Complex Trauma and Posttraumatic Growth: A Bibliometric Analysis of Research Output Over Time

Sophie Ballinger, BPsych (Hons)

Submitted as partial of requirement for the degree of Master of Clinical Psychology, School of Psychology, The University of Newcastle, Australia

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the Copyright Act 1968.

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Sophie Ballinger

Date: 14th November, 2019

Acknowledgements of Collaborations

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has been done in collaboration with other researchers. I have included as part of this thesis a statement, endorsed by my supervisor, clearly outlining the extent of collaboration, with who, and under what auspices.

Associate Professor Lynne McCormack designed this study. I, Sophie Ballinger, was primarily responsible for data extraction and the writing of the thesis. Together, my supervisor and I screened all publications extracted for inclusion using the title, abstract, and where necessary, full text. Data were extracted from included publications according to the data classifications. To provide a measure of quality control, a third independent researcher, Linda Swaab (PhD student), screened those publications that had not met consensus between the first two researchers. Ms Debbie Booth (Senior Research Librarian) contributed to the formulation of the methodology. Mrs Megan Valentine (Statistical Consultant) contributed to the statistical analysis.

Student Name: Sophie Ballinger	Supervisor Name: A.Prof. Lynne McCormack
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Journal: Trauma, Violence & Abuse

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A.Prof. Lynne McCormack (University of Newcastle, Australia)

Sophie Ballinger, BPsych (Hons) (University of Newcastle, Australia)

Corresponding Author: A.Prof. Lynne McCormack

Behavioural Sciences Building

University of Newcastle

University Drive, Callaghan,

NSW, Australia, 2308

+612 4985 4543

Lynne.Mccormack@newcastle.edu.au

Abstract

Introduction: The interpersonal nature of complex traumatic events can negatively impact the long-term psychological wellbeing of an individual. However, reconceptualisation through deliberate rumination following complex trauma provides the opportunity for posttraumatic growth. Research in this area has increased in recent years. The aim of this study was to assess the volume and characteristics of research output over time in the fields of complex trauma and posttraumatic growth.

Method: A descriptive repeat cross-sectional study of publications from PsycINFO, MEDLINE, EMBASE, and Psychology and Behavioural Sciences was used across the time periods 1995-1998, 2005-2008, and 2015-2018. Authors jointly assessed article relevance for inclusion. Classifications used for each study were: data-based, country of research institution, country of participants, type of trauma experienced, and trauma terminology.

Results: One-hundred and forty-one articles met criteria for review. The output of publications concerning complex trauma and posttraumatic growth has increased over time with a high proportion of studies conducted by researchers in the United States of America with a focus on war veterans. Relative to descriptive studies, there are very few intervention studies.

Conclusion and Implications: A growing interest in the conceptualisation of posttraumatic growth in the aftermath of complex trauma, was demonstrated. Currently, this field of the literature is dominated by research outcomes from the USA concerning war veterans. Further cross-cultural and types of complex trauma research is needed, and interventional studies would be important for informing therapy.

Key words*: Complex trauma; posttraumatic growth; bibliometric study; cross cultural; interventional studies.*