

Abstracts

of the 2021 Middle Tennessee Psychological Association Conference

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#MTPA2021

2021 MTPA CONFERENCE

A virtual event hosted by
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee
Saturday April 24, 2021

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

10:00 am-11:00 am
Gary Fisk, Ph.D., Georgia
Southwestern State University
Department of Psychology

**Getting More Power Out of
PowerPoint Presentations: An
Evidence-Based Approach**

POSTER SESSIONS

9:00 am-9:45 am
Poster session I
12:30 pm-1:15 pm
Poster session II

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

11:15 am-12:15 pm
Session I

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2021 MTPA CONFERENCE

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POSTER SESSION I

9:00 am-9:45 am

1001

Examining the Impact of Past Educational Experiences on Current Reading Ability and Psychological Functioning.

Lauren Hunsicker (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*

Dr. Emily Farris (she/her; faculty advisor) and Dr. Timothy Odegard (he/him; faculty advisor)

Many college students experience difficulties that may hinder their academic performance, and a large proportion of students who matriculate into university settings do not complete their degrees. One reason for these findings is that students who enter university settings may not be sufficiently prepared to interact with the advanced materials required by their courses. While substantial research shows that childhood reading problems, such as dyslexia, often persist into adulthood, few studies have addressed the impact of past educational experiences on adult reading performance. Reading ability occurs along a continuum and is influenced by multiple factors (Pennington et al., 2012). Individuals with reading difficulties may be more likely than their peers to experience ongoing socio-emotional consequences, such as depression and anxiety, that can exacerbate reading struggles (Livingston et al., 2018). Both reading and emotional difficulties may begin in childhood and persist into adulthood (Aro et al., 2019). Yet, these individuals may also demonstrate resilience with strengths in linguistic and/or emotional factors (e.g., Haft et al., 2016). The current study examines the relationship between past

educational opportunities, current reading skill, and psychological well-being in a sample of MTSU students who will likely vary in their performance across tasks. It is hypothesized that former educational experiences will impact both current reading skill and psychological functioning. It is anticipated that students with a history of reading difficulty will exhibit continued areas of weaknesses and poorer well-being. Data collection is ongoing. In a virtual meeting, participants complete a reading and spelling battery, an interview about prior educational opportunities, and a self-report survey about socio-emotional functioning. If past educational opportunities are found to mediate the persistence of reading difficulties, it will help to understand how educators can best support students to encourage their successful graduation.

1002

Attitudes Towards Developmentally Appropriate Classroom Practices Among Kindergarten Teachers in Tennessee.

Paige Johnson (she/her), Dr. Monica Wallace (she/her), and Dr. James Rust (he/him), *Middle Tennessee State University*

Dr. Monica Wallace (she/her; faculty advisor)

The purpose of this study was to investigate the opinions of kindergarten teachers about developmentally appropriate practices and their effects on students externalizing behaviors. It was expected that these teachers would hold positive associations of developmentally appropriate practices paired with negative associations of current academic standards. The kindergarten

teachers participated by completing a survey, attending one individual interview, and one group discussion. Results indicate that the participants do not hold negative associations of current academic standards and believe that developmentally appropriate practice does mitigate some externalizing behaviors in students. Lastly, this study found that teachers believed that student's externalizing problem behaviors were not linked directly to academic standards, but rather to internal traits related to each individual student.

1003

Emotional Intelligence and Color

Perception. Britney Mounratry (she/her), Hailey Adams (she/her), and Beth Henson (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*

Dr. Thomas Brinthaup (he/him; faculty advisor)

We're looking at how emotional intelligence affects one's perception of color. If people who are more emotionally intelligent are more sensitive to the world around them, then it should be possible that this would cause them to be more sensitive to colors as well. Furthermore, we believe gender plays a role in emotional intelligence, and we are comparing men and women's emotional intelligence to their ability to see color variations.

1004

Exploring the Potential Benefits of an Intergenerational Dialogue Intervention on Character Development.

