

# **Reactions to Torture: Comparing Punjabi and Tibetan Survivors**

Minal A. Bopaiah, M.A., Barry Rosenfeld, Ph.D., Howard T. Everson, Ph.D.

*Fordham University*

& Andrew E. Rasmussen, Ph.D.

*Bellevue/NYU's Program for Survivors of Torture*


Division 56: Trauma in Diverse Populations

14 August 2008





# Overview

- Definitions and History
  - Previous research findings on survivors
  - Study sample
  - Results
  - Implications and caveats
- 

# Definitions of Torture

- “...**any activity** that may be used to extract information, **punish, exact retribution,** discredit political opposition, or as a tool of **ethnic cleansing and genocide.**” (Silove, 1999)
- “severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental...intentionally inflicted on a person...**for any reason based on discrimination of any kind...**” (UN Declaration of Human Rights)

# History 101: Tibet

- In 1949, People's Republic of China invaded Tibet
- China still occupies
- More than 1.2 million Tibetans have died
- Tibetans flee



# History 101: Punjab



- Sikhs: religious minority
- Punjab divided in partition
- Call for Khalistan
- Militants began targeting officials
- June 1984: Indian army attacked holiest site
- October 31, 1984: Indira Gandhi assassinated

# History 101: 1947




# Previous Research

- Torture is bad for MH across cultures
  - prevalence rates and symptom patterns may differ
- Some studies on Tibetan refugees
  - PTSD 11-23%
  - Anxiety 25-77%
  - Depression 12-57% (Mills et al., 2005)
- Little research on Punjabis or South Asians




# Objective

- Compare psychological distress after torture in two distinct but geographically proximal Asian cultures
  - Both subjected to political oppression
  - Religious and ethnic differences
- 



# Method

- Archival data
  - Punjabis derived from PSOT/PHR study in Punjab (2005)
    - Subset of randomly sampled litigants in Punjab
    - 10-20 years after torture
  - Tibetans derived from continuous sample of torture survivors at PSOT between Oct 2005-Dec 2006
    - Refugees emigrated to U.S. 1-2 years ago
- 

# Sample Characteristics

	N	Gender	Age*	Mean abuse events †
Punjabi Sikhs	61	47 men, 18 women	51.46 (Range 26-75)	4.61
Tibetan Buddhists	52	36 men, 16 women	34.69 (Range 22-44)	7.05

• $p < .001$

† These scales on different metric and converted to z-scores for statistical analysis

