Measures of Societal Trauma: Indicators and Markers

Overview

Social groups appear to take on characteristics or “personality” much like an individual. A history of societal trauma [http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/societal_trauma.pdf] is, in my opinion, an important factor when considering what affects the personality, health, and wellbeing of a social group. Social groups or societies form their identity by their unique course through history. National or societal traumas are certainly as important on a people group’s historical landscape as are other socio-economic and political factors. Wars, devastating natural disasters, genocidal experiences, and the like are not soon forgotten and affect the choices and decisions societies make for generations.

When trying to understand the behavior of a society or a nation certain lenses must be used if sense is to be made of their history. It seems to me that the lens of large scale social trauma has been underutilized or absent in some cases, including US history. European hegemony, colonization and colonial aggression, oppression guided by unjust and self-serving motivations, the rewriting of history that covers up appalling behaviors perpetrated by one group upon another; all these things can seem to have happen without much rhyme or reason unless the correct lens is used. It is my premise that American history is a story best told through the use of the lens of societal trauma. The darker side of American history didn’t happen because the offending people group is somehow inherently bad (which would be racist thinking). The aggressor people group in this story most likely suffered from its own societal trauma response incurred from unresolved trauma in the stream of their history. The lens of societal trauma helps make that clarification. It is as if early Euro-Americans were truly desperate to survive and prosper at any expense. Choices and behavior that were condoned then are now a matter of national secrecy and shame. And were true justice to prevail in the world, it would be more than just a matter of national secrecy; it would be an international disgrace. Why and how did this happen? What motivated a nation in such a way?

As already said it is my premise that oftentimes sense cannot be made of history without seeing history through the lens of societal trauma. A nation that has not found healing for its own social wounds is at risk of wounding other nations around them. Euro-Americans in the new world behaved like survivors of traumatic events most likely because they were in fact a collective of trauma survivors. It is not my intent to develop the historical basis for this view but instead to simply illustrate it here with a few comments.

People literally by the boat loads came to the new world for some of the most drastic and tragic reasons. They appeared to be fighting over new world resources as if their lives depended upon it—because their lives did depend on it; at least it was a held perception that the stakes were a matter of life and death (a characteristic of trauma survivors). Life in Europe for those who made the drastic...
choice to leave absolutely everything—life, home, heritage and deep roots, family—never to return, did so because of often dire circumstances: threats of death by every cause, famine, persecution, disease, poverty, and all manner of desperations (including for some the escape of criminal prosecution). Euro-Americans weren’t Europeans that ended up here on a pleasure cruise and decided to stay. Many came to extract themselves from traumatic circumstances and to insure that they and their families would never have to face that kind of trauma again. This shared common theme made it easier over the years to collectively justify the unjustifiable. It’s my opinion that the lens of historical and societal trauma makes sense of their behavior. It does not provide an excuse, only an explanation. What to do once it is plain is another matter.

Quantifying Societal Trauma Factors: for the sake of accurate assessments

The intent I have in writing about this is to point out some factors that I believe can help quantify the collective trauma various people groups have experienced. I don’t claim to be an expert so I submit these ideas as points for consideration and further discussion. I will use national accounts, accounts from my tribe’s history, and illustrations from my own family to present my points.

Europe Coming Out of the Middle Ages

According to Roberts, *The Penguin History of the World*, J.M. Roberts (1990) pp. 483-4, [http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/euro_death.pdf](http://www.ehcounseling.com/materials/euro_death.pdf) there were longstanding hard times for Europeans in the 14th century. “In 1320 after a series of bad harvests there was a sudden rise in mortality.” This escalated. In the mid 1300’s the rise in mortality increased to drastic levels due to “The Black Death” (bubonic plague) and, according to Roberts, quite likely other diseases such as typhus, influenza, and smallpox. The result was disastrous. Death rates in some areas increased until 33% to 50% of the population had died. In Avignon, for example, 1,400 died in 3 days. In another city (Toulouse) the population may have gone from 30,000 (in 1335) to 8,000 (which is going from 100% to 27%) between the 14th and 15th centuries. Furthermore from Roberts,

