



Presenter: Christopher Kenney

Session & Time: Poster_II / 1:00 to 1:50pm

Room: Guzman Lecture Hall

Discipline: Psychology

Faculty Mentor: Benjamin Rosenberg

Digital Portfolio URL: <https://sites.google.com/students.dominican.edu/christopherkenney/thesis>

Title: The Role of Choice in Response to Help-Seeking Messages Among People With Depressive Symptomatology

Abstract:

Depression affects over 280 million people worldwide. While there is treatment for depression, people with depression are less likely to seek help as their condition worsens. This is uncharacteristic of most other illnesses or conditions that typically see an increase in help seeking as conditions worsen. Previous research has explored this unique characteristic of depression, more specifically, how psychological reactance could be responsible for the resistance that one feels toward a help seeking message. Psychological reactance theory (PRT) posits that when an individual's freedom is threatened, they enter a motivational state (psychological reactance) that drives them to regain lost freedoms. The current experiment hypothesizes that people with moderate to severe depression who are exposed to a persuasive help seeking message with 4 compliance options will report less reactance than those who are exposed to a message with a single compliance option. An online study (N= ~500)

explored a new technique that aims to increase help-seeking among people with depressive symptomatology in response to a depression public service announcement (i.e. compliance options). Compliance options (CO) refer to the number of ways that an individual can choose to comply with a help seeking message. Participants will be randomly assigned to either a high CO condition or low CO condition. In the low CO condition, participants will see a help seeking message with a single CO. In the high CO condition, participants will see the same help seeking message but that has 4 compliance options. Results are expected to show that depressed individuals who are given more ways to comply are more likely to seek help. Additional results are expected to show that reactance will be lower among participants who view a message with 4 compliance options compared to a help seeking message with a single CO. The findings of this study imply that in a depressed population, exercising the role of choice increases post-message help seeking intention, and second, these findings encourage more research into CO's as a method of reducing psychological reactance in all public service announcements, not just those centered around depression.