# Brief Symptom Inventory

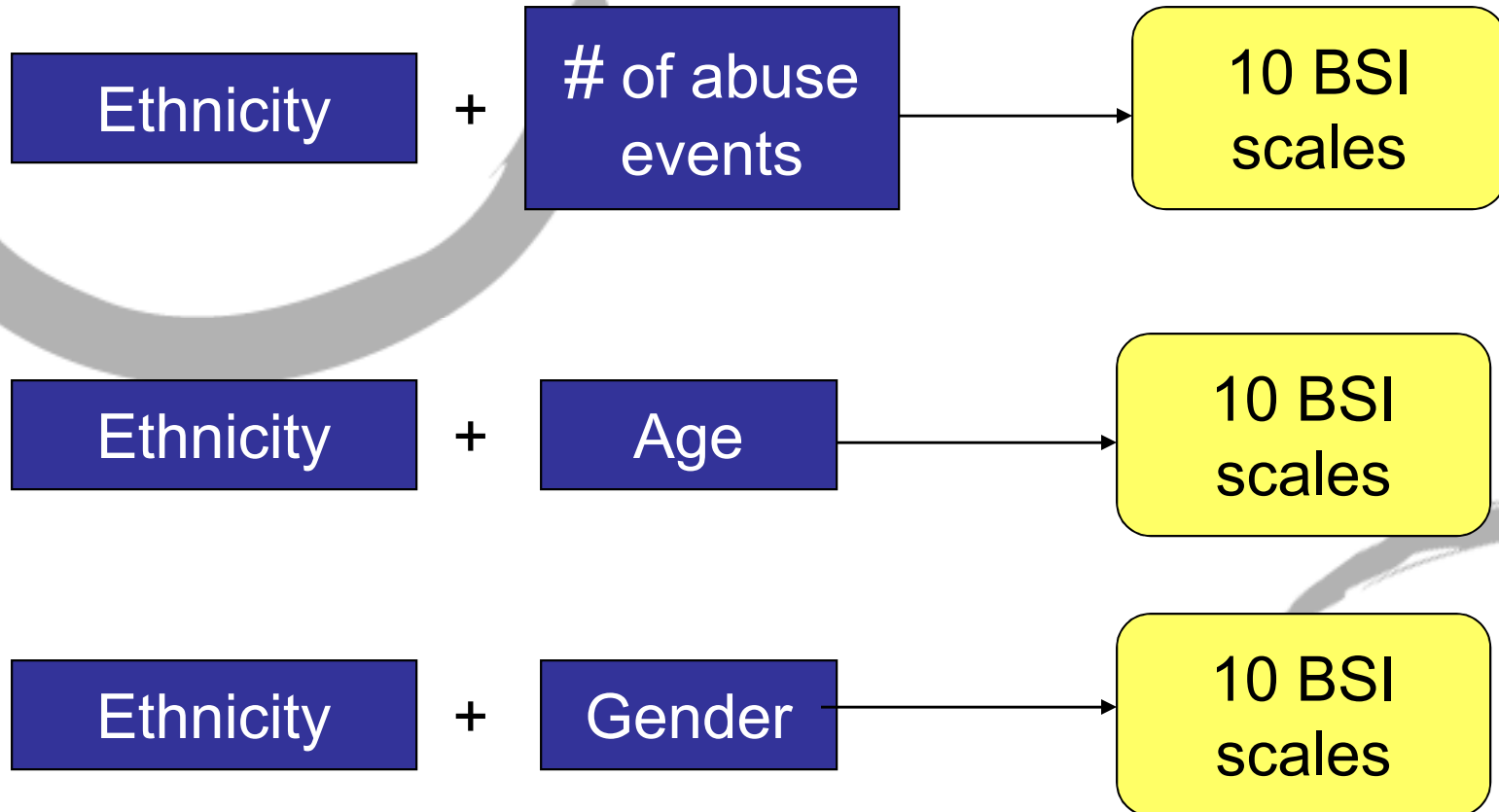
- 53-item; 5-point Likert-scale
- Nine symptom areas (10 scales):
  - Somatization (SOM)
  - Obsessive-compulsive behavior (OC)
  - Interpersonal sensitivity (IS)
  - Depression (DEP)
  - Anxiety (ANX)
  - Hostility (HOS)
  - Phobic anxiety (PHOB)
  - Paranoid ideation (PAR)
  - Psychoticism (PSY)
  - Global Severity Index (GSI)

(Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983)

# Results

	Punjabi	Tibetan	<i>p</i>
SOM	1.70	0.66	<.001
OC	2.02	0.64	<.001
IS	2.07	0.54	<.001
DEP	2.14	0.58	<.001
ANX	1.71	0.97	<.001
HOS	1.61	0.38	<.001
PHOB	1.44	0.59	<.001
PAR	2.35	0.58	<.001
PSY	1.20	0.55	.024
GSI	1.76	0.41	<.001

# MANCOVA Analysis



# MANCOVA Analysis


- Ethnicity accounted for sig. amount of variance in overall models ( $\eta^2 = .63 - .70$ ) and across scales
  - SOM ( $\eta^2 = .20 - .31$ )
  - OC ( $\eta^2 = .25 - .37$ )
  - **IS** ( $\eta^2 = .31 - .41$ )
  - DEP ( $\eta^2 = .27 - .38$ )
  - ANX ( $\eta^2 = .09 - .17$ )
  - **HOS** ( $\eta^2 = .39 - .42$ )
  - PHOB ( $\eta^2 = .09 - .11$ )
  - **PAR** ( $\eta^2 = .45 - .53$ )
  - **GSI** ( $\eta^2 = .30 - .40$ )

# Within-Group Analysis

- No sig. findings for any variable for Tibetans
- For Punjabi sample, # of abuse events and gender explained sig. amount of variance for
  - SOM
  - OC
  - ANX
  - **HOS**
  - GSI




# Discussion

- Huge differences
    - Despite longer time since torture for Punjabis
    - Difference in type/severity/duration of torture
    - Punjabi sample still in India
  - Patterns within groups:
    - Tibetans: measure of abuse events may be poor
    - Dose-response relationship for Punjabis
    - Punjabi women more likely to exhibit  $\Psi$  sx
- 



# Caveats

- Religious/Ethnic differences confounded with sampling differences
  - Cultural validity of BSI
- 



# Acknowledgments

Barry Rosenfeld, PhD

Howard Everson, PhD

Andrew Rasmussen, PhD

Bellevue/NYU's Program for Survivors of Torture

Physicians for Human Rights

Fred Wertz, PhD

Keith Cruise, PhD