Zachary T. Swanson (he/him), Khushi Dhruv (she/her), Angela Kruck (she/her), Luke Wiley (he/him), and Dr. Jill Shelton (she/her), *The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga*

Dr. Jill Shelton (she/her; faculty advisor)

Problem: Aging stigma has detrimental effects on the health and well-being of older populations and has been related to a decreased sense of belonging and social motivation (Rahn et al., 2020). Active Aging allows for the reduction of the negative effects of aging stigma while allowing older adults to be reintegrated into society (Kruse & Schmitt, 2012). Kruse & Schmitt (2012) encourage generativity to guide the next generation as a way to improve intergenerational solidarity and equity (Erikson, 1980). The purpose of the proposed research is to investigate the process of active aging as it pertains to generative relationship with younger generations. Older adults tend to have additional insights, knowledge, and experiences that younger adults do not yet have. These insights from older generations could assist younger adults in navigating their future. Previous intergenerational dialogue interventions have been used to transfer sensitive cultural knowledge from elders to younger generations, as well as reducing racial and ageist biases (Fletcher, 2007; Ohsako, 2002; Wexler, 2011). The current study proposes that intergenerational dialogue will lead to intergenerational character development by bringing older and younger generations together. **Method:** The researchers propose two stages for the current research project. First, the researchers will administer a survey to the general population to determine the differences among age groups on prosocial behavior, generativity, goal setting and completion, social identity, moral attitudes, meaning in life, and psychological well-being. We will collect responses using convenience

sampling methods through community outreach partners. In the second stage, researchers will recruit participants for dialogue sessions where they will discuss a range of topics including, perceived meaning, decision making and values. The goal of this stage is to determine if intergenerational dialogue can decrease age stigma and produce desirable character developments for each person. The intended measures include: the Ambivalent Ageism Scale (Cary et al., 2016), Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006), The Prosocial Behavior Intentions Scale (Baumsteiger & Siegel, 2018), the Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale (Aquino & Reed, 2002), PERMA-Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016), subscales of the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) the WHO-5 Well-being Index (Topp et al., 2015) and a series of items gauging participants daily goals, prosocial behaviors, and interest in engaging in intergenerational dialogue. Conclusion: The proposed study is serving as a pilot study to investigate the potential benefit of intergenerational dialogue on prosocial behavior and character development. This pilot research will be the foundation for a research grant being proposed this fall. The findings of this study will illuminate the character differences across generations, and will evidence the effects of intergenerational dialogue on character development.

1005

Determining the Role of Mesolimbic Dopamine Activity in Social Motivation in Mice.

Isabela Ramos (she/her) and Dr. Tiffany Rogers (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. Tiffany Rogers (she/her; faculty

advisor)

Although previous research has emphasized dopamine's role in the motivation for reward and addictive substances, very little is known about the role of dopamine in motivation for social behavior. The researchers of the current study hypothesize that dopamine will moderate social behavior by promoting both prosocial and negative interaction. Testing arenas will measure anxiety, social motivation and aggression using experimental and stimulus groups of mice. To bypass the blood brain barrier, dopaminergic drugs will be administered through intracerebral cannulas directed at the nucleus accumbens. Dopamine hydrochloride will be administered to increase dopamine activity, while SCH23390 and raclopride will be administered to inhibit dopamine activity. A control group will receive phosphate-buffered saline. Behaviors will be video recorded and analyzed using a combination of software and hand coding.

1006

The Stress Experience of the Black Children and Youth in Summer 2020: Youth, Illness, and Racism in 2020.

Marlon A Majors-Ricks (he/they),
Middle Tennessee State University
Dr. Tiffany Rogers (she/her; faculty advisor)

The proposed study is important and relevant because it brings up the conversation of African American mental health, specifically the mental health of African American children and adolescents. Expected results include increased anxiety levels as a direct result of both BLM and COVID-19, regardless if they had anxiety prior to 2020.