“There was no universal pattern of disaster, but everywhere Europeans shuddered under these blows. In the most extreme cases a kind of collective madness seized men. Pogroms [ethnic cleansings] of Jews were a common expression of a search for scapegoats or those guilty of spreading the plague; the burning of witches and heretics was another. *The European psyche bore a scar for the rest of the Middle Ages*, which were haunted by the imagery of death and damnation in painting, carving and literature. The fragility of settled order illustrated the precariousness of the balance of food and population. When disease killed enough people, agricultural production would collapse; then the inhabitants of the towns would die of famine if they were not already dying of plague. Probably a plateau of productivity had already been reached by about 1300. Both available techniques and easily accessible new land for cultivation had reached a limit and some have seen signs of population pressure treading close upon
resources even by that date. From this flowed the huge setback of the fourteenth century and then the next century’s slow recovery.” [Emphasis mine]

Mass death sent Europeans reeling into the 1400’s. The tradesman died before his son learned the trade. The farmer had no farm hands. The village had no priest. Hunger lead to death. Death throughout the population threatened to collapse the functioning of vital social systems. Even before all this the land had seemed to be at its limits to provide for the people living on it. An entire culture was subjected to the consequences of massive death and adapted to survival as a result. This constellation of factors is what I would call a “post depopulation crisis” meaning the social structures of society have passed beyond a tipping point due to death throughout society and societal functioning has destabilized resulting in its own cause for traumatization. There was a whole new shared reality in the land powerful enough to reshape communally held worldviews and to deeply wound the collective psyche. In a culture of post depopulation crisis it is understood that “the world has changed” and social values get reshaped. The values shared in times of stability are displaced by a rawer set of survival values. In Europe as people struggled to recover, a “bright new hope” arrived. A whole new world appeared, there for the taking. Looking through the lens of societal trauma now gives the aggression of European hegemony a meaningful context.

A Modern Day “Culture of Post Depopulation Crisis” in the USA

Fast forwarding to the mid-1990s, the gay community turned a much needed corner regarding the AIDS epidemic. In 1997 I listened to a presentation given by a gay man living with AIDS at a health and wellness seminar. He gave his personal and moving account. There were many people that he loved and deeply missed who had died of AIDS. Before the mid-1990s AZT therapy was the only option out there. AZT therapy was a single anti-viral therapy and the AIDS virus readily got around it. Testing HIV positive at that time pretty much meant you would develop AIDS and AIDS was viewed as a death sentence (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AIDS_Deaths-US_1987-1997.gif). The way he put it was, “Of the people that made up my circle of close loved ones, I knew more people that were gone then remained. That’s the way it was for most of us in those days [of pre-combination antiretroviral therapy]. We all lived in preparation for dying.” He went on to explain that the gay community was engulfed in traumatic grief and with so many missing it was a time of disaster and disarray. “If you were HIV positive there was really no need to prepare for a future because there would be no future. Then the arrival of effective combination antiretroviral therapies changed things over-night.” Unexpectedly to me, he shared how difficult it was for him to reengage and face the fact that he had been given a new future. Rising from what seemed to him a certain death to face a new future took courage and support. “I had gotten used to the idea that I would die,” he said, “but instead all of a sudden I was faced with the responsibility of having to live my
life.” His story illustrated a kind of courage to face the realities of death on a societal scale. His story also illustrated the traumatic nature of living as a member in a community so gripped by death that it was difficult for him to contemplate reentering his life. The survival of such a drastic period was a galvanizing force in the gay community and reshaped his life into one of passionate activism, as it did for many who went through it. It was a traumatic decade.

