AASP Pacific Northwest Regional Conference

2015 Conference Report

The 2015 AASP Regional Conference Northwest Student Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium (NWSSEPS) was held at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington on April 10-11th. The conference was attended by over 20 students and faculty members from Eastern Washington University, University of Idaho, Whitworth University and Western Washington University. The conference consisted of ten student presentations and two keynotes.

Dr. Lynn Briggs, a Professor of English at Eastern Washington University, was the keynote speaker on Friday evening. Dr. Briggs' keynote was titled, "What's Love Got to Do With It? Teaching Resilience" and addressed her current research endeavor – how can professors facilitate resilience in students? For the last year, Dr. Briggs has been revising the current English curriculum to incorporate Angela Duckworth's notion of grit and mental skill tools and strategies in the classroom. The keynote gave an interesting perspective of how sports psychology concepts can be applied to virtually any context.

Dr. Tony Pickering, visiting Associate Professor of Public Health at Eastern Washington University, was the keynote speaker on Saturday morning. Dr. Pickering's keynote was titled, "Conceptualizing Mental Toughness: What I'm learning from athletes, soldiers and cats". Dr. Pickering shared his experiences as an athlete, practitioner and researcher in his pursuit to define mental toughness. He discussed his path leading him to one of his current projects with the US Army.

Ten students presented at the conference. Presentations consisted of both research and applied presentations. Each student was allotted 20 minutes to present which included 3-5 minutes of questions. Most student presentations focused on research as part of their degrees, theses or dissertations.

A special thanks to our sponsor the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). The grant from AASP was used for conference supplies and dining services on Friday evening and Saturday morning.

AASP Regional Conference

Northwest Student Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium (NWSSEPS)

April 10th & 11th 2015

Eastern Washington University

Conference Sponsored by the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP)

Conference Itinerary

Friday, April 10th

5:00 PM – 5:30 PM: Registration

5:30 PM – 5:40 PM: Welcome guests/Introduction

5:40 PM – 6:00 PM: Student Presentation – Art Hoomiratana, University of Idaho
Playing one play at a time: Pre-performance routines in collegiate football

6:00 PM – 6:40 PM: Dinner

6:40 PM – 7:00 PM: Student Presentation – Courtney Flynn, Eastern Washington University
Mental Skills Training infused into a College English Composition Course

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM: Keynote Speaker – Dr. Lynn Briggs, Eastern Washington University
What's Love Got to Do With it? Teaching Resilience

8:00 PM: – Student Social

Saturday, April 11th

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM: Coffee & pastries

9:00 AM – 9:20 AM: Student Presentation – Alex Farley, Western Washington University
Superstition and Performance

9:20 AM – 9:40 AM: Student Presentation – Leah Parton, Eastern Washington University
Using a Creed as a Team Building Activity: An Internship with the Eastern Washington University Women's Tennis Team

9:40 AM – 10:00 AM: Student Presentation – Matt Vezzani, Western Washington University
Hardiness and High Intensity Interval Training

10:00 AM – 10:15 AM: Break

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM: Keynote Speaker – Tony Pickering, Eastern Washington University
Conceptualizing Mental Toughness: What I'm learning from athletes, soldiers and cats

11:15 AM – 11:30 AM: Break

11:30 AM – 11:50 AM: Student Presentation – Vanessa Martinez, University of Idaho
Program Compatibility: Exercise is Medicine, but What Should Be the Prescription?

11:50 AM – 12:10 PM: Student Presentation – Brook Skidmore, Western Washington University
The "Squat-n-Swap": A Pilot Exercise Intervention to Promote Increased Physical Activity among Mothers of Young Children

12:15 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch

1:00 PM – 1:20 PM: Student Presentation – Amanda Start, University of Idaho
Power Posing and Dominating Discourse: A Comprehensive Self-Communication Intervention for Improving Confidence, Anxiety, and Performance

1:20 PM – 1:40 PM: Student Presentation – Matthew Vaartstra, University of Idaho
Life After Sport: A Glimpse into Student-Athlete Career Development and the Role of Sport Psychology Practitioners

1:40 PM – 1:45 PM: Break

1:45 PM – 2:15 PM: Student Keynote Speaker – Brittney Conway, Eastern Washington University
An investigation of the Big Five personality traits and elite hockey performance

2:15 PM – 3:00 PM: Round Table Discussion – Jon Hammermeister, Damon Burton, Linda Keeler, Tony Pickering, Kirk Westre

Presentations & Abstracts

Keynote Presentations & Bios

Conceptualizing Mental Toughness: What I'm learning from athletes, soldiers and cats

Dr. Tony Pickering, Eastern Washington University

Athletes are expected to perform well under conditions of stress and adversity. However, sport is only one of many domains where environmental conditions and circumstances can make optimizing performance a psychological challenge. Moreover, we know some people seem better at operating and performing under adverse conditions than others. Those who are more prone to wilt in the face of pressure or stress are often characterize as not "mentally tough," an attribute few of us desire to be labeled with. So, what exactly is "mental toughness?" Can we define it in a tractable manner suitable for both scholarly inquiry and applied use?" Are the roots of mental toughness similar across domains? Or, is it so specific to a given context it cannot be generalized effectively? Our discussion will introduce empirical, theoretical, and anecdotal perspectives aimed at arriving at a framework for studying and applying the mental toughness concept, both within and outside of sport.

