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-Community Psychology

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Self-Compassion and Experiential Avoidance:
Potential Pathways to Posttraumatic Growth

Date: March 15, 2023
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Place: Remote

Abstract
Social support has been identified as one of the most consistent predictors of posttraumatic growth (PTG). Although the role of social support in the process of PTG is informative, social support is intrinsically reliant on other people. Identifying internal, potentially malleable, factors that are associated with PTG is essential for developing preventative interventions to improve trauma-related outcomes and increase levels of PTG among trauma survivors. Internal processes such as self-compassion and experiential avoidance may promote, or interfere with, deliberate processing and the subsequent development of PTG; however, this has not yet been examined in the literature. Thus, the primary aims of the current study were to: 1) examine the associations between PTG, social support, self-compassion, and experiential avoidance; 2) investigate if self-compassion has an indirect effect on the link between social support and PTG; 3) evaluate whether self-compassion or experiential avoidance moderate the relationship between social support and PTG. The sample included 398 trauma-exposed adults (Mage = 30.56, SD = 10.64; 67.6% female; 68.6% white). PTG was positively correlated with social support, self-compassion, and experiential avoidance (rs = .12-.16). Mediation results revealed an indirect effect for social support and PTG via self-compassion (B = .08) and experiential avoidance was found to moderate the relationship between social support and PTG (B = .01). These findings indicate that both self-compassion and experiential avoidance may be key internal factors relevant in understanding individuals' propensity for growth in the aftermath of trauma.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Rachel Wamser-Nanney, Ph.D., Committee Chairperson
Ann Steffen, Ph.D., Committee Member
Emily Gerstein, Ph.D., Committee Member
Annah Bender Ph.D., Committee Member