As mentioned above, sufficiently sudden or massive enough die-offs disorganize the functioning of a society and then not only is the death and dying traumatic, so is the disaster it leaves in its wake. Trauma can be so broad and severe that an otherwise stable and healthily functioning society can destabilize, putting the culture of the community at risk of deep and lasting injury. At the individual level the behavior of a trauma survivor can be misunderstood and not recognized as behavior that is a trauma response. Especially if, to the non-traumatized observer, there is nothing he or she sees that is perceived as particularly threatening. To some degree this must happen at the societal level as well, at least one would think so. When social behavior that is unjust gets condoned by its membership in a manner that is beyond all reason it is time to use the lens of societal trauma. As obvious as it is, in this writing I think it is important to apply that lens by looking at death rates, population attrition (depopulation), and other measures of societal trauma to see if the roots of the problem is societal trauma.

Genocidal Death Tolls in Rwanda

Europe in the late Middle Ages experienced massive death that took the population down, as noted above, from 100% to as little as 66% and 50% remaining survivors. It was a scarring experience. In 1994 Rwanda had a modern day encounter with a huge and sudden “die-off” due to genocide. Rwanda continues to work through its national recovery today and will do so for many years to come. The event was nothing less than horrific. The accounts are so graphic you would want to protect your young ones from even hearing them. What happened in Europe’s census over decades, perhaps
even centuries happened in Rwanda in 100 days. Rwanda’s total population went from 7,500,000 million to 6,670,000 million leaving 89% of its population alive after the genocide. In Rwanda’s case one social group (the Hutus) perpetrated genocide on another Rwandan population (the Tutsis) decimating them. At the end of the 100 days only 29% of the Tutsi population survived the nightmare. If you were a family of ten on day one, on day 100 you are a family of three—each with an unspeakable story of horror.

If the first bar graph (showing the sudden change in population) doesn’t represent societal trauma, and of course it does, than certainly the second bar graph does.

In “We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda,” Philip Gourevitch states, “Decimation means the killing of every tenth person in a population [a 90% survival rate], and in the spring and early summer of 1994 a program of massacres decimated the Republic of Rwanda.” If that is so, then Europe was decimated by war, disease, and famine in the Middle Ages; and the primary circle of personal relationships of the speaker noted above was decimated by the HIV virus; and the Native Americans were decimated in the US following contact with the Old World. As bad as the numbers are for the decimation of the earlier Europeans who were the forefathers of our US founding fathers (perhaps only 50% survived in the above Middle Ages account), as bad as the decimation of the Jews was in the Holocaust in the whole of Europe perhaps 37% survived (http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-statistics.htm), and as bad as these numbers are for the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi (a 28% survival rate), these numbers are exceeded by the numbers of American Indians decimated in the US. In fact, according to Russell Thornton’s book, “American Indian Holocaust and Survival,” perhaps of the entire Native American population that once thrived upon what is now the United States by the 1890s only 5% survived. By comparison to the comments above regarding Rwanda, here in the US if you were a family of ten at the start, by the end you are a family (on the average) of less than one. Native America entered the last century standing on the edge of extinction, hence (I assume) the title of Russell Thornton’s book.

Historical Trauma Factors Affecting Pawnee Indians in the US

This section takes a look at certain factors associated with the man-made societal traumas that affected my own tribe. These factors, factors that affected all Native tribes, include but are not
limited to depopulation, loss of land base, loss of lifeways, and the loss of culture bearers. I see these factors as having impact not only on my own tribe, the Pawnee Indian Nation, but on my entire family’s experience within that tribe.

**Depopulation**

The numbers are controversial due to the lack of sense taking in the earlier history of this country. I will try to cut through the controversy surrounding census numbers by leaning on Russell Thornton’s work, who seems to use the more conservative estimates.

