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SVT: Survive VS Thrive: Through Trauma Growth Theory

You may need to survive for a season; ultimately, you are designed to thrive for a reason

As I have focused on developing the specifics of my gero-niche, factors such as social determinants of health, lived experiences, and traumatic experiences will be centered in my work. This is necessary because these factors, over the span of a lifetime, can hugely influence later years and the condition in which one experiences elderhood. For the purposes of my theory, I determined trauma experience would ground its creation due to the long-term effects of unaddressed trauma I have encountered with clients in my work, from social work to guardianship.

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a theory that explains transformation following trauma. It was developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi, PhD, and Lawrence Calhoun, PhD, in the mid-1990s, and holds that people who endure psychological struggle following adversity can often see positive growth afterward (Collier). The components of this theory echo what I am developing, with the exception that my theory will also involve the influence of the additional two factors I listed in the first paragraph. Tedeschi contends that the groundwork to experience PTG can actually be taught prior to experiencing trauma. My theory contends there are factors already present in an individual and because of this, the person actually "thrives" through the adversity, based on the pre-existing conditions/factors I will later share.

The theory is named **SVT (Survive VS Thrive): Through Trauma Growth Theory (note the emphasis on through)**. My theory is based on the supposition that traumatic experience can conversely serve as a motivator and protector for people throughout their lifespan (Overstreet et al), for those who meet the below listed criteria; manifestation of this theory is demonstrated during critical crossroads moments/situations. My theory is another spoke in the adult development theory wheel, with its existence supported by theories we have studied this semester in addition to Tedeschi's PTG theory. Because trauma has a continuum of manifestation, it is critical to consider its presence and impact when examining human growth and development.

Five Components of SVT: Through Trauma Growth Theory

1. Strong sense of self-worth
2. Curiosity/questioning
3. Willingness to take risks

4. Intentionality
5. Belief in ideal/idea larger than own purpose

To further explain the significance of each theory component and how it manifests:

1. **First component is formed in early years;** However, this component can expand/deepen or decrease/move toward superficiality depending on individual choices (theories to support this include Baltes and Erikson)
2. **Second through fourth components** Emerge through lifespan at high trauma/stress times (theories to support this include Possible Selves)
3. **Fifth component** Is the underlying bedrock of an individual's foundation; although this component has been present throughout the lifespan, the full impact of this component does not reveal until later life, 60+ (i.e. past childbearing years, health concerns, changes due to aging, etc.). (Tornstam)

SVT theory will also be identified through use of the lotus blossom to assist in supporting its definition, as the lotus is a flower that grows through mud, with the mud necessary to the flower's resilience and holistic beauty. On close examination, the surface flower's roots have pushed through mud, thick debris, in water, and other challenges to break through to the surface, with its unique beauty intensified by its journey.

I intend to further strengthen and deepen my theory through further research and review, as I believe there is a need for theories that include the factors I have shared, which will expand equity and inclusion in this area, ensuring authenticity and relevance of human development as it pertains to real life factors.

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