



Undergraduate Psychology
Research Conference
Est. 2023



Program

Friday, November 3rd



1st Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference

University of Southern Indiana
Psychology Department

University Center: Carter Hall, 226/227

1:00-1:15 p.m. **Check-in & presentation set up**, *Hallway outside Carter Hall*

1:15-1:30 p.m. **Opening Remarks**, *Carter Hall D*

Dr. Urska Dobersek, Psi Chi Advisor, UPRC Chair

Dr. Amie McKibban, Chair of the Psychology Department

1:30-2:25 p.m. **Oral Presentations**, *UC 226/227*

2:30-3:15 p.m. **Poster Presentations**, *Carter Hall D*

3:15 p.m. **Awards Presentation & Closing Remarks**, *Carter Hall D*

Dr. Urska Dobersek, Psi Chi Advisor, UPRC Chair

Faculty Mentors

- Dr. Gisele Casanova, Purdue University Northwest
- Dr. Urska Dobersek, University of Southern Indiana
- Dr. George Gaither, Ball State University
- Dr. Zach Pilot, University of Southern Indiana
- Dr. Laurel Standiford-Reyes, University of Southern Indiana

1:30-2:25 p.m.
ORAL SESSIONS
UC 226/227

- 1:30 – 1:45 **Jillian Walker & Caleb Cunningham**, University of Southern Indiana
Longitudinal Study of the Covid-19 Pandemic at USI
- 1:50 – 2:05 **Gabriel Del Greco & Genevieve Dewey**, Ball State University
Relationships among Autistic Traits, Hypersexuality, and Consensual
Nonmonogamy
- 2:10 – 2:25 **Caleb Cunningham & Jillian Walker**, University of Southern Indiana
Deficits in Mental Health Care: Resilience, ACEs, and Psychopathology

2:30-3:15 p.m.
POSTER SESSION
Carter Hall D

- Lyndsey Bunch Examining the Relation between Exercise and Mental Health
- Gabriela Fernandez Gil Your Worth, Your Mind: What is the Relation between Self-Esteem,
Anxiety, and Depression?
- Lillian Ehlers McNair Scholar Student Experiences with Barriers and Aids in
Educational Attainment
- Trenton Goffinet, Nick
Purdy, Caden Porter,
& Tyler Robinson Attitudes Towards Anxiety Treatment Efficacy and the Effects of
Stigma in College Students: Results from the University of Southern
Indiana
- Kaitlyn Hicks &
Abigail Eckert Judgments of Warmth and Competency
- Thea Petry Bridging People in Need to Community Resources
- Cassidy Sozio Examining the Relation between Gender Roles and Anxiety

Abstracts

Oral Presentations

Deficits in Mental Health Care: Resilience, ACEs, and Psychopathology

Caleb Cunningham & Jillian Walker, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zach Pilot**

Resilience is a process through which individuals adapt to difficult life stressors. This can be done through the boosting of personal assets or the mental shielding of the most damaging events (Drew & Matthews, 2019). Past research has shown an inverse relationship between resilience and the prevalence of different disorders in individuals, such as major depressive disorder (Gerber et al., 2012). Similarly, past research has suggested an inverse relationship has been suggested between resilience and ACEs (Bethel et al., 2014). Over four semesters following the COVID-19 lockdowns, deidentified information was collected from students in PSY201 classes. Their total adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), depression, anxiety, and resilience scores were all measured. ACE scores were collected using the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire for Adults. Depression scores were recorded via the Patient Health Questionnaire, 9th edition (PHQ-9). Anxiety scores were measured using the General Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire, 7th edition (GAD-7). Finally, resilience was measured using the Dispositional Resilience Scale, 15th edition (DRS-15). An exploratory data analysis on the collected information is currently being conducted by researchers using the R data analytic software. This project looks to examine the relationships between resilience and each of these variables to see how scores change across the intersections of different groups. Additional theoretically relevant demographic variables will also be examined, such as gender identification, first-generation student status, and ethnicity. We predict that ACEs will be inversely correlated with resilience.