The graphs above show the decline in population of Native Americans and the rise in population of the non-native population in America in relationship to the so-called discovery of the “new world” (which wasn’t really that “new” to those already here). These numbers differ from the case of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. In Rwanda, although the depopulation among the Tutsis was not as deep as here, it happened in the shockingly short time of 100 days. It would be a matter of research (that I am unaware of) to say what the differences in traumatic impact are between sudden depopulation as in Rwanda and “chronic” depopulation as happened here in America. I would speculate that both scenerios are both traumatic in differing ways but would be hard put to say which way is worse. What happened to the Tutsis had to be absorbed by an entire generation “set” (the snapshot in time that contains the concurrent overlapping generations) in one abrupt moment whereas the Native Americans lived under the grind of ever increasing depopulation trends generation after generation for centuries. Which is worse? I don’t know but I would simply say they are both very bad. The one would be like getting hit by a car and living; the other would be like getting run over by the car repeatedly.

I would like to disagree with the graph done by Russell for the sake of better using depopulation as a measure for societal trauma. Here’s the basis for wanting to change Russell’s graph (bear in mind that his graph for the early years is not based on numbers but is simply a projection upon the past by what was known at a later time). In my studies while living in Alaska I took a class that looked at wildlife life cycles. The ups and downs of animal populations were illustrated by wolves and voles. Voles are mice-like rodents and are found in places like the far north and are eaten by the wolves. The charts showing the effects each population had on the other were interesting in that there was a natural and balancing 90 degree phase shift between the preditor and prey populations. The reason for it was simple; supply and demand.

When the wolves were at their peak the voles were at their most rapid rate of decline, heading for their “nadir” (lowest point in numbers). The wolf population could not sustain itself at a peak level because the food supply was disappearing so their numbers began to fall too. As the wolves died off the voles experienced some relief and their numbers rebounded. When the voles hit their peak the wolves were feeling it and were at their greatest rate of recovery, heading for their next new peak. And the cycle
goes on. By projecting this cycle backwards and forwards in time you would have a model of the “steady state” of a population’s changing census. I would submit that this sort of rise and fall in populations is not traumatic, it is normal and sustains the population within natural bounds. I would further suggest that there are levels of decline that are beyond what is normal and that when these numbers are in play (unnatural rates of decline and a disrupted period of the cycle) trauma is in play as well.

My chart shows the numbers (from my own tribe’s population estimates) but adds in the idea that there were non-traumatic ups and downs in human populations prior to the traumatic depopulation that followed. The chart showing the years pre-contact (before 1492) are depicted as a population in the normal and non-traumatic ups and downs of census changes. There are no actual numbers so this graph is an expression of my own reasoning, not anything more. However, the closer the years get to the present the more the numbers are from actual census taking. Anthropologists of the 1800s gathered information that has helped project census number that are likely pretty close to the real numbers in history. The numbers of 22,000 or so Pawnees in the 1700s are an educated guess, that may in fact be low. The census in Pawnee, Oklahoma in 1903 of the 635 remaining Pawnees is not. It is a list of specific names, line by line, of each with a name of the remaining survivors.

My great grand father was number 574. His day was a time of “post depopulation crisis” as described above, when attrition by death threatens to disrupt the ability of a society to sustain itself as it had before. The families were dying; men, women, children and babies. My great grand father had two wives at the same time in part due to survival needs. Women without husbands were at greater risk of not surviving so he was married to two sisters that had been widowed. Over the course of his life he had four wives and many children. Some of these children were adopted orphans. Their parents had died and someone needed to take them in. I say he had several children but a number of them died very young, at birth, in infancy, and in early childhood. My own grandfather, who was born into this difficult time, lost his mom when he was young and was mothered by an older adopted sibling who was his surrogate mother. She was an emotional rescue for him that gave him a fighting chance.

All this life and death drama was happening in a county in Oklahoma that as a whole was probably having a rather normal go of it for the times, at least for the non-native folks. Those times for them don’t harken back to times marked by death, but by growth.
once did a family geogram for a class I was taking and made a discovery that I found striking. In the same county and in the same timeframe my non-native ancestors were experiencing longevity while my Native ancestors were not. They were living truncated lives. My Native great grand father had several and multiple wives, my non-native great grand father had one wife (they had immigrated here from Switzerland). Echohawk had 11 children, two were adopted, three died in early childhood, and at least one died at birth. My grand father as a child saw death in the ranks of his family at all levels; his mom, older and younger siblings, and I’m sure adult relatives that are not on my genogram but were in his life. My non-native great grand father, Jacob, had nine children. They all lived to adulthood except for one. One of them (Uncle Benny) was still living at the time I made this chart for my class. I was stunned. The bar graph shows the differences of these two neighboring families. These families started in the late 1800s and lived into the 1900s both in the same locale but with two very different experiences around death and dying.

