

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 with an emphasis in Clinical-Community Psychology

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M.A. in Psychology, August, 2018, University of Missouri-St. Louis
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Trauma and Alcohol/Substance Use: The Role of Self-regulation Flexibility

Date: April 26, 2022
Time: 2:00p – 4:00p
Place: Remote

Abstract

Despite a high comorbidity rate between trauma/PTSD and problematic alcohol/substance use, there is only a small body of work investigating moderators and mediators in this relationship. Few studies have examined the role of self-regulation, composed of coping and emotion regulation, in the context of PTSD and problematic substance use, with prior work generally measuring self-regulation categorically, with strategies labeled as maladaptive or adaptive and therefore failing to account for the adaptiveness of the strategy in particular contexts. The present study is the only one to date to examine self-regulation flexibility in the relationship between posttraumatic symptoms (PTSS) and problematic alcohol/substance use. The study also examines the role of various trauma characteristics—including total trauma exposure and trauma type—as well as differences in polysubstance use and monosubstance use in the context of PTSS, problematic alcohol/substance use, and self-regulation flexibility. The study involved 359 trauma-exposed participants who completed several self-report measures on trauma exposure, trauma characteristics, PTSS, self-regulation flexibility, and problematic alcohol/substance use. PTSS was related to problematic alcohol and substance use, with greater exposure to trauma and presence of childhood trauma relating to greater PTSS. Results also found that poly-substance users, compared to mono-substance users, experienced a greater number of traumas and PTSS. Higher trauma exposure and presence of childhood trauma were related to lower levels of coping flexibility, although PTSS was not related to coping flexibility. PTSS was unexpectedly related to greater emotion regulation flexibility. Although findings did not support a mediation role of self-regulation flexibility in the relationship between PTSS and problematic alcohol/substance use, the study supports continued development of the self-regulation flexibility construct as well as future studies assessing for a meditational role with different methodology.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

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