Because the survey asked for five most personally important changes, results demonstrated that experiencing growth on personally important changes is a key predictor of self-esteem. The 21 items on the PTGI may not all be indicative of growth for every individual. Future research should look at the individual importance of PTG, instead of assuming that all items on the PTGI are equally indicative of growth for everyone. Future research should also assess how the meaning of growth may change developmentally.

Table 2 
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Self-Esteem 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Adjusted R 2</th>
<th>dp</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Adjusted R 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.98**</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.844**</td>
<td>.07**</td>
<td>.07**</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>.28*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total PTGI</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>6.56**</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.96**</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>2.44*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>6.50**</td>
<td>.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total PTGI</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PI PTGI = Personally Important Posttraumatic Growth score; * p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

The final model includes personally important PTG and significantly improved the previous model R 2 = .11, adjusted R 2 = .07, F (1,155) = 5.95, p < .05. Not only did the final model significantly improve on the previous but also after entering personally important PTG into the model, total PTGI score no longer makes a significant contribution to the final model in predicting self-esteem.

Discussion

The 21 items on the PTGI may not all be indicative of growth for every person and assessing growth on items that are actually experienced may be of use in research and clinical settings.

• Experiencing growth in ways that mean significantly can predict an adolescent’s self-esteem more than commonly defined PTG.

This result provides researchers with evidence demonstrating why it may be important to assess not only total growth but growth that is meaningful to individuals.

• The results demonstrate that experiencing growth on personally important items (i.e. discovered that I am stronger than I thought, greater appreciation for value of my own life and changed priorities about what is important) is a greater predictor of high self-esteem than total growth reported on the PTGI and gender.

• Experiencing growth in ways that mean may be valuable more than reporting a higher overall score on the PTGI.

Future Directions

• Research should look at importance of psychological changes at a more individual basis, rather than assuming all changes listed on the PTGI are equally indicative of growth for every participant.

• A person may obtain a lower score on the PTGI overall but report higher growth on the items that are important to them, and that should be assessed and valued in research and clinical settings that utilize PTG.

• Future studies should also assess how the meaning of personal growth might developmentally vary.

• Limitations: Method of determining item importance.

• Because the survey asked for five most personally important, it does not mean the other 16 items are not important.

• Self-Esteem-Reporting items most experienced as most important.

References


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Abstract

Recent research on posttraumatic growth (PTG), positive psychological changes after trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) revealed adolescents also report growth after experiencing stress-related events (Clay et al., 2009). Research found a positive relationship between PTG and self-esteem; however, the correlations are relatively weak. We hypothesized this may be because studies in general assume all positive changes assessed by the inventories are equally indicative of growth. Some changes on the inventories may be more personally important. It was hypothesized adolescents who experienced PTG in the areas that were important to them would show a higher level of PTG and self-esteem. The current study aimed to determine how the addition of personally important PTG could improve the commonly defined PTG as a predictor.

This study involves 196 high school students with the mean age of 15.75 (SD=0.15). Participants were given a paper and pencil survey, asked to disclose a stressful life event they experienced within five years, fill out the PTGI and asked to choose five out of the 21 positive changes they perceived as most important to themselves and complete the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. A hierarchical regression was conducted with gender, total PTGI score, and personally important growth to test the hypothesis. The final model includes personally important PTG and significantly improved the model, R 2 = .11, adjusted R 2 = .07, F (1,155) = 5.95, p < .05. This final model gender (β = .23, p < .01) and personally important PTGI (β = .24, p < .05) affected self-esteem. The current findings demonstrated experiencing growth on personally important changes is a key predictor of self-esteem, and more so than the commonly defined total PTG score or gender. In other words, PTG does play a significant role in self-esteem among adolescents, but especially the growth that is personally important for them. Future research should look at the individual importance of PTG, instead of assuming that all items on the PTGI are equally indicative of growth for everyone. Future research should also assess how the meaning of growth may change developmentally.