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 Psychology with an emphasis in Clinical Psychology

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Examining the Gender- and Sexuality-Related Cognitive “Stuck Points” of Men and Women with Experiences of Adult Sexual Assault: Implications for Cognitive Processing Therapy

Date: July 29, 2019
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Place: SSB 132

Abstract
Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is considered a gold-standard psychotherapy protocol for the treatment of posttraumatic stress symptoms secondary to a variety of traumatic events. Despite its demonstrated efficacy, there is research to suggest CPT may not be as effective in reducing PTSD symptoms for men with an adult sexual assault trauma as it is for their female counterparts. The purpose of the present study was to determine whether CPT treatment outcome discrepancies may be attributable to gender differences in posttraumatic cognitions, or “stuck points.” As the act of sexual victimization is incongruent with socially prescribed masculine gender norms, it was hypothesized that men may present with more stuck points related to distortions about their gender or sexuality than women. A total of 39 men and 75 women with adult sexual assault (ASA) experiences completed an online survey assessing their posttraumatic reactions. Participants were asked to complete a modified impact statement assignment from CPT session 1, as well as measures assessing their current PTSD symptoms, depression, anger, and subscription to rape myths and traditional gender norms. Gender comparisons showed that, overall, men’s and women’s experiences of and reactions to ASA were remarkably similar. Men were more likely than women to report stuck points related to questioning their gender or sexual identity following their ASA experience and related to believing that their gender or sexuality was the reason their ASA experience occurred. The presence of these stuck points was associated with high levels of anger but not posttraumatic stress symptoms. As gender and sexuality concerns are not directly addressed by the CPT protocol, recommendations for adaptations to CPT are proposed, along with a discussion of other important considerations in delivering a much-needed effective PTSD treatment protocol to sexually assaulted men.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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