The trauma of chronic depopulation faced by my tribe, the Pawnees (along with all the other tribes), was still a factor up to my father’s time. The population had stopped declining and leveled off at a low. He lived to be 44, being the oldest of his siblings. The next oldest, my uncle, died at age 42. Really, for me, the death and dying that had for so long plagued my tribe continued to plague my own life. I can remember how my whole family breathed a sigh of relief when my uncle (the last and youngest of the three brothers) lived passed his forties into his fifties. He in fact lived into his seventies for which we were all very grateful. When my dad was born the nadir for the Pawnees had already been hit and the tribe was bumping along the bottom in terms of population rebound. The population finally took the upward trend it is maintaining today about the time I was born in the 1950s.

It is important for me to note something about the recovery shown in these more recent charts. There has not been a return to my theorized steady state condition whereby the census has a normal up and down flow in the overall census that is non-traumatic and natural. There has been no leveling off showing that the Pawnee population has hit a new and stable normal. The fact that the trend is upward indicates recovery is in progress. The fact that the Native population growth is out-stripping the dominant population treads and has not leveled off indicates to me that the recovery is still early.

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The questions these speculations and graphs raise for me are several. How long and how steep do the declines in these graphs have to be before we are talking about societal trauma? How much time has to pass before we can say (regarding the psyche of the collective) that the coast is clear and the times of danger are over? And for how long, once the coast is deemed clear, does it have to stay cleared before there is a restored collective sense of safety? I have not seen studies that address these questions. I don’t hear people talking about these factors. I don’t hear a commonly held vocabulary to have this discussion. My fear is that people think these questions don’t need to be asked, much less answered.

Addressing a story like this in a national narrative is hard to do if those in charge of the narrative (that is to say, “those in control of” the narrative) are inclined to leave this sort of story out. I’m sure there is much shame and guilt being held by the dominant culture around this story, just as I am sure there is pain and grief being held within the Native population over this story. It seems to me to be a little easier to live a functional life as a member of the dominant culture with a lid on the national shame than it is to try to live a trouble free life as if your family has never been traumatized, when in fact it has. But that is probably just my bias speaking. I would value having an honest and constructive dialogue with someone to sort this out.

**Loss of land base**

The Pawnee’s used to live in what is now Nebraska and hunted in a larger domain that covered most of that state and into modern day Kansas. Even into the 1800s when American anthropologist types began observing and documenting the life and times of the Pawnee, the Pawnee still had a strong presence on the Great Plains and a freedom to live out their lifeways as they had from time immemorial. George Hyde in *The Pawnee Indians* (1951) gives an account of a hunting trip the Pawnee took that gives us a sense of what it was like for them at that time:

This great throng of Indians, with their thousands of horses and mules and their packs of wolvish dogs, moved across country in parallel columns, leaving a wide trail of trodden grass and dropped articles in their rear. Miles ahead, or out on the flanks of the marching columns, groups of scouts were scanning the country for signs of game or indications of the presence of enemies...In 1835 they had some 4,000 people in these camps, in about 600 buffalo-skin lodges, with thousands of horses and mules, and some 7,000 half-wild dogs. By day, and more particularly by night, the noise that this congregation of Pawnees, horse, mules, and wild dogs made was prodigious. All day long and on into the small hours of the night the men were talking, shouting, singing war-songs, while the women’s shrill voices never ceased. Babies and small children that were ill wailed and screamed; babies and small children that were just spoiled and...
cranky yelled for anything they wanted, and kept on yelling until their mothers came and filled their need; horses neighed, mules brayed; and at night the thousands of dogs, half wolf and half cur, assembled in packs and howled at the moon. It was claimed in the 19th century that the Pitahauerats were called Tappage or Noisy Pawnee by the early French traders; but why should they have been singled out, when all the Pawnees habitually produced all the noise that human lungs could develop? On a still night you could hear the roar of the Pawnee camp miles away across the lonesome plains; and it is little wonder that enemy war parties frequently found the camp at night, slipped into its very center, cut loose the best of the horses, and made their escape. The only guard consisted of little groups of young men, who at night went out from the camp in every direction and lay down on the grass, to talk, to sing war-songs, and to sleep. They were not ordered to do this; it was simply an age-old custom for young men to sleep away from the camp; and as guards they were not particularly useful. If an enemy party approached and was discovered, it was more of an accident than an expected result.

The Pawnee were still on their traditional homelands and I would imagine they thought within themselves that they would always continue to do so. They were lords in their own domain free to come and go as they chose without undue fear or need of permission to conduct the ways of their annual cycles of living; part of the year living in their round house homes in towns along the rivers and part of the year going on the summer and winter hunts. You could say that by western standards these were wealthy people living, per capita, in a large and free space.

As we know now these lifeways were coming to a close and by the end of the 1800s there was a collapse of those Great Plains lifeways and a relocation to Indian country, Oklahoma, to be reestablished on a reservation there. Even then there was more loss and change to come as federal allotment policies came into play, reducing the Pawnee land base to what it is today—fragments of the original reservation lands are held in trust and managed by the BIA with tribal members holding such small shares with so many others (as decendants inherited their parents’ shares) that the land is mostly useless beyond receiving a very small income per shareholder from leases and other land uses by non-Native interests. No one in the tribe lives off the few dollars a year generated by this income. Functionally many of us are landless. As a collective we are no longer lords of any domain. With the loss of the land came the loss of many of the lifeways that so tied us to the land and the natural abundance that was once found there. From the perspective of those oldtime Pawnees in a very real sense the Pawnees of today have gone from lords on the land to landlessness in a foreign land.

This is our story and the story of tribe after tribe in this country.
The loss of land base in readily grasped by the charts here showing the progression of loss from 1492 into the 1700s and to the present. Time has gone by and adjustments to the times have been made but the repercussions of this dramatic loss remains poorly understood and largely unstudied by social science. It is my proposition that a measureable loss like this represents a measure of societal trauma and the historical trauma legacy affecting the Pawnee of today.

The Pawnee land base is reflective of this overall national trend. From the late 1890s the land base in the so called “Indian territory” of Oklahoma continue to drain away. Within the psyche of Pawnee today is the knowledge that there has been a loss that changed everything and for all time, and that the loss was an injustice to the tribe. The question about land loss for a culture so tied to the land is the same question about tribal depopulation: How much loss represents societal trauma?

**Loss of resources on the land**

Another indicator of loss are the resources upon the land that sustained the lifeways of the Pawnee and were part of the Pawnee world view of how the world is and ought to be. As stewards living close to nature in a kinship relationship to the land and animals, destruction of those things would translate to the injury of a world view held by a whole people group. One measure of this loss would be the buffalo. The decimation of the buffalo is held as a tragedy in the psyche of the Pawnee people. The destruction of the buffalo in their native habitat parallels our own story. The buffalo were central to the Pawnee lifeways and to destroy the buffalo was to destroy a way of life at the emotional expense of those living in such close relationship to them.

There is a grief that stirs deep within me when I see a herd of the remaining buffalo. I stop and look at them and know within myself there has been a great tragedy.
The Euro-Americans living on the land today typically see the loss of the native grasslands and the buffalo that once grazed there, and their displacement by new grasses and cattle from Europe as a great success of the advancement of modern progress. The tragedy is invisible and goes unnoticed. But not by all. The soul of the Native Americans take notice from a deep place within. The herds of the 1700s of 60,000,000 million flatlined by 1895 to 1000 remaining animals. By comparison the slight rebound in the census of buffalo in this country is only a continuation of the flat line from their nadir of 1895. Because the landscape of the American Great Plains has been so radically changed there is no possibility of the return of that vast herd. It is forever gone.