Though the study is examining anxiety levels of children, the participants answering the survey questions will be their parents. Recruitment would be through online surveys, that would be promoted in African American dominated communities. The study will use parental perceptions to mark changes in anxiety levels before and after the summer of 2020. To be more specific, there will be separate questions for BLM and COVID-19, and a question in the survey asking if their child had an anxiety disorder beforehand. Hopefully, the study can start a movement to increase accessibility and funding towards therapy for African American children. Citing the summer of 2020, and likely the summer of 2021, as recent and traumatizing stressors may increase the urgency for such programs to be installed.

1007

Political Activity vs. Political Expression. Jay Cross (he/him) and Sandra Medina (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. Thomas Brinthaup (he/him; faculty advisor)

This study is to investigate whether sharing political views online is related to how politically active a person is. We sent a survey to college students and others on social media. The participants answered what political activities they've done in the past year, and what political topics they've posted about. We found that the participants were more active than expected, but posted on social issues less often than expected.

1008

Black Women in Interracial Romantic Relationships: The Relationship between Gendered Racial Microaggressions and Relationship Satisfaction. Audrey Tesi (she/her), *Lipscomb University*
Dr. Chris Gonzalez (he/him; faculty advisor)

This study will explore the correlation between gendered racial microaggressions and relationship satisfaction among Black women involved in interracial relationships with White men. Few studies have studied the experiences of Black women in interracial relationships (Chito Childs, 2005). This is an example of how race and gender of Black women puts them at a disadvantage (Collins, 2004). When studying racism and sexism through an intersectional lens (Collins 1986; hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2006; Lewis et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2008), it shows how Black women experience psychological distress and different forms of oppression. For example, Lewis et al. (2016) created a concept called gendered racial microaggressions, which are daily, covert verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights based on the intersection of one's race and gender (Lewis et al., 2016). There is limited literature, however, that explores the extent to which the intersection of race and gender affects Black women's lives. This study sought to explore how gendered racial microaggressions affect Black women involved in interracial romantic relationships with white men and how those experiences impact relationship satisfaction. It contextualized relationship satisfaction among Black women by using the gendered racial microaggressions

concept to understand their experiences. A literature review of Black and White identity, romantic relationships, gender and racial microaggressions, gendered racial microaggressions, intersectionality theory, and interracial relationships is provided followed by a discussion regarding gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women in interracial romantic relationships with white men and relationship satisfaction. A total of four Black women participated in a one-time focus group interview in which their relationships and gendered racial microaggressions were discussed. Results from a thematic analysis revealed that while the participants did not experience gendered racial microaggressions within their relationship, they experienced them, and other stereotypes, outside of the relationship. In fact, four major themes among their partners were identified: Knowledge of Black History and Lives, the Desire to Learn More, Cultural Humility, and Compassion. These characteristics may allow their partners

to engage in a relationship with a Black woman. They may also explain why the participants do not experience gendered racial microaggressions in their relationships. Implications for mental health professionals and future research are discussed.

1009

Correlation between Introversion and Anxiety/Depression. Diana Castro (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. William Langston (he/him; faculty advisor)

Extraversion and neuroticism are been statistically proven to be independent of each other when concerning the Big Five, but do they interact together to develop mental disorders such as anxiety and depression? Does the simple fact of preferring to be alone lead to depressive states and higher anxiety? Since mental disorders are related to extremes of the Big Five traits, do interaction effects and comorbidities exist between the big five personality traits and mental illnesses?

