

Abstract:
Cultural Differences in Autobiographical Memory of Trauma

Autobiographical memory is defined as an explicit memory of an event that occurred in a specific time and place in one's personal past. Research has been conducted on autobiographical memories of trauma. However, no study to date has explored the effect of culture on autobiographical memories of trauma. This is surprising given that research has found that culture influences how autobiographical memory emerges, can account for many individual differences in autobiographical memories in adulthood and strongly influences self-organization, self-concept, emotions, goals, appraisals and personal meanings.

This study proposes to explore how individuals from individualistic/Western cultures represent trauma in autobiographical memory compared to individuals from collectivistic/Non-Western cultures and the influence of this on mental health and clinical treatment. This will include exploring possible cultural differences in content, meaning, expression and sense of 'self' in trauma memories. It will also explore possible cultural differences in emotional responses to trauma, dealing, processing and responding to trauma and the relationship of the above on mental illness and treatment, especially in relation to refugee populations.

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