

## Gender Differences in Exposure to Betrayal Trauma

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## Gender Differences in Exposure to Betrayal Trauma

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- n Part 1: Background
  - n Betrayal trauma theory
  - n Betrayal trauma exposure related to forgetting, and mental and physical health symptoms
- n Part 2: Gender findings

## Betrayal Trauma Theory

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- n Betrayal Trauma Theory had its origins in attempting to understand memory for trauma.
  - n Many people experience trauma.
  - n Many of those trauma survivors forget the trauma or parts of the trauma for some time.
  - n Why? How?

## Many people experience trauma

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- n E.g. Trauma rates (Elliott, 1997):
  - n Random sample 724 individuals across the US.
  - n Mail questionnaire (demographics, trauma history, trauma memory questions).
  - n 505 (70%) completed the survey.
- n Results:
  - n 72% reported some form of major trauma
  - n 40% experienced major motor vehicle accident or natural disaster
  - n 43% witnessed violence
  - n 50% victims of interpersonal violence
  - n 23% childhood sexual abuse

## Many People Forget... Elliott (1997) continued

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- n Delayed recall reported by 32% of those who reported some form of trauma.
- n Most likely to report continuous memories for:
  - n adult sexual assault without penetration (94%)
  - n major motor vehicle accidents (92%)
  - n natural disasters (89%)
- n Complete memory loss most common for:
  - n victims of child sexual abuse (20%)
  - n witnesses of combat injury (16%)
  - n victims of adult rape (13%)
  - n witnesses of domestic violence as a child (13%)

## Why forget or remain unaware?

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- n Any class of trauma can be forgotten; why is unawareness and memory impairment more associated with some traumas than others?
- n Even within a category of trauma (e.g. child sexual abuse) some traumas are forgotten (and not others): why?
- n Betrayal Trauma Theory: Theorized motivation for unawareness of betrayal traumas
  - n Should successfully predict when traumas most likely to be forgotten

The core of the motivation hypothesis:  
Betrayal blindness as survival mechanism

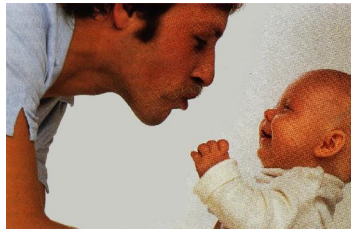
- n Humans have exquisite sensitivity to betrayal (S)
- n Humans, particularly children, often are profoundly dependent on others, thus attachment system (D)
- n Conflict between sensitivity to betrayal and needs of attachment can lead to betrayal blindness (BB)
- n Under some circumstances  $S + D = BB$

Human sensitivity to betrayal (S)

- n Ability to evaluate trustworthiness highly important to social species
- n Cosmides proposed humans have evolved "cheater detectors"
  - n Evidence from reasoning tasks (e.g. Wason Selection task) showing people much better at reasoning when task involves detecting violation of social contract.
- n Empowered individuals are likely to be exquisitely aware of betrayal
- n Typical response to betrayal is withdrawal or confrontation

Dependence in Humans (D)

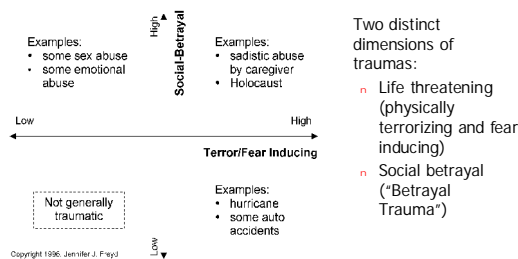
- n Social animals depend on others
- n Human children are extremely dependent
- n Attachment system protects dependent person/child
- n Baby has "job" (love and be lovable):



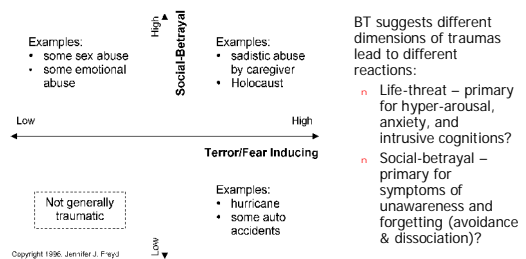
Betrayal Blindness ( $S+D = BB$ )