Dr. Pickering is a Visiting Associate Professor within the College of Health Science and Public Health at Eastern Washington University. He has held academic positions at several institutions where his primary focus has been developing applied research methods and quantitative analysis curricula for graduate students. He has also served administrative time as a department chair, and since 2008 has worked with the U.S. Army as a senior research psychologist and research consultant. When not reading, writing or analyzing data, he enjoys activities such as paddling white water, attempting triathlons, flying airplanes, and owning cats – all of which, he claims, require a degree of mental toughness he has yet to master.

What's Love Got to Do With It? Teaching Resilience

Dr. Lynn Briggs, Eastern Washington University

This presentation will address the ways that teaching about and through a growth mindset allowed the professor and students in an introductory English course to develop levels of caring and trust that spurred learning for all. It will address how these relationships redefined fear of failure, assumptions about success, and resilience. Finally, it will challenge the audience to reintegrate love as a motivator for success.

After completing her Ph.D. at Syracuse University, Dr. Briggs began her work at EWU as Writers' Center Director and Assistant Professor in 1994. She later served as the university assessment officer, Associate Dean, and Dean. In AY 13-14 she returned to her true vocation, teaching writing, theory, and research. She is currently researching the effects of mental fitness training on student performance in writing classes.

Student Presentations

Superstition and Performance

Alex Farley, Western Washington University

Superstition has been analyzed in prevalence and in performance in the worlds of athletics, academics, and economics (e.g., Bleak & Frederick, 1998; Dudley, 1999; Wright & Erdal, 2008). Superstition has been postulated to be positively associated with external locus of control, high athletic identity, ambiguous intolerance, and high stress situations (Foster, Weigand & Banes, 2006; Todd & Brown, 2003). Superstitions have been found to increase both cognitive and physical performance tasks (e.g. Damish et al. 2010; Foster et al. 2006; Schippers & Van Lange, 2006). To date, there has been no research exploring how an individual decides to believe in the power of superstition and how they choose a superstitious behavior (SB). Additionally, no research has been conducted analyzing individual SBs within the military and performing arts communities. The purpose of this study was to qualitatively analyze why and how an individual comes about choosing and relying on a SB in a performance setting. The participants were made up of five athletes, three military members, and three performing artists. Each participant answered questions from an interview guide created by the researcher. The interview guide focused on three topics, history of the SB, perspective around the SB, and sustainability of the SB. Interviews took approximately 20 minutes each and were then transcribed and analyzed for themes. Some of the themes that emerged included effects on performance without the SB, effects on performance with the SB, external root of power, rules around the SB, transfer of power, ambivalence around SB, connection between the belief and the behavior, thoughts of SB during performance, and religion. Future research is needed on the connection between belief in superstition and the behavior as well as the discovered themes, particularly transfer of power, root of power, and ambivalence around SBs.

Power Posing and Dominating Discourse: A Comprehensive Self-Communication Intervention for Improving Confidence, Anxiety, and Performance

Amanda Start, Art Hoomiratana, & Damon Burton, University of Idaho

Self-talk has been shown to be an effective intervention to enhance confidence and anxiety as a means of improving sport performance (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2009). However, at least 70% of communication is nonverbal (Mehrabian, 1981), suggesting that traditional self-talk interventions in sport, which only address verbal communication, may be inadequately addressing overall intrapersonal communication. (**PURPOSE**) This study explored the viability of using a nonverbal body language intervention, power posing (PP), in sport by (1) comparing the effectiveness of three self-communication (SC) interventions (PP, self-talk [ST], and combined PP and ST [CB]) with a placebo condition and (2) assessing the extent to which state goal focus (outcome [OG], performance [PG]) moderated the effectiveness of the SC interventions. (**METHOD**) Participants (N=137) were randomly assigned to a goal and SC condition and then followed a four-part experimental procedure: goal manipulation, pretest (self-reported confidence/anxiety, dart task), SC intervention, and posttest (self-reported confidence/anxiety, dart task). (**RESULTS**) A 4(SC) x 2(GOAL) x 2(TIME) mixed-design ANOVA was calculated for each DV. The SC x TIME interaction was significant for confidence (F(3,132)=5.27, p<0.01, η^2=0.08). Follow-up contrasts indicated no differences between ST and CB conditions (F(1,66)=0.09, p>0.05) or between PP and placebo conditions (F(1,101)=1.71, p>0.05). Participants in ST and CB conditions experienced greater gains in confidence across time compared to participants in PP and placebo conditions. The SC x GOAL x TIME interaction was significant for anxiety (F(3,128)=2.82, p<0.05, η^2=0.05). A simple two-way interaction for anxiety was found between SC and TIME for a PG (F(3,129)=2.63,