The above points (depopulation, loss of land, loss of lifeway resources on the land) are only a sample of what could be a catalogue of measurements of trauma. When the depopulation curve has a steep enough slope there are other losses not explored in this writing: the loss of culture bearers before their time and before the succeeding generation learns the knowledge they carry for the people, the effects of deculturation and forced acculturation, being the objects of social engineering projects such as being forced onto reservations followed by federal policies geared to assimilate a people out of existence, federal policies that involved the taking of children from their cultural settings with the express purpose (in the spirit of social engineering) of irradiating their native culture and transforming them into the dominant culture’s image, and returning them to their communities ill equipped to reintegrate into their former world. Perhaps the greatest tragedy in the historical trauma story of Native Americans is the boarding school era that continued into the 1900s. In the view of many Native Americans the Euro-Americans first came for the land, taking it for themselves, then they came for the culture to displace the Native culture with their own, and last they came for the children—the last being the worst injustice of all.

Final comments

I have used three aspects of societal trauma—death and dying that depopulates a culture, loss of land base, and loss of resources on the land—as three simple factors that are quite measurable and could be used as factors in a whole catalogue of other factors to be used to assess a society for trauma; especially if that society has a history of perpetration of injustices upon other neighboring societies, with injustice itself being a signal that an assessment is needed. Other related factors that aren’t addressed above would be not only what are the measures of societal trauma but what does the “societal trauma response” look like; what are those characteristics in the behaviors of the dominant culture that come from their own former traumas? Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, among others, has studied the effects of historical trauma (something I would consider to be a subset of societal trauma as framed in this writing). She has used the term “historical trauma response” to give us a language to talk about how people are effected by by historical trauma. Societal trauma researchers need to borrow from this concept to define the effects of societal trauma and create a body of behaviors that describe the “societal trauma response” as seen in the behavior of the aggressor society as well as the victimized people group.
Internet search: societal trauma (two reference sources)

http://www.trc10.co.za/docs/NEXTchapter.pdf

From: “Memory, Narrative, and Forgiveness: Reflecting on Ten Years of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Celebrating Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s Life of Peaceful Justice” (2006)
Dr. Vamik Volkan’s keynote address on trauma, mourning, memorials, and forgiveness

Pg 28. Similarly, adults who are drastically traumatized may deposit their traumatized self-images into the developing identities of their children. A Holocaust survivor who appears to be well adjusted may be able to behave “normally” because he has deposited aspects of his traumatized self-images into his children’s developing selves and has given the children “tasks” to deal with these images (Brenner, 1999). His children, then, are ones now responding to the horror of the Holocaust, “freeing” the older victim from his burden.”

Pg 32. Trauma transcends time and space. Dyfunctionally stored. Does not know that time has elapsed. At the societal level... “As the six hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo approached, the remains of Prince Lazar, the Serbian leader captured and killed at the Battle of Kosovo, were exhumed. For a whole year before the atrocities began, the coffin traveled from one Serbian village to another, and at each stop a kind of funeral ceremony took place. This “tour” created a time collapse. Serbs were primed to react as if Lazar had just been killed the day before, rather than six hundred years before.