Relationships among Autistic Traits, Hypersexuality, and Consensual Nonmonogamy

Gabriel Del Greco & Genevieve Dewey, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. George Gaither**

It was once thought that people who were diagnosed with Autism were either asexual and that they, by default, had no interest in romantic or sexual relationships, OR were unable to control their sexual desires (i.e., were hypersexual). More recent research is demonstrating that these beliefs are inaccurate. Many researchers are finding that people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), deviate from the "norms" of neurotypical adults by demonstrating higher levels of sexual orientation, gender, and relationship nonconformity. Similarly, relatively little current research has demonstrated such differences in neurodivergent (e.g., ASD diagnosed) individuals in terms of hypersexuality. This may be due to the fact that the diagnosis of ASD has been widened, leading to the question of whether not only the ASD/nonASD differences still exist, but also, which specific ASD traits may be related more closely to specific

ASD/nonASD differences in sexuality. We conducted an online survey of 256 reddit users and university members, 27% of whom reported that they had been diagnosed with an ASD related disorder and 44% who scored above the cutoff for ASD on the Autism Quotient. Participants completed multiple measures, but only demographics, measures of Hypersexuality (HBI), attitudes toward and willingness to participate in nonmonogamous relationships, and self-report of relationship status are assessed here. Participants were grouped as either having ASD (15% of the sample) or nonASD (35% of the sample) and compared on the above variables. Independent samples t-tests found no differences in hypersexuality, attitudes toward or willingness to engage in polyamorous relationships. Only Social Skills deficits were significantly negatively related to hypersexuality. Results of the current study (based on preliminary data) suggest no ASD differences in sexual and relationship variables. This suggests older stereotyped beliefs that those diagnosed with ASD are no longer (if they ever were) supported by empirical data.

Longitudinal Study of the Covid-19 Pandemic at USI

Jillian Walker & Caleb Cunningham, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zach Pilot**

This project is a continuation of a study examining mental health of the student population at USI before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. A literature review found that college students are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and did not adapt as well to the restrictions of the pandemic (Horigian et al., 2021; Lechner et al., 2021; Savage et al., 2021). Many studies found that depression and anxiety increased due to the pandemic, but almost none of said studies had data prior to the pandemic to compare to (Horigian et al., 2021; Soria & Horgos, 2021; Tuason et al., 2021). For this study, we aim to fill that gap since data collection began in Fall 2019, pre-pandemic. The study utilizes anonymous data consisting of students in Introduction to Psychology classes. The focus of this study is depression scores on the PHQ-9 over eight semesters and anxiety scores post-pandemic. The previous study found significantly higher depression scores that had not returned to pre-pandemic levels by Spring 2021. We will also investigate the role adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) play on mental health. To examine this, ACEs have been divided into three categories based upon previous literature (Vai et al., 2017). The categories are No ACEs, (1-2) Mild ACEs, and (3-10) Severe ACEs. This study is currently in the data analysis stage. We intend to run an ANOVA to compare across semesters and across ACEs categories. We predict we will find that the depression levels have not returned to baseline. We also predict a positive correlation between ACEs and scores on the PHQ-9.

Poster Presentations

Examining the Relation between Exercise and Mental Health

Lyndsey Bunch, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Urska Dobersek**

