing from historical trauma is believed to occur through a grief process (Brave Heart, 1998; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The grief process would heal the historical trauma and associated historical grief. Historical grief and healing would fit with institutional betrayal trauma theory. Theoretically, if one becomes more enculturated and begins to experience historical trauma, healing would be through the shared historical grief process.

Research has suggested that high rates of child maltreatment in American Indian samples may be due to historical trauma (Whitbeck, Adams, et al., 2004). The impact of historical losses on communities resulted in dysfunctional systems that transmitted trauma to new generations (Horejsi et al., 1992). Traditional economic, social, and political aspects of American Indian communities were decimated during colonization, and healing these systems is believed to be fundamental to healing the trauma (Lambert, 2008). Communities that experienced historical losses were less likely to have control of child welfare and other community systems (Oetzel et al., 2011, as cited in Bombay et al., 2014). New programs in American Indian communities have incorporated cultural and traditional ways for preventing the intergenerational transmission of trauma across communities and within families (DeBruyn, Chino, Serna, & Fullerton-Gleason, 2001). Although the damaged systems may be the result of historical trauma, trauma that occurs within these damaged systems is consistent with an intergenerational transmission of trauma explanation.

To test the idea that the intergenerational transmission of trauma is related to damage within family systems, we examined two competing hypotheses in the current study. Number of years that parents and grandparents had spent in a boarding school was used to index historical trauma that damaged family systems as the predictor variable. The first regression tested transmission within the family system, using participants' childhood betrayal trauma as the dependent

variable. This hypothesis was supported. We tested a competing hypothesis that there could be a spurious correlation and that family boarding school history would relate to low betrayal trauma. This competing hypothesis was not supported. In other words, broken family systems related to interpersonal trauma but not all trauma. This finding supports the notion that healing intergenerational transmission of trauma should focus on healing family systems. Introducing and healing traditional practices within families could stop the intergenerational transmission of trauma, even while families become more enculturated or become more aware of historical losses. Given that scholars believe that historical trauma and the intergenerational transmission of trauma are the source of the social and mental health problems that affect American Indians at rates which have far outpaced other inhabitants of North America (e.g., Kirmayer et al., 2003), keeping the nomenclature distinct to elucidate possible mechanisms of trauma's impact on mental health is important.

Study Strengths and Methodological Considerations

A methodological approach in this study was that we asked college students about their ethnic identity in a prescreen and as a separate question, asked whether they had a grandparent who was American Indian. We expected that acculturated individuals would not necessarily identify as being of American Indian descent even if they had a grandparent who they saw as being of American Indian descent. Of the 36 HSP participants who had at least one American Indian grandparent, only four self-labeled as American Indian. Furthermore, 22 participants did not identify tribal affiliation. Most research with American Indians focuses on those who are registered with tribes and who self-identify as American Indian (e.g., Flynn et al., 2014; Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012). There could be a restriction of range confound if samples are not including participants who do not use the cultural label for themselves yet who still have cultural ties. We encourage researchers who consider acculturation/enculturation as a variable of study to use a similar methodology to avoid restriction of range issues. More acculturation could relate to diminishing historical consciousness (Jervis et al., 2006).

Limitations

Although diverse tribal affiliation is a strength in this study, American Indians are a heterogeneous group and generalizations should be made conservatively. In addition, this study used a relatively small, convenience volunteer sample and did not query socioeconomic status. The findings from this study are limited in their generalizability due to the cross-sectional nature of the research. More enculturated individuals are more likely to have grown up or lived on reservations and thus are more likely to have experienced poverty and health disparities and to have had more exposure to violence. Thus longitudinal data about enculturation changes would enhance the ability to determine causal relationships between trauma experienced by American Indians and its effects. Inherent in self-report methodology will always be questions of accuracy. As one elder who consulted on this study noted, although the NAAS was developed with guidance from elders, it is difficult to capture "Indianness" based on a brief survey. Furthermore, the NAAS does not assess marginalization in either culture. Although this study was innovative in using number of years in a boarding school as an objective measure of oppression and loss of parenting practices, it is possible that unidentified third variables could account for the relationship, and therefore, this methodology for indexing extent of trauma should be replicated in future studies before we gain confidence in the findings. Furthermore, only 29% of participants had a boarding school history. Therefore, these findings should be replicated in larger samples with a larger portion of individuals with boarding school experiences to more confidently assert that amount of time spent in a boarding school is a valid index of amount of trauma due to that experience.

Future Directions and Implications

Since Brave Heart's (1998) important work introducing the idea of historical trauma as a pathway to healing, much research has examined historical trauma, and related concepts. As the literature has developed, there has been some confusion in the nomenclature. The current study provides an empirical basis for considering two different but complementary theories in understanding historical trauma and its aftermath. The theoretical distinction between historical trauma and intergenerational transmission of trauma is important because they suggest different pathways to healing. Although a grief process may facilitate healing from historical trauma, healing family systems may prevent and heal the intergenerational transmission of trauma to new generations.

We hope that future research will carefully consider the nomenclature when studying collective traumas because of potentially different trauma mechanisms (Vasquez et al., 2014). Going forward, this could also mean different pathways to healing from related but distinct types of trauma. In the current study, betrayal trauma appears to provide a theory for understanding historical loss awareness whereas family systems may explain the intergenerational transmission of trauma. We hope that longitudinal research can further elucidate mechanisms for trauma and healing.

Future research should also consider the possibility that within-group victimization of members of oppressed or marginalized groups can lead to additional costs to trauma exposure. For example, in Gomez's (2012) theory of cultural betrayal trauma, she lays a foundation for understanding a greater impact of trauma that occurs when minorities experience stereotype threat and may be struggling with notions of betraying key aspects of their cultural identity, if they disclose interpersonal trauma. We hope that future research will further examine the interplay of cultural identity and betrayal in understanding collective and individual trauma.

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