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Eastern Psychological Association Annual Meeting, Boston, 2023



Empathic Concern and Moral Care: Implications for Healthcare Professionals

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BACKGROUND

- Our research examined relationships between the Care moral foundation and Empathic Concern.
- Empathy is the capacity to feel something for someone who is in distress.
- Moral foundations theory is an intuition theory that explains the origins of human moral reasoning

PURPOSE

- To distinguish how the care foundation pertains to empathetic concern for others following exposure to an emotional stressor.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Does the Care moral foundation predict empathic concern following exposure to a personal narrative story?

Hypotheses:


1. Care/Harm would be positively related to empathic concern.
2. Care/Harm would positively predict levels of empathic concern.

METHOD

N = 59 participants
Mean Age = 19.8 years
59.3% female
52.5% from white or European background

MFQ
STORY
IRI


Intuitive *Care* statistically significantly predicted Empathic Concern for others following exposure to an emotional stressor.



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RESULTS

- Simple linear regression to predict Empathic Concern based on the moral foundation Care/Harm: $F(1, 57) = 11.87, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.17, 95\% CI [1.02, 3.91], R^2 = 0.17$
- The Care foundation scores increased 2.44 points for each increase in Empathic Concern.
- The null hypothesis was rejected.



DISCUSSION

- Harm reduction and prevention services may be helpful for teaching empathic concern.
- Our findings are limited to our sample, but results may generalize to larger populations that engage in care-taking practices.

IMPLICATIONS

- By discovering a link between empathy and morality, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals may be better equipped for patient care.
- Offering support in an empathic, caring lead to better patient outcomes, higher patient compliance, and more positive feedback between medical staff and their support, thereby establishing a more caring environment.



Dr. Seddio & Mary Quinn '24



Gender Differences and the Role Depression Plays in the Expression of Empathy

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BACKGROUND

- Empathy and depression are both affected by environmental stimuli resulting in biological and behavioral fluctuations (Johnstone et al., 2015).
- Personal distress is a measure of internalized empathy where individuals work to actively relieve their own distress experienced by observing another's suffering.
- Depression and its symptoms negatively impact individuals' capacities to engage in prosocial behaviors (Off, 2012; Off et al., 2014).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do levels of depression impact feelings of personal distress following exposure to a personal narrative story?

It is hypothesized that depression will be positively associated with personal distress. There will be statistically significant differences in personal distress and depression between males and females.

METHODS

n = 51 participants | 19 8-years | Female n = 31, 61% | 52% white | European descent | \$10 compensation



Personal Distress Index (PDI) (Davis, 1983)
Inventory-II (BDI-II) (Beck et al., 2001)

Women exhibited significantly more personal distress when their depression was higher than compared to men...

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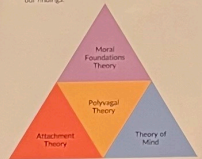
RESULTS

- 3 samples t test
- Females with higher levels of depressive symptoms experienced more personal distress following an emotional stimulus.
- The null hypothesis was rejected.
- There was a meaningful effect of depression on personal distress for others.

	n	μ	SD	t	df	p	d
Female	31	14.42	4.30	3.741	49	<0.001	1.09
Male	20	10.05	3.47				
Note: 95% CI [2.02, 6.72]							

DISCUSSION

- Empathy is not a standalone trait, and it has the potential to both positively and negatively impact a person.
- Personal distress is a category of empathy where a person experiences stress and anxiety from witnessing another person's distress.
- Women typically report higher levels of personal distress compared to men, and this was supported in our findings.



IMPLICATIONS

- These findings are important because they alter the way that psychologists can view and treat depression.
- Certain behavioral activities such as gratitude practice aim to help the individual increase their empathy for other people and recognize the positives in their own circumstances.
- If an individual has high levels of personal distress, and their treatment focuses on increasing their empathy for others, it can increase their already low levels of personal distress.
- Our findings are limited to our sample, but may generalize to larger populations that engage in care-taking practices.



Aana Blaszk '24 & Dr. Seddio



Aana, Mary, & Dr. Seddio (all smiles after great presentations)



THE WESTIN
COPLEY PLACE
BOSTON

The Relationship of Plant Awareness Disparity to Environmental Awareness & Personality

Tyson C. Krejger & Angeline M. Viti
Utica University



Dr. Krejger & Angeline Viti '23



Angeline, Dr. Kreiger, & ... name that plant!

Method Overview

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    graph TD
      A[Event Simulation & Posttest Ratings  
N = 61] --> B[Brief Video]
      B --> C[Director Task]
      C --> D[Episodic Specificity Induction  
n = 38]
      C --> E[Control Induction  
n = 23]
      D --> F[Alternative Outcome Generation & Posttest Ratings]
      E --> F
  
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Scoring Alternative Outcomes

- Outcomes were scored as relevant or irrelevant
- Relevant:
 - reframing/interpreting the event, specific coping strategies
 - gaining insight, reduced negativity over time, changing circumstances

Constructive Episodic Simulation Hypothesis

- We retrieve and integrate past experiences in order to construct imagined future experiences.

