

PSYCHOLOGY 499

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT FOLLOWING TRAUMATIC LIFE EVENTS: THE CASE OF GENOCIDE

Spring, 2009

Time: Wednesday 2-5:30
SGM 714

Instructor: Beth E. Meyerowitz
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Office hours: Tuesday, 2-4 pm

Course Goals:

Although civilian casualties have always been part of war, modern warfare is increasingly targeting non-combatants. Olweean (2003) notes that “psychological and emotional injuries may be the most enduring effects of war, yet historically, they may be the least addressed in terms of rebuilding a society and preventing future violence” (p. 271). The case of genocide represents a particularly dramatic assault to mental health. Not only have survivors of genocide typically been exposed to extreme trauma, they have been targeted for death because of some personal characteristic such as religion, race, or perceived ethnicity. In this course, we will explore the long-term mental health consequences of surviving genocide, using the Holocaust and the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide as case examples.

The specific aims of the course are:

1. To understand the basic scientific literature on the emotional, cognitive, physiological, social, and health consequences of exposure to extreme trauma;
2. To consider how this literature can be applied to the case of survivors of genocide and, specifically, the Holocaust;
3. To conduct a brief project using the USC Shoah Foundation Institute archives that explores trauma among survivors of the genocide;
4. To compare and contrast the aspects of the Holocaust and the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide that might influence the psychological consequences for survivors

Course Outline:

1/14 Course overview/Introduction to mental health following genocide

1/21 Reactions to traumatic events

American Psychiatric Association (2000). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV-TR. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, pp. 463-472.

Cook, A., Spinazzola, J., Ford, J., Lanktree, C. et al. (2005). Complex trauma in children and adolescents. Psychiatric Annals, 35, 390-398.

1/28 Application of trauma research to the case of genocide

Olweean, S.S. (2003). When society is the victim: Catastrophic trauma recovery. In S.K. Krippner & T.M. McIntyre (Eds.). The Psychological Impact of War Trauma on Civilians: An International Perspective. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 271-276.

Staub, E. (2000). Genocide and mass killing: Origins, prevention, healing and reconciliation. Political Psychology, 21, 367-382.

2/4 Introduction to the Holocaust and testimonies from the Shoah archives

USC Shoah Foundation Institute web page
Project Part 1: Watch testimonies

2/11 Biological, psychological, and social effects of trauma exposure

Lemelson, R., Kirmayer, L. J., & Barad, M. (2007). Trauma in Context: Integrating biological, clinical, and cultural perspectives. In L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson, & M. Barad (eds.). Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 451-474.

Project Part 2: Develop research question

2/18 Methodology and ethics in studying post-traumatic stress following genocide

Newman, E., Risch, E., & Kassam-Adams, N. (2006). Ethical issues in trauma related research: A review. Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethic, 29-46

Project Part 3: Project reading(s)/Proposal

2/25 Individual differences in reactions to post-traumatic stress

Barenbaum, J., Ruchkin, V., & Schwab-Stone, M. (2004). The psychological aspects of children exposed to war: Practice and policy initiatives. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45, 41-62.

Project Part 4: Test hypotheses

3/4 Midterm Exam

3/11 Treatment of post-traumatic stress

Bradley, R., Greene, J., Russ, E., Dutra, L., & Westen, D. A multidimensional meta-analysis of psychotherapy for PTSD. American Journal of Psychiatry, 162, 214-227.

Project Part 5: Write-up of findings

Project presentation

3/25 Vicarious and secondary traumatization

Project presentations

4/1 Literary and media portrayals of trauma following genocide

Project Part 6: Media portrayals

Project presentations

4/8 A second case study: The 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide

Geltman, P. & Stover, E. (1997). Genocide and the plight of children in Rwanda. The Journal of the American Medical Association, 277, 289-294.

4/15 Trauma following the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi genocide

Bolton, P. (2003). Assessing depression among survivors of the Rwanda genocide. In S.K. Krippner & T.M. McIntyre (Eds.). The Psychological Impact of War Trauma on Civilians: An International Perspective. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 67-77.

Boris, N. W., Brown, L. A., Thurman, T., Rice, J. C. et al. (2008). Depressive symptoms in youth heads of household in Rwanda: Correlates and implications for interventions. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 162, 836-843.

4/22 The future of the study of mental health and genocide: Research and career opportunities and challenges

Eisenman, D., Weine, S., Green, B., de Jong, J et al. (2006). The ISTSS/Rand guidelines on mental health training in primary healthcare for trauma-exposed populations in conflict-affected countries. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 19, 5-17.

4/27 Conclusions/Summary

Project Part 7: Cultural considerations

5/11 FINAL: 2-4 pm

Grading:

Your grade in this course will be based on three components--class participation, exams, and a course project.

- Class participation: 20% of grade

To receive full credit for class participation, you will need to attend the entire class period, complete all assigned readings before class, be prepared to describe and comment on reading assignments, and attend to and participate in classroom discussions. If you are uncomfortable with speaking up in class, please come see me at the beginning of the semester.

- Exams: 35% of grade

There will be a midterm and a final, which will count for 15% and 20% of your grade, respectively. The exams will be based on assigned readings and materials presented in class.

- Course Project: 45% of grade

Everyone will do a class project based on interviews in the USC Shoah Foundation Institute archives. The project will involve listening to testimonies from the archives and developing a research question or hypothesis based on the experiences of the survivors whose interviews you have heard. Then, you will test your hypothesis using other testimonies in the archives. Results will be discussed in both oral and written presentations. Details of this assignment will be distributed in class.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/> Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>