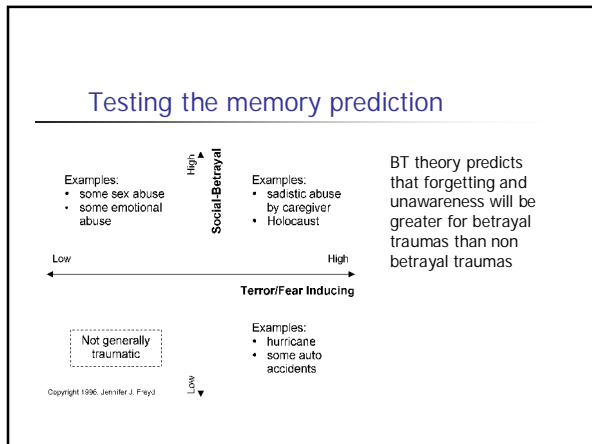
- n What does a child do when caregiver betrays?
  - n a child abused by a caregiver would risk further mistreatment if awareness caused withdrawal or conflict
- n Betrayal blindness occurs when awareness would threaten necessary (or apparently necessary) relationships
- n Thus unawareness and forgetting are sometimes an adaptive response to betrayal

Thus, Betrayal Trauma Theory Suggests  
Two Primary Dimensions of Trauma



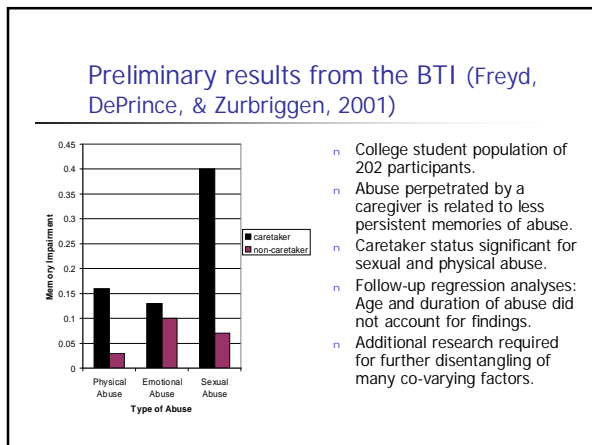
Betrayal Trauma theory: dimensions of  
trauma may lead to different symptoms





### Motivation to not remember: a specific prediction

- Specific prediction: childhood abuse perpetrated by a caregiver will lead to more memory impairment than will abuse perpetrated by a non-caregiver



### Forgetting – betrayal relationship found in at least seven data sets

- Freyd (1996) reanalysis:
  - Williams (1994, 1995)
  - Cameron (1993)
  - Feldman-Summers and Pope (1994)
- Sheiman (1999)
- Freyd, DePrince and Zurbriggen (2001)
- Stoler (2001)
- Schultz, Passmore, and Yoder (2003)

### Also dissociation related to exposure to betrayal trauma

- Chu and Dill (1990)
  - childhood abuse by family members was significantly related to increased DES scores in psychiatric inpatients, but abuse by nonfamily members was not.
- Plattner et al (2003)
  - significant correlations between symptoms of pathological dissociation and intrafamilial (but not extrafamilial) trauma in a sample of delinquent juveniles.

### Beyond forgetting: Are health and distress also related to betrayal trauma?

- Overall trauma & abuse are associated with negative physical and mental health consequences
  - What about traumas high in betrayal?
- Goldsmith, Freyd, & DePrince (2004)
  - 185 college students
- Freyd, Klest, & Allard (2004)
  - 99 community members with health/pain problems, wave 1 of a longitudinal writing intervention study
- Assessment of physical (PILL) and mental health (TSC) symptoms
- Trauma assessed using the BBTS

Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS – Goldberg & Freyd, 2004)

- n 12 Items of potentially traumatic events
- n Answer each item for before 18 and after 18
- n Response choices: never, 1 or 2 times, more than that
- n Items include natural disasters, accidents, and interpersonal traumas perpetrated by a close other, and those perpetrated by someone not so close