(A) Joint activation for episodic simulation and episodic memory

Regions of overlapping patterns of activity that underlie the past and imagining the future

Main Implications

(1) Imagining alternative future outcomes may depend on episodic memory.

- Consistent with the constructive episodic simulation hypothesis

"YOU'VE GOT TO ALWAYS GO BACK IN TIME IF YOU WANT TO MOVE FORWARD"

ROBB

Dr. Schwoebel, Christopher Marleau '23, Cassandra Chalon '23, & Evan Stevens '23



Evan, Dr. Schwoebel, Chris, & Cassie (Presentation? Check! Let's celebrate!)



If you can heal the symptoms,
but not affect the cause,
It's quite like trying to heal
A gunshot wound with gauze

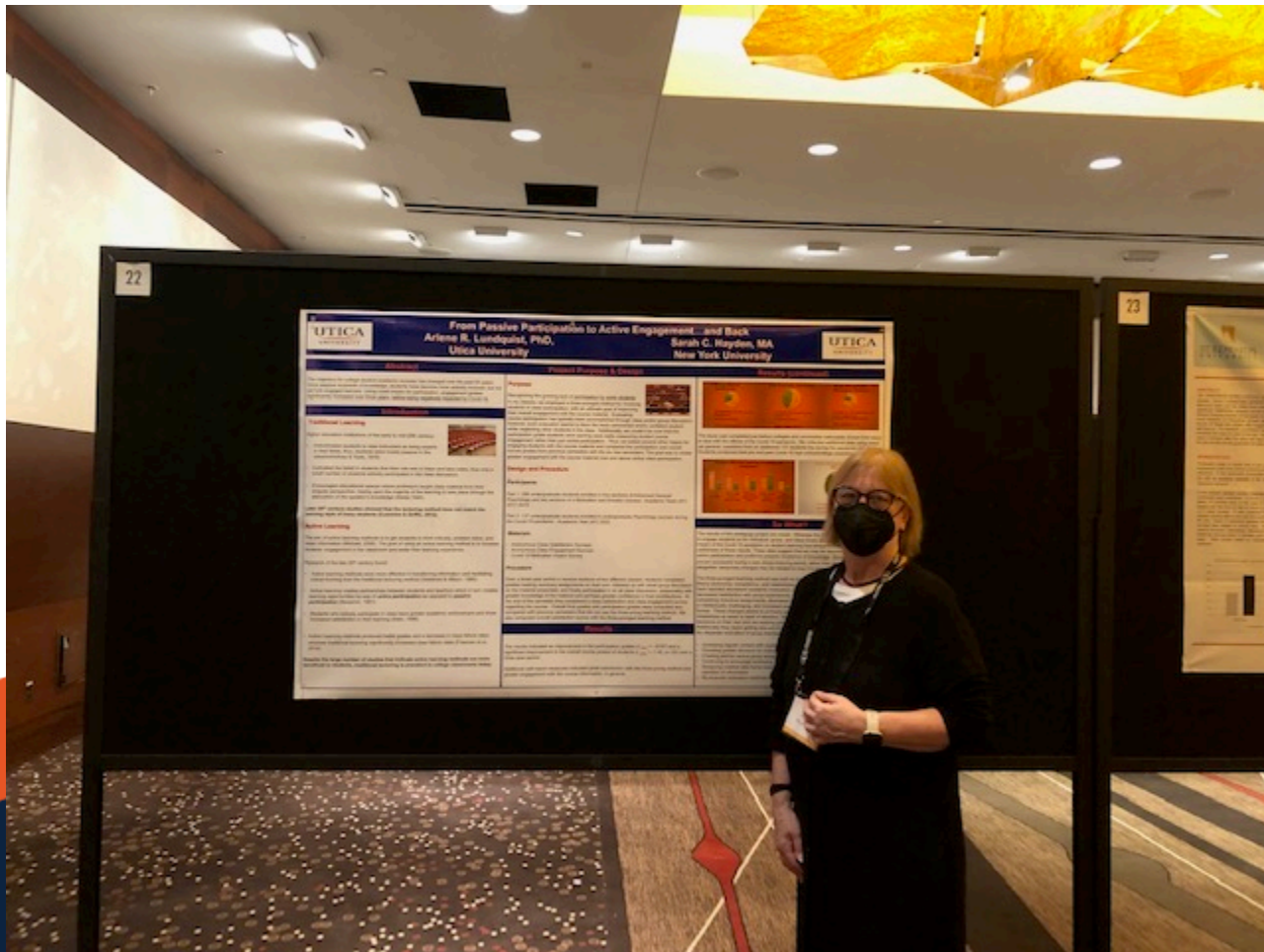
Dr. Specht



Dinner (Faculty treat!)



Earn Extra Credit in Cognitive Psychology if you can identify this psychologist!



Dr. Lundquist at Association for Psychological Science Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2022



Psi Chi Induction Ceremony, 2023
Congratulations to Chris, Angeline, & Aileen!



Congratulations to Cassie, Evan, and ALL of our 2023 graduates!