Rationale

- Numerous studies have revealed an association between trauma and adverse physical and mental health status.
- While the rotation is well established, the mechanisms underlying this link are less well understood.
- In the current study we sought to distinguish impact on health arising from types of trauma as indicated by betrayal trauma theory (Freyd 1996, 2001), with an eye toward eventually uncovering mechanisms and developing interventions.

Assessment Instruments

1) Trauma assessed using the Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS; Goldberg & Freyd, under review)
- BBTS lists 12 potentially traumatic events
- Respondents say how often they experienced each event before and after age 18
- Items include natural disasters, accidents, and interpersonal traumas perpetrated by a close other, and those perpetrated by someone not so close

BBTS Example Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trauma with Less Betrayal (LB)</th>
<th>Trauma with More Betrayal (MB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Been in a major earthquake. The flood, hurricane, or tornado that resulted in significant loss of personal property. Jones injured in personal or in a significant other. The theft of a significant other or the loss of your own nest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Depression, anxiety, and dissociation assessed with time-bound* version of the Trauma Symptom Checklist 40 (TSC-40; Elliott & Briere, 1992)
- Physical illness symptoms assessed with time-bound* version of the Pennebaker Inventory of Limbic Languidness (PILL; Pennebaker 1982)
- *From source: items listed were correlated to report how frequently they real experienced those symptoms during the past month

Method

Participants
- We recruited 99 community adults from Eugene/Springfield Oregon who reported at least 12 months of chronic medical or pain problems.
- Data presented here from wave 1 of a longitudinal writing intervention study
- Participants were assessed for trauma history and physical and mental health symptoms.
- Trauma assessment included measuring exposure to both traumas high in betrayal and traumas low in betrayal (but high in life-threat).

A complete BBTS is on the web at:

http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/~jjf/bbts/

Strong associations between overall trauma exposure and negative health and mental status were found.
- Trauma history accounts for 25% of the variance in anxiety, 19% in depression, 21% in dissociation.
- High betrayal was particularly potent. Exposure to more betrayal (MB) is significantly correlated with number of physical illness symptoms, dissociation symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and depression symptoms (see Table 1).
- Although exposure to less betrayal (LB) traumas is also correlated with these symptoms, exposure to MB traumas is a better predictor. Multiple regression analyses reveals that when both MB and LB are included as predictors, only MB is a significant predictor of symptoms (see Table 1).
- LB and MB are both highly correlated with symptoms. However, LB and MB are also correlated with each other, r (95) = .603, p < .01.
- Using regression to determine the unique contributions of LB and MB to predict symptoms, only MB comes out as a significant predictor.

Discussion

- More betrayal (MB) trauma is highly associated with physical and mental health symptoms in this sample of ill adults.
- This pattern of results has been replicated with data recently collected in our laboratory using a healthy student population (Goldsmith, Freyd, & DePrince, 2004).
- With the large amount of variance in symptoms predicted by exposure to high betrayal trauma, we are now focusing on uncovering mechanisms and evaluating the health consequences of an intervention that involves writing about reactions to these events.
- We recommend that health and trauma researchers and clinicians attend to betrayal trauma.

Results

• Betrayal trauma (BT) theory distinguishes two dimensions as primary for events that cause long lasting harm to people: life-threat (e.g. major car accident; urban violence) and social betrayal (e.g. abuse by a close other). (see FIGURE 1)

Figure 1: Betrayal Trauma theory; two distinct dimensions of harm

Table 1: Trauma and symptom correlations for 99 adults from the community with chronic illness

| Trauma and symptom correlations for 99 adults from the community with chronic illness |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Physical illness (PILL) | Psychological distress (MB) |
| Depression | Anxiety |
| Physical illness | 0.37 | 0.36 |
| Psychological distress | 0.30 | 0.30 |

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