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Coping-Mediated Differences in Posttraumatic Growth

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COPING-MEDIATED DIFFERENCES IN POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Psychology

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This study intended to identify potential underlying mechanisms of posttraumatic growth, or positive outcomes resulting from recovery and growth in the aftermath of a traumatic experience. Primarily of interest were relations between posttraumatic growth and coping strategies, and negative social support. Undergraduate female psychology students at a university in western Pennsylvania with a history of trauma exposure completed several questionnaires regarding trauma exposure and emotional reactions, coping strategies, others' reactions to their experience, and basic demographic information. Data were analyzed to evaluate the measurement model and the structural model in order to test the fit of hypothesized relations between latent and manifest variables. Analyses indicated that substance use, denial, and avoidant coping did not contribute to the coping variable in the model in the expected manner that was indicated by the literature. Coping strategies, such as the use of emotional support, seeking social support, acceptance, religion, confrontation coping, positive reframing, and positive reappraisal, covaried with posttraumatic growth and with negative social support. Negative social support, including distancing, bumbling, blaming, and minimizing, also covaried with posttraumatic growth, although this relationship did not significantly contribute to the model. The best-fitting model in this study included the three latent variables of coping, negative social support, and posttraumatic growth, although the overall fit of the model was fair. Possible explanations of these findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.