BBTS form

The form is titled 'Personal Experiences' and contains 12 items. Each item is rated on a scale from 0 (Never) to 4 (More than that) for two time periods: 'BEFORE AGE 18' and 'AGE 18 or OLDER'. The items include:
 

- Been in a major earthquake, fire, flood, hurricane, or tornado that resulted in significant loss of personal property, serious injury to yourself or a significant other, the death of a significant other, or the fear of your own death.
- Been in a major automobile, boat, motorcycle, plane, train, or industrial accident that resulted in similar consequences.
- Witnessed someone with whom you were very close (such as a parent, brother or sister, partner(s) or intimate partner) committing suicide, being killed, or being injured by another person so severely as to result in marks, bruises, blood, or broken bones. This might include a close friend or neighbor.
- Witnessed someone with whom you were not so close undergoing a similar kind of traumatic event.
- Witnessed someone with whom you were very close deliberately attack another (being attacked so severely as to result in marks, bruises, blood, broken bones, or broken teeth).
- You were deliberately attacked that severely by someone with whom you were not close.
- You were deliberately attacked that severely by someone with whom you were not close.
- 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 or lover).
- You were made to have such sexual contact by someone with whom you were not close.
- You were continuously or psychologically mistreated over a significant period of time by someone with whom you were very close (such as a parent or lover).
- Experienced the death of one of your own children.
- Experienced a normally traumatic event you already covered in one of the questions.

BBTS example items

- n Low Betrayal: Been in a major earthquake, fire, flood, hurricane, or tornado that resulted in significant loss of personal property, serious injury to yourself or a significant other, the death of a significant other, or the fear of your own death.
- n Medium Betrayal: You were deliberately attacked so severely as to result in marks, bruises, blood, broken bones, or broken teeth by someone with whom you were not close.
- n High Betrayal: 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 or lover).

BBTS on the web

- n The complete BBTS (including parent report version) is on the web at:
- n <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/~jff/bbts/>

BBTS, Preliminary Results, n=185 college students, Goldsmith, Freyd, & DePrince (2004)

Pearson Corr	Exposure to Trauma with Less Betrayal	Exposure to Trauma with More Betrayal
Days Sick	-.02	.24**
Number of physician visits	-.02	.26**
Anxiety	-.07	.38**
Depression	.16*	.35**
Dissociation	.18*	.39**

n More betrayal is a significant predictor of both anxiety and depression

n When we add less betrayal into the model (using multiple regression), R-square statistics change very little, and these changes are not significant.

BBTS, Preliminary results from Freyd, Klest, Allard (2004), 99 individuals from the community with chronic illness and/or pain

Pearson Correlations	Exposure to traumas with less betrayal	Exposure to traumas with more betrayal
Depression (TSC)	.31**	.45**
Anxiety (TSC)	.39**	.49**
Dissociation (TSC)	.40**	.46**
Physical Illness Symptoms	.31**	.37**

Multiple Regression Results -- Depression predicted by MB and LB (Freyd, Klest, Allard, 2004)

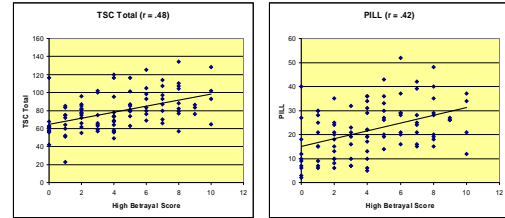
a Dependent Variable: Depression (TSC subscale)  
 b Predictors:  
 1 (Constant), More Betrayal Total  
 2 (Constant), More Betrayal Total, Less Betrayal Total

- Adding LB does not significantly improve model
- MB accounts for 20% of variance
- Results for Anxiety are similar (24% of variance)

Model	R	R Square	R Square Change	Sig. F Change
1	.451	.204	.204	.000
2	.453	.205	.001	.690

Model		Beta	t	Sig.	Correlations	
					Zero-order	Partial
1	(Constant)		14.536	.000		
	More Betrayal Total	.451	4.982	.000	.451	.451
2	(Constant)		13.861	.000		
	More Betrayal Total	.423	3.643	.000	.451	.349
	Less Betrayal Total	.046	.400	.690	.308	.041

High Betrayal Correlated with Mental Health & Physical Symptoms (Freyd, Klest, & Allard 2004)



What about gender and trauma?