Involvement in exercise and physical activity has a number of physical and psychological benefits (An et al., 2020). Given that exercise can potentially improve individuals' quality of life, we examined the relation between exercise habits and happiness and life satisfaction. Using convenience sampling, we recruited 98 students ($n_{males} = 41$, $n_{females} = 57$) between 18 and 33 years of age ($M_{age} = 19.5$, $SD = 2.22$) through the psychology subject pool (SONA). Participants completed an online survey via Qualtrics that included the Demographic Questionnaire, the Godin Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire (Godin & Shepard, 1997), the Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener et al., 1985), and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Arygyle, 2002) in random order to avoid order effects. We found that individuals who exercise regularly were more satisfied with their life ($M = 22.59$, $SD = 6.42$) compared to individuals who were less active/sedentary ($M = 16.92$, $SD = 7.48$), $t(97) = 2.91$, $p = .005$, 95% CI (1.79, 9.54), $d = .87$. Additionally, individuals who exercise regularly were happier with their life ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.67$) compared to individuals who were less active/sedentary ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.63$), $t(97) = 2.44$, $p = .02$, 95% CI (0.10, 0.88), $d = .73$. Consistent with prior research individuals who performed active leisurely activities more frequently scored higher on satisfaction with life and happiness compared to individuals who performed less active leisurely activities or were sedentary (Toros et al., 2023). Future research could explore the mechanisms of the relation between exercise and mental health.

Your Worth, Your Mind: What is the Relation between Self-Esteem, Anxiety, and Depression?

Gabriela Fernandez Gil, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Urska Dobersek**

In 2017, mental illness was the leading cause of disability worldwide (World Health Organization, 2017). They estimated that over 300 million people suffer from depression and over 260 million people suffer from anxiety (Kessler et al. 2005). These estimates reflect a substantial increase in the number of people living with mental disorders over the past two decades (Vos et al. 2015; World Health Organization, 2017). Additionally, individuals experiencing mental health pathologies tend to have poorer well-being and lower self-esteem (Henriksen et al., 2017). Given this relation, the purpose of the present study is to replicate the previous findings and examine the relation between self-esteem and anxiety and depression in a college-age population. Over 100 students will be recruited using a convenience sampling via psychology subject pool (SONA) and social media. They will complete an online survey hosted in Qualtrics that will include the Demographic Questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (Dhira et al., 2021; Spitzer et al., 2006), and the Patient Health Questionnaire (Kroenke et al., 2001; Molebatsi et al., 2020) in random order to avoid order effects. The results will be aligned with the previous research suggesting a negative relation between self-esteem and anxiety and depression. Future research should focus on the mechanisms for this relation: whether low

self-esteem leads to anxiety/depression or vice versa. Having a better understanding of how these variables are related can provide a better insight into how to treat these mental disorders.

McNair Scholar Student Experiences with Barriers and Aids in Educational Attainment

Lillian Ehlers, Perdue University Northwest

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Gisele Casanova**

Students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students are systemically, institutionally, and personally discriminated against. These students have been kept from pursuing and getting higher education. Using a self-report survey, this study gathered the perceptions of obstacles and aids to educational achievement from Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement program students and graduates. The insights from this study can be used to pinpoint areas systemically, institutionally, and personally that require modification to promote a positive and equitable learning environment for all students regardless of race, sex, and socioeconomic status.

Attitudes Towards Anxiety Treatment Efficacy and the Effects of Stigma in College Students: Results from the University of Southern Indiana

Trenton Goffinet, Nick Purdy, Caden Porter, & Tyler Robinson, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Laurel Standiford-Reyes**

In an ever-changing world, the prevalence of anxiety continues to increase, with studies estimating 39% of college students experience anxiety. Additionally, anxiety in an academic setting has shown to decrease academic success in college students. Decreasing anxiety amongst college students is pivotal in creating an environment of academic success. Previous studies highlighted treatment methods that are used to anxiety in students, but with limited or conflicting results. Some therapeutic methods may be more effective for different individuals according to their beliefs and experiences. A major predictor in the efficacy of any treatment is the attitudes and self-stigma that the patient associates with the treatment. These stigmas can differ from culture to culture and can influence treatment efficacy. Our study aims to identify and understand effective methods of treating anxiety among students at the University of Southern Indiana (USI), as well as how stigma impacts the success of, and attitudes toward, treatments. A Qualtrics survey was developed using previously validated questions to gain insight into the self-reported efficacy of treatments, as well as reported self-stigma and perceived stigma of anxiety. The treatments tested are ones that have demonstrated effectiveness in previous studies as well as treatment methods provided by Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at the USI. Statistical analysis techniques will be used to find the correlation between self-stigma and treatment success, determine the success of online therapy, and relate all therapeutic success in those who have undergone said treatment vs attitudes on efficacy in those who have not undergone said therapy. The findings will be used to improve the quality of treatment and resources for students experiencing anxiety at USI.