http://epu.ac.at/fileadmin/downloads/research/Famula.pdf

From: “Healing Societal Traumas and Transforming Collective Consciousness: A Path to a Culture of Healing”
M.A. Thesis
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Pg 66. “Like other TRCs, the GTRC [Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Committee] makes a distinction between retributive justice and transformative justice. Whereas retributive justice seeks to punish or enact revenge on the perpetrator, transformative justice “facilitates exchange of diverse perspectives on why these wrongs occurred and what should be done” (GTRC Final Report, 2006, 309). Instead of simply disciplining the people responsible, it attempts to take a more complete look at the situation to gain a better understanding of the reasons why the event may have” happened and what the effects on the community will be. It does not replace the judicial system, but rather compliments the process, and works towards a fuller, more long-term community healing. Additionally, whereas retributive justice looks at the perpetrators’ crimes and punishes them, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions focus more on the victims, allowing individuals to share their stories, gain clarity about the events, and to hopefully help them to heal. The GTRC is quick, however, to clarify that they are not victim “biased”, the whole purpose of the Commission is to find the whole story without any partiality (GTRC Final Report, 2006, 15).”

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 Pg 73. “We hope that our modest examination of a difficult chapter of Greensboro’s history and how those events shape the community today may serve as a profound and timely reminder of the importance of facing shameful events honestly and acknowledging the brutal consequences of political spin, calculated blindness and passive ignorance...the truth about the past will help us build a better, more just and more inclusive future” (The Final Report, GTRC, 2006, 15).

 Pg 76. A person’s worldview influences the way he views reality, his ideas about human nature, his understanding of the purpose of life and his view of human relationships (Danesh, July 10, 2006). Worldview is developed in several ways without individuals ever acknowledging that it even exists. As has been examined in this paper, this worldview occurs not only in individuals, but in entire societies and can be developed and reinforced by others within the society.

 Pg 80. The EFP program, based on the Integrative Theory of Peace Education developed by Danesh outlines four conditions for successful peace education: development of a unity based worldview; creating a culture of peace; creating a culture of healing; and using Peace Education as the framework for all educational activities (Danesh, 2006, 71). Initially started in schools, the EFP program eventually becomes a part of the entire community – through student/parent interactions, public community events, and school trips to the cities of former “enemies.” Through the curriculum, students and teachers build trust and incorporate the ideals of unity and peace into their every-day conversations and activities.

 Pg 81. EFP’s success in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggests that the concept of a Culture of Healing could effectively be implemented on a larger scale. Additionally, the fact that the program helped to transform the collective consciousness of the participating school communities in BiH suggests that similar work would help to transform the collective consciousness of other traumatized communities.

 Ppg 80-1. While a Culture of Healing may look different depending on the cultures in which it is being introduced, three aspects are common across all cultures: understanding the long lasting, detrimental impact that unhealed societal traumas have on affected populations; acknowledging the previous traumas that may be causing violence and problems; and understanding how collective consciousness is created and sustained, and how trauma affects the collective consciousness. While other methods used for healing, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder have been beneficial in caring for survivors of trauma, without changing the worldview to one that encompasses unity, these methods have not proven sustainable for continued societal healing.

 Pg 85. Tina Rosenberg, a journalist who has written extensively on collective violence, observes that individuals “need to tell their stories to someone who listens seriously and who validates them with official acknowledgement....individuals must be able to reintegrate the narrative of atrocity into their whole life stories...if the whole nation is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, this process would be appropriate for the whole nation” (as cited in Minow, 1998, 326). Although it may not be obvious, “a harmful act implies not only trauma suffered by the victim, but also guilt suffered by the perpetrator” (Galtung, 2003, 28). This lingering guilt is often disguised and may lead the perpetrator to future violence. It is necessary when healing a society to give close attention to not only the individuals affected by the traumatic event, but also to those perpetuating the violence.
Pg 89. A rather startling aspect of researching and writing this paper was the realization that everywhere around the world entire populations are suffering from pain as a result of unhealed traumas.

Pg 90. Several researchers have noted that there is not significant data to fully propose that individual and collective healing are similar enough to apply lessons learned from one, to help the other (Minow, 1998, 327; Avruch and Vejerano, 2001, 41). As one researcher notes, it “is precisely in trying to apply what may be therapeutically effective at the interpersonal level to the collective level that reconciliation often seems to lose clarity and become more ambiguous as an approach to peace building” (Avruch and Vejerano, 2001, 41).