- Depression, anxiety, and dissociation associated with exposure to betrayal trauma
- Other research suggests women have higher rates of these sorts of mental health problems
- This raises the question: Is gender predictive of exposure to betrayal trauma?

What about gender and trauma?

- Goldberg & Freyd asked 750 homeowners about their trauma experiences
- Trauma rates were quite high for both males and females (as has been found by other researchers)
- But specific event categories tend to show highly significant gender differences. . .

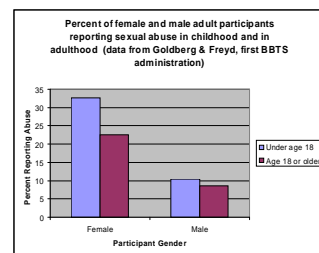
Lots of gender differences for reporting different types of traumas (BBTS, Goldberg & Freyd, 2004)

Significance Levels for chi-square test of gender differences (Likelihood Ratio).  
 Violet indicates women report more;  
 blue indicates men report more.  
 Significant effects in bold. \*\*\* means p < .001

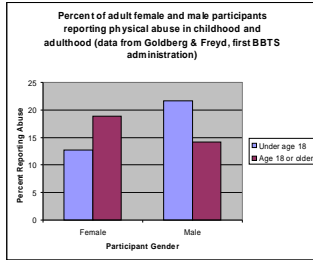
	Before 18	After 18
1/13 Earthquake, fire, flood	.27014	.19245
2/14 Automobile, bike accident	.29703	.00025***
3/15 Witness...close...killed	.37203	.25018
4/16 Witness...not close...killed	.00000***	.00000***
5/17 Witness...close...attack family member	.04805	.00057***
6/18 Attacked...close	.06219	.00000***
7/19 Attacked...not close	.00000***	.00002***
8/20 Sex abuse...close	.00000***	.00031***
9/21 Sex abuse...not close	.00000***	.00001***
10/22 Emotionally mistreated	.00001***	.00000***
11/23 Death of own child	n too small	.01454
12/24 Other traumatic event	.87752	.04473

[Eugene-Springfield community sample: n for women = 422; n for men = 304]

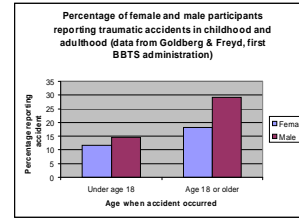
Women experience more sexual abuse in both childhood and adulthood



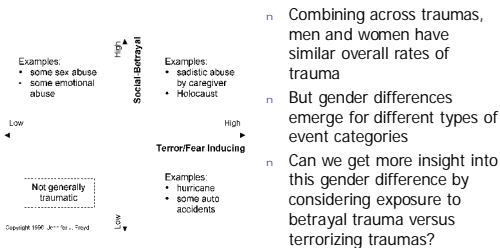
But for physical abuse the rates are much closer, with boys the more common victims in childhood, women in adulthood



And for traumatic accidents, males experience more, particularly as adults



### What about Gender & Betrayal?



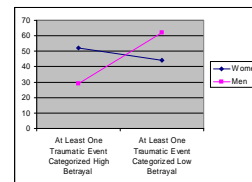
### Goldberg & Freyd's observed gender differences categorized by degree of betrayal

	High Betrayal Items (6 items) 6, 8, 10, 18, 20, 22	Medium Betrayal Items (12 items) 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24	Low Betrayal Items (6 items) 1, 2, 4, 13, 14, 16
Women Report More of This Trauma (p < .001)	22: Emotional Abuse Adult*** 18: Emotional Abuse Adult*** 8: Close Sex Abuse Child*** 10: Emotional Abuse Child*** 20: Close Sex Abuse Adult***	9: Not-close Sex Abuse Child*** 21: Not-close Sex Abuse Adult*** 17: Witness someone close attack family member Adult***	1, 2, 4, 13, 14, 16
Men Report More of This Trauma (p < .001)		7: Not-close Attack Child*** 19: Not-close Attack Adult***	16: Witnessed Not-close Death Adult*** 14: Accident Adult*** 4: Witness Not-close Attack Child***
Not Sign. Diff.	(Item 6)	(Items 3, 5, 11, 12, 15, 23, 24)	(Item 1, 2, 13)