Judgments of Warmth and Competency

Kaitlyn Hicks & Abigail Eckert, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zach Pilot**

Tattoos have become more popular in society and the reason for getting tattoos has broadened. Tattoos are seen frequently on individuals and many people use tattoos to celebrate their bodies and showcase their personality. However, perceptions of tattoos offer a wide range of both positive and negative traits that the public may associate with the individuals themselves. In the past, many people believed that having tattoos was a sign of delinquency and that those with tattoos were not good workers or good people (Resenhoeft et al., 2008). This type of bias draws into question the competency and warmth of an individual with tattoos and how people may assign specific traits to a person with tattoos. The Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) proposes that all group stereotypes and interpersonal impressions form along two dimensions: (1) warmth and (2) competence. We used this model to examine how our participants will rate a picture of somebody they do not know solely based on whether the person has tattoos or not. In this study, we used a picture of a male face and either presented the male face with tattoos or the male face without tattoos. We used a competency scale and a warmth scale as well as questions that we adapted from Fiske et al, (2002). We will conduct an independent samples *t*-test to determine whether the groups differ. We hypothesize that the male picture without tattoos will be rated higher on both competency and warmth versus the male picture with tattoos. We also hypothesize that the male face with the tattoo will be rated higher in competency than on warmth.

Bridging People in Need to Community Resources

Thea Petry, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Laurel Standiford-Reyes**

In the Human and Family Development Lab at the University of Southern Indiana, we are creating an interactive website that links our community to resources in the broader Evansville/Vanderburgh area. The purpose is to develop a website, called The Bridge, that will be coming soon, and to conduct interviews and evaluations of programs that help adolescents grow healthy attachments and teach parents healthy attachment interventions. Right now, we are currently gathering data on how many programs are evidence-based and what the need is in Evansville through surveys and measuring data through qualitative software, Nvivo. By evaluating programs in our area, we can measure the use of and need of evidence-based programming and the funds to support it. Through my social work internship, I have already begun to identify the problem of substance abuse in our area, as well as what children in low economic areas need most; supportive and loving guardians who understand how to teach them life skills such as socioemotional learning and forgiveness. Other populations we want to provide resources for and advocate for are children with LGBTQ+ parents, parents of LGBTQ+ children, incarcerated parents, parents struggling with addiction, and children of divorce.

Examining the Relation between Gender Roles and Anxiety

Cassidy Sozio, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Urska Dobersek**

People are expected to behave according to their gender identity and/or sex. For example, men are expected to be assertive dominating figures (i.e., masculine) while women are expected to be affectionate caring figures (i.e., feminine; Ng et al., 2023). These gender roles (i.e., socially acceptable attitudes/behaviors based on a person's gender identity/sex) are associated with a number of biopsychosocial variables, including personality and well-being. For instance, individuals who conform to feminine gender roles are more likely to express their worry compared to individuals conforming to masculine gender roles (Farhane-Medina et al., 2022). Given this premise, I will examine the relation between gender roles and mental health. Specifically, I hypothesize that individuals who fit the masculine gender roles and whose gender identity is man would experience lower levels of anxiety compared to individuals who fit feminine gender roles and whose gender identity is either woman or non-binary. Over 60 participants using convenience and purposive sampling techniques will be recruited from a university campus in the southern Indiana region in the U.S. via the subject pool (SONA), word of mouth, and personal contacts. Participants will complete an online survey using Qualtrics that will include the following questionnaires: Demographic Questionnaire, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory in random order to avoid order effects. I anticipate that individuals who conform to feminine gender roles would have higher anxiety levels compared to individuals who conform to masculine gender roles. The findings will further the knowledge on gender roles and mental health. Future research can examine specific mechanisms and factors that contribute to the relation between gender roles and psychological well-being.