Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School
An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology

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M.A. in Clinical Psychology, May, 2016, University of Missouri-St. Louis
B.A. in Psychology, December, 2013, Kent State University

Examining the Relationship Between Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms and Posttraumatic Growth:
Pathways to Thriving in the Face of Adversity

Date: July 10, 2018
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Place: Center for Trauma Recovery Conference Room

Abstract
Research has largely focused on the negative physical and psychological consequences of trauma exposure. In contrast, posttraumatic growth (PTG) is conceptualized as positive changes in a person's life following a cognitive struggle in the aftermath of trauma. However, PTG research is a relatively nascent line of empirical inquiry and there are several major unanswered questions about the construct and its utility. Part of this is due to conflicting findings related to the relationship between PTG and psychological distress and adaptive significance. The current study sought to clarify the relationship between posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) and PTG in a large convenience sample of trauma-exposed college students (N = 572). Research shows that PTSS and PTG are independently related to ruminative thought processes, religiosity, depression, social support, and physical health functioning. However, little is known about the degree to which these factors influence the relationship between PTSS and PTG. A secondary aim of this study was to examine these processes as potential pathways of influence through which PTG is facilitated or precluded in the aftermath of trauma. Results revealed a positive association between PTSS and PTG across the sample, however subsequent analyses suggested a stronger curvilinear relationship for those identifying as African American and/or female gender. There was no statistically significant association between PTG and measures of physical health functioning. Notably, symptoms of depression served as an inconsistent mediator of the relationship between PTSS and PTG, suggesting depressive symptoms may impede the development of PTG in the aftermath of trauma. Findings indicate some support of the conceptualization of PTG as an adaptive illusion when it concerns physical health domains but suggest a stronger relationship with affective well-being.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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