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

10:00 am-11:00 am

Getting More Power Out of PowerPoint Presentations: An Evidence-Based Approach

SPOKEN PAPERS**11:15 am-12:15 pm****(11:15)**

Lay Perceptions of Treating Mental Illness with Psychedelic Assisted Therapy. Dejah Barksdale (she/her) and Dr. Emily Pica (she/her), *Austin Peay State University*
Dr. Emily Pica (she/her; faculty advisor)

With roughly 44.7 million individuals struggling with mental health problems, it is important that new methods of treatment are explored. Currently, the primary method of treatment is Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) for disorders such as: anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but they also provide many detrimental side effects and only decrease symptomology for a short period of time. However, the interest and enthusiasm of many researchers has led to uncovering the true benefits of utilizing psychedelic drugs as a leading treatment for mental health problems. Participants (N = 474) were given a questionnaire regarding their knowledge of mental illnesses (anxiety, depression, and PTSD), traditional treatment (SSRIs), perception, potential usage, and recommendations towards psychedelic drugs being used as treatment for mental illnesses. A correlation analysis revealed that participants were not being open to their personal usage of psychedelics, but being more open to recommend to their loved ones. Thus, these results suggest that while society may be open to others engaging in psychedelic-assisted therapy, there is still some hesitation for self-use.

(11:25)

Perceived Effects of Prescription Medication, Cannabis, Psychedelics,

and Meditation on Individuals with Depression, Anxiety, and ADHD.

Payton Downey (she/her) and Dr. Emily Pica (she/her), *Austin Peay State University*

Dr. Emily Pica (she/her; faculty advisor)

The current study examined the use of prescription medication compared to new-wave treatments including cannabis, psychedelics, and meditation for the treatment of depression, anxiety, and ADHD. Participants (N = 1,360) answered questions concerning their personal mental health and treatment history; moreover, scales measuring depression, anxiety, ADHD severity, and subjective happiness were examined. The use of prescription medication was associated with lower depression and ADHD severity, and increased happiness; frequency of use was not significantly associated with any of the variables. The overall use of psychedelics was associated with higher depression, anxiety, and ADHD severity, and lower happiness scores; higher frequency of use was only associated with decreased anxiety severity. Overall use of meditation was associated with higher depression, anxiety, and ADHD severity, and lower happiness. Conversely, higher frequency of use was associated with lower depression, anxiety, and ADHD severity, and higher perceived happiness. Cannabis was not significantly associated with any of the variables for both analyses which may be a reflection of the variability seen within prior research and a product of confounding factors not examined in the current study. Overall, the current study suggests that individuals with higher symptom severity are more likely to

participate in new-wave treatment methods to help alleviate symptoms from depression, anxiety, and ADHD. Further experimental research on new-wave treatments and potential confounding factors is imperative to help aid in the understanding of the benefits (or lack thereof) of these new-wave treatment methods.

(11:35)

Personality and Writing Style. Cindi Brown (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. William Langston (he/him; faculty advisor)

Prior research has found several intriguing relationships between personality and writing style, (Hirsch & Peterson, 2009), but most studies of this type have focused on the Five Factor Model, which dominates academic discourse on personality (Young and Schinka, 2001). The current study examines relationships between the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which is popularly used in business settings (CPP, nd), and writing style. Writing samples obtained from online forum posts on the Personality Café website by 8675 individuals with previously determined MBTI types will be examined. Emotional tone, authenticity, analytic thinking, and clout scores for each writing sample will be generated using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC, Pennebaker et al., 2015), a text analysis software program that “reads” writing samples and counts words reflecting different emotional and thought patterns. Correlations between these variables and the MBTI suggest the potential for utilizing LIWC to determine personality factors from writing samples. Determining personality traits through analysis of

writing samples may have broad-ranging applications, particularly for employers.

(11:45)

Battle of the Sexes: Similarities and Differences in Lay People’s Perceptions of Male and Female Sex Offenders. Felix Osagie (he/him) and Dr. Emily Pica (she/her), *Austin Peay State University*

Dr. Emily Pica (she/her; faculty advisor)

The aim of this research was to compare and contrast public perceptions and opinions about male and female sex offenders. This topic is important as it addresses gender disparities that not only exist in the criminal justice system but society as well. Participants (N=226) spent about 10-15 minutes completing the revised Attitudes Towards Sex Offenders Scale (ATS; Harper & Hogue, 2015) and a questionnaire about female sex offenders using the web-based software Qualtrics to gather the data. Findings indicated there was no significance in opinions about either gender regarding sexual offenders; however, when focusing on parents’ attitudes, significance was discovered as they perceived male sex offenders as worse than female sex offenders. The importance of this study is bringing awareness to gender bias regarding male and female sex offenders. Implications of this study are changes in social behaviors that affect our perceptions of sex offenders such as education about sexual abuse or laws about sex crimes and offenders. Keywords: male sex offender, female sex offender, lay people, perceptions, disparity, gender roles.

