

Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology with an emphasis in Clinical-Community Psychology

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M.A. in Clinical Psychology, May 2020, University of Missouri-St. Louis
M.A. in Clinical Psychology, May 2018, Minnesota State University, Mankato
B.A. in Psychology/Biology, May 2014, University of Wisconsin-Superior

Factors Influencing Purpose in Life for Middle-Aged and Older Adults

Date: May 6, 2024

Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Place: Remote

Abstract

Purpose in life, or having broad aims and a sense of directedness, is an important dimension of psychological well-being with associated health benefits. The current study used a path analysis model to examine how perceived cognitive control, health locus of control- self, engagement in physical activity, and engagement in challenging cognitive activities relate to purpose in life longitudinally. Several potential covariates were also examined, and multimorbidity status was examined as a potential moderator of paths in the model. Participants were middle-aged and older adults who participated in the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) longitudinal national study ($n = 2,481$). Overall, perceived cognitive control, engagement in physical activity, and engagement in challenging cognitive activities, all measured during MIDUS II, were all related to purpose in life measured during MIDUS III. Health locus of control- self during MIDUS II did not appear to be related to purpose in life during MIDUS III, and having multimorbidities did not moderate any of the relationships between variables. Intervention targets such as beliefs related to internalized ageism, self-efficacy beliefs related to cognition, and behavioral activation may influence purpose in life, leading to benefits for psychological well-being and physical health.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

Ann Steffen, Ph.D., ABPP (Chairperson)

Kami White, Ph.D.

Emily Gerstein, Ph.D.

Patrick Hill, Ph.D.