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 Education with an emphasis in Counseling

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M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, May 2018, University of Missouri-St. Louis
B.A. in Psychology, May 2015, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Sexual Minority Thriving: Bouncing Beyond Adversity

Date: April 19, 2022
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: Marillac Hall 459

Abstract
Sexual minority individuals continue to face prejudice and discrimination due to their sexual minority identity. However, despite these negative experiences, many sexual minority individuals display resilience and thrive. Most of the literature on sexual minorities focuses on negative aspects of identifying as a sexual minority, rather than the positive qualities that these individuals possess that allow them to persevere. In a sample of 303 sexual minorities, this dissertation contained two studies. Study one investigated if posttraumatic growth mediated the relationship between resilience and thriving and if identity pride and existential anxiety moderated the relationship between resilience and thriving in a sample of sexual minorities. Results revealed that greater resilience predicted greater posttraumatic growth which in turn predicted greater thriving. However, the moderating effects of identity pride and existential anxiety on the relationship between resilience and posttraumatic growth were not supported. Study two utilized cluster analysis to identify patterns of scores in posttraumatic growth and quality of life. One-way ANOVAs were utilized to examine differences in scores among group members in levels of social support, existential anxiety, and identity pride. Results revealed that individuals in the thriving group (high posttraumatic growth and high quality of life) displayed significantly greater scores on social support and identity pride than the survival with impairment group (low posttraumatic growth and low quality of life). Individuals in the thriving group also displayed significantly lower scores on existential anxiety and distress from heterosexist discrimination than those in the survival with impairment group. Limitations and implications for clinical work and future research on sexual minority resilience and thriving are discussed.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Susan Kashubeck-West, Ph.D. (Chairperson, Advisor)
Matthew Taylor, Ph.D. (Faculty Member)
So Rin Kim, Ph.D. (Faculty Member)
Mary Lee Nelson, Ph.D. (Faculty Member)