Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0010-440X(17)30237-7
DOI: doi: 10.1016/j.comppsych.2017.10.009
Reference: YCOMP 51911

To appear in: Comprehensive Psychiatry

Please cite this article as: Mazor Yael, Gelkopf Marc, Roe David, Posttraumatic growth among people with serious mental illness, psychosis and posttraumatic stress symptoms, Comprehensive Psychiatry (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.comppsych.2017.10.009

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Posttraumatic growth among people with serious mental illness, psychosis and posttraumatic stress symptoms

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Recent research has shown high rates of exposure to trauma among people with serious mental illness (SMI). In addition, studies suggest that psychosis and mental illness-related experiences can be extremely traumatic. While some individuals develop posttraumatic symptomatology related to these experiences, some appear to experience posttraumatic growth (PTG). Little is known, however, about PTG as a possible outcome among people who experienced psychosis as well as posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS). For further understanding of the relationship between PTSS and PTG among people with SMI who experienced psychosis, 121 participants were recruited from community mental health rehabilitation centers and administered trauma and psychiatric questionnaires. Results revealed that while high levels of traumatic exposure were common, most participants experienced some level of PTG which was contingent upon meaning making and coping self-efficacy. In addition, posttraumatic avoidance symptoms were found to be a major obstacle to PTG. The range of effect sizes for significant results ranged from $\eta^2 = .037$ to $\eta^2 = .144$. These findings provide preliminary evidence for the potential role of meaning making and coping self-efficacy as mediators of PTG in clinical, highly traumatized populations of people with SMI and psychosis. Implications of these findings for future research and clinical practice are discussed.

Key Words: Posttraumatic growth; Psychosis; Posttraumatic symptoms; Meaning; Coping

1. Introduction

The notion of growth after trauma is not new, and has been recognized in the fields of religion, philosophy, and literature for decades (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Since the 1970s, numerous models of positive change (i.e., growth) following trauma in general have been developed and researched; namely, stress-related growth, perceived benefits, thriving, positive adjustment, and meaning making (Fraizer et al., 2001; Linley

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