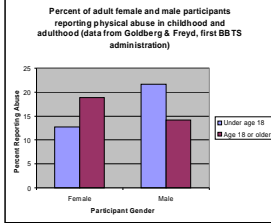
### Goldberg & Freyd gender effects continued

	Women	Men	Significance Level of Gender Diff (chi square)
Percent Reporting at Least one High Betrayal Items (6 items) 6, 8, 10, 18, 20, 22	52%	29%	.00000***
Percent Reporting at Least one Medium Betrayal Items (12 items) 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24	72%	62%	.00230*
Percent Reporting at Least one Low Betrayal Items (6 items) 1, 2, 4, 13, 14, 16	44%	62%	.00000***

### High versus low betrayals in graphical Form (Goldberg & Freyd, 2004)

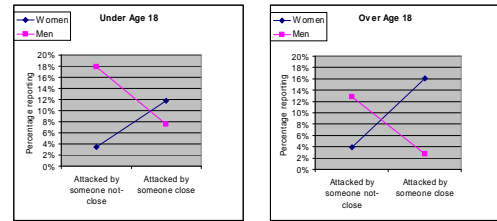


What about physical abuse?



- Remember...for physical abuse the gender effects were not so big...
- But what happens if we look at closeness of perpetrator?

Gender and exposure to physical abuse: Close versus not-close attack



Are men and women interpreting "close" and "not close" differently?

- Could the gender effects reflect different categorization systems?
- Perhaps women categorize individuals as close that men would categorize as not close?
- Follow-up study on same sample collected more detailed perpetrator information.
- If participant indicated event happened, a question on the next page asked for perpetrator gender and perpetrator category.
- Would the gender effect be diminished using relationship categories instead of "close" versus "not close"?

Follow up of BBTS

**More About Your Personal Experiences**

If Any of Events #7 to #12 Happened to You:  
The person who did this to you was:

	Their Sex/Gender		Their Relationship With You						
	Male	Female	Parent or Guardian	Other Family Member	Husband, Wife, or Romantic Partner	Babysitter or Nanny	Teacher, Doctor, Coach, Religious Counselor, or Other Professional	Friend or Acquaintance	Stranger
7.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. (continued) For any seriously traumatic event NOT included in items 1 to 13:  
In the space below, please describe the event, including your relationship with the person who caused it, his or her sex, the nature of the traumatic event, and how often it occurred.

Perpetrator Categories (including those particularly likely to be close other)

- Parent or guardian
- Other family member
- Husband, wife, or romantic partner
- Babysitter or nanny
- Teacher, doctor, coach, religious counselor, or other professional
- Friend or acquaintance
- Stranger

Follow-up Data Collection: Gender & Closeness of Perpetrator (Goldberg & Freyd, 2004)

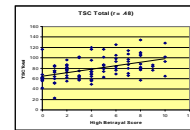
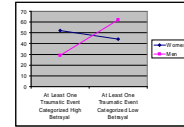
	Number of Women Participants Reporting Attack	Number of Men Participants Reporting Attack
Item 7 (attacked by close other)	99	44
Item 8 (attacked by not close other)	26	60
Either 7 or 8 but Relationship likely close	107	41
Either 7 or 8 but Relationship likely not close	18	63

FYI: About 85% of attack perpetrators are reported to be male (Goldberg & Freyd, 2004)

	Women Ss: report male perp	Women Ss: report female perp	Men Ss: report male perp	Men Ss: report female perp
Item 7 (attacked by close other)	88	11	36	8
Item 8 (attacked by non- close other)	20	6	58	2

### In Conclusion: Gender Differences Considered

- The majority of women experience a betrayal trauma
- The majority of men experience a trauma with low betrayal
- Exposure to betrayal is associated with symptoms...
- Future research question: Are gender differences in mental health based in part on differences in betrayal trauma exposure?



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