(11:55)

Public Perception of Non-Violent

Criminals. Bri'Aisha Robertson (she/her) and Marcea Herron (he/him), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. Thomas Brinthaup (he/him; faculty advisor)

To see if people's perceptions of non-

violent criminal offenders have a correlation with their ability to contribute for society. We examined people's perceptions of the different kinds of situations and job contexts where non-violent offenders who have served their time are thought to be appropriate or not.

POSTER SESSION II

12:30 pm-1:15 pm

2001

The Role of Personality and Experience in Vaccine Hesitancy.

Kristopher Plattsmier (he/him), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. William Langston (he/him; faculty advisor)

The development of vaccinations is often cited as one of the most important achievements of public health. In recent years, however, the rate of vaccination has decreased in many regions of the world. One of the primary reasons for the decline in vaccinations is an increase in the tendency of individuals to be resistant to vaccines, or vaccine hesitant. The current research is an exploratory analysis of the role of vaccine experiences and personality in vaccine hesitancy.

2002

COVID-19 Vaccine Attitudes Among Young Black People.

Halley Robinson (she/her), Victoria Jones (she/her), and Virginia Holmes (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. Thomas Brinthaup (he/him; faculty advisor)

We are studying the change of attitudes on receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine

among young black people and whether or not there is a change in attitudes when being exposed to information about the Tuskegee experiment.

2003

TERF Beliefs and Personality Traits.

Daniel Moore (he/him), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. William Langston (he/him; faculty advisor)

This poster covers a proposed research project that looks to determine the common belief systems and personality traits of the group known as TERFs or trans-exclusionary radical feminists.

2004

Domestic Pets and Mental Health.

Maria Makary (she/her) and Merna Baskhron (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*
Dr. Thomas Brinthaup (he/him; faculty advisor)

We are conducting our study to examine the correlational relationship between living with a pet and the reduction of anxiety, stress, and maintaining overall mental and physical stability. We are expecting to observe higher scores of mental stability in pet owners (living

with a pet). Our measuring tool for this study is an anonymous survey provided to college students. A T-test statistic measure indicated no significant difference between pet owners and none pet owners, however, there was evidence of a positive correlation between living with a domestic pet and an improvement on mental health.

2005

Gender Differences in Self-Talk.

Destiny Hutcherson (she/her), Cyndi Torres (she/her), and Maryrose Uwimana (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*

Dr. Thomas Brinthaup (he/him; faculty advisor)

The purpose of this study is to look at gender differences in self-talk. Although very little research has been done in this area, what has been done indicates there is not a significant difference between women and men in self-talk. However, there does seem to be gender differences in other areas, such as anxiety, depression, self-esteem, optimism, self-enhancement, self-derogation, social influence, perfectionism, body image and eating disorders. Our goal is to try and understand if these areas where gender differences statistically do exist is reflected in men and women's self-talk, and if so, in what ways.

2006

Inhibitory and Excitatory Expression in Axo-somatic Synapses.

Diamond Law (she/her) and Dr. Lisa de la Mothe (she/her), *Tennessee State University*
Dr. Lisa de la Mothe (she/her; faculty advisor)

Establishing a foundation of the types of connections and synapses in the auditory system is essential for developing a

model of primate communication. Within cortical systems GABA is distributed broadly and is the major inhibitory neurotransmitter, while glutamate is the major excitatory neurotransmitter (Chaudry et al., 1998, Hackett and de la Mothe, 2009). While knowing the overall expression of both of these markers can help identify overall patterns, of particular interest are axo-somatic synapses, which due to their proximity to the axon hillock have more influence over the integration and potential firing of the neuron. In this study samples from area A1 (a primary area) of the macaque auditory cortex were examined to determine axo-somatic locations for excitatory (glutamate) and inhibitory (GABA) markers. Multi-fluorescent immunohistochemistry (IHC) was performed in order to visualize neurons in the sample (using NeuN) in blue, excitatory axon terminals (using vesicular glutamate transporter 2 (vGluT2)) in red, and inhibitory axon terminals (using vesicular GABAergic transporter (VGAT)) in green. Analysis of the X-Y location of axo-somatic synapses was plotted using adobe illustrator across cortical layers with samples from supragranular (layer II), granular (layer IIIb/IV) and infragranular (layer V) layers examined. Axo-somatic synapses were found to largely be VGAT positive indicating a strong inhibitory influence in primary auditory cortex requiring large excitation to overcome the inhibition in order for neurons to fire.

2007

The Relationship Between COVID-19 and Anxiety.

Molly Pevahouse (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University*

Dr. William Langston (he/him; faculty advisor)

The question of whether or not and to what extent COVID-19 is playing a role in our individual anxiety levels has been broadly debated in the healthcare field, with researchers such as Shilpa Gaidhane, The World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, all arguing that COVID-19 seems to be associated with anxiety levels. However, the works that have been published have yet to identify to what degree each aspect of the pandemic is causing greater levels of anxiety in individuals: obtaining new information about and discussing the virus, obsessive thoughts of the virus, or the need of reassurance. My presentation addresses the issues of how COVID-19 is affecting anxiety levels with specific attention to each individual aspect broken down and, at this point in time, as the vaccine is being offered rather than earlier on in the pandemic. Particularly, in my research, I propose to look at how COVID-19 is influencing anxiety levels on a 5-point scale created by Sherman A. Lee. I will first discuss the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale (CAS); secondly, the Obsession with COVID-19 Scale (OCS); and last, the Coronavirus Reassurance Seeking Behavior Scale (CRBS). I believe that the results will show that the anxiety levels will not exist as shockingly high as they did in earlier published research early on in the pandemic and that the CAS will show higher results when connecting to anxiety levels as compared to the OCS and the CRBS. This project would elucidate what aspects of the pandemic are responsible for bearing the most weight when it comes to mental health depletion and anxiety levels escalating.

2008

Childhood Trauma and Fear of Failure. Destiny Prezzato (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University* Dr. William Langston (he/him; faculty advisor)

Fear of Failure can have implications on the successes of adult life if not confronted. It can make growing in aspirations difficult and cause those affected to miss opportunities readily available to them. This research project aims to identify if there is a correlation between childhood trauma intensity and extreme levels of Fear of Failure as adults. If a correlation exist, programs can be developed to identify those at risk in order to help them overcome and thrive as adults. My hypothesis is: The higher the ACE score (Adverse Childhood Experiences), then the higher the intensity of Fear of Failure. Of the respondents with a history of childhood trauma, I predict that there is a positive correlation to levels of Fear of Failure.

2009

Differences in Perceptions of Growth and Depreciation After Dating Violence. Justice M. Cundiff (she/her), Myra A. Pennington (she/her), and Mary Ellen Fromuth, Ph.D. (she/her), *Middle Tennessee State University* Mary Ellen Fromuth, Ph.D. (she/her; faculty advisor)

The current study compared 182 undergraduates' perceptions of posttraumatic growth and posttraumatic depreciation after partner abuse. After reading author-constructed scenarios depicting partner violence, respondents completed a questionnaire that assessed perceptions of the potential impact of partner abuse. Overall, participants

perceived negative impacts to be more prevalent than positive impacts for survivors of partner violence. Results suggest that men were more likely than women to differentiate based on the gender dyad characteristics described in the scenario.