p=0.053, η^2=0.04) but not an OG focus (F(3,129)=1.26, p>0.05). Simple simple effects tests showed significant interactions between ST and TIME for a PG focus (F(1,128)=10.22, p<0.01, η^2=0.06) and between CB and TIME for both a PG (F(1,128)=4.82, p<.05, η^2=0.03) and an OG focus (F(1,128)=20.57, p<0.001, η^2=0.11). (**CONCLUSION**) Addressing nonverbal body language may enhance the effectiveness of self-talk interventions, particularly for reducing anxiety.

Playing one play at a time: Pre-performance routines in collegiate football

Art Hoomiratana, University of Idaho

Pre-performance routines have been a widely accepted technique used to enhance performance in sport. Positive effects have been demonstrated with a number of sports including basketball, golf, tennis, rugby, diving, and water polo (Cohn, P.J., Rotella, R., & Lloyd, J.W., 1990; Czech, Ploszay, & Burke, 2004; Highlen & Bennett, 1983; ; Jackson, 2003; Moore, 1986; Marlow , C., Bull, S., Health, B., Shambook, C., 1998). However, research involving the sport of American Football is scant. Our understanding of how pre-performance routines can be developed and implemented to improve performance in American football has not been adequately developed, implemented, and measured to date. This study aims to develop a pre-performance routine that is designed specifically for use in a collegiate American football setting. The pre-performance routine aims to repeatedly enhance the recall of optimal psychological and physiological states which will allow each player to play at their optimal level on a more consistent basis. Psychological skills and tools that will be introduced as part of the intervention will include goal setting, imagery, energy management, self-talk, and attentional control. Implementation of the pre-performance routine will include a education phase where the athletes are introduced to the individual psychological components of the pre-performance routine, an acquisition phase where the athletes will develop and refine their skills in practice situations, and finally an implementation phase where the athletes will incorporate the pre-performance routine in competition settings. A repeated measures, quasi-experimental design will be utilized to test the effectiveness of the intervention. Participants will be a collegiate American football team located in the California. Measurement tools will include self-report instruments, performance data, and qualitative data. Self-report instruments will measure confidence, task and ego orientation, coping skills, and performance strategies. Performance data will include coaching grade sheets completed by each position coach that track individual frequency of use and performance data. Lastly, qualitative data will be gathered to explore the thoughts, feelings, and understanding of the athletes who were part of the control group.

An investigation of the Big Five personality traits and elite hockey performance

Brittney Conway, Eastern Washington University

An interesting trend in the personality literature has been devoted to better understand the relationship between personality traits and athletic performances. In non-sport settings, the conscientiousness trait has been found to be strongly related to a number of good outcomes including job and training proficiency, academic performances, and physical activity (Barrick & Mout, 1991; Poropat, 2009; Rhodes & Smith, 2006). In the athletic setting, similar findings have been found with soccer players (Piedmont, Hill, & Blanco, 1999), football players (Tran, 2012) and Division 1 collegiate athletes (Saale-Prasad, 2014). However, in professional hockey these findings have generally not been replicated (Karp, 2000; Cameron, Cameron, Dithurbide & Lalonde, 2006; Man & Wohl, 1985). Thus, the purpose of this study was to further investigate the relationship between personality and a variety of indicators of hockey performances. The sample was comprised of 27 male hockey players from a major junior team in the Pacific Northwest. Participant ages ranged from 15 years

old to 20 years old (mean age = 18 years old) with varying levels of education (25% were in high school, 67% had finished high school and 7% had some college education). Personality was assessed using the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999). The BFI is a validated and reliable instrument that categorizes personality into five dimensions – extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience (John & Srivastava, 1999). Other inventories that were administered were the Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960), and the Conceptions of the Nature of Athletic Ability Questionnaire 2 (CNAAQ-2; Biddle, Wang, Chatzisarantis, & Spray, 2003). Participants were also assessed on their competitive orientation, self-determined motivation and work ethic. Game statistics were utilized as indicators of athletic performances (e.g., games played, goals, assists, saves, etc.) Findings suggest a subtle link between personality and hockey performance. Implications for both practitioners and researchers will be discussed.

The "Squat-n-Swap": A Pilot Exercise Intervention to Promote Increased Physical Activity among Mothers of Young Children

Brook Skidmore, Western Washington University

A large majority of mothers of young children are not sufficiently active to obtain health benefits, and motherhood itself has been associated with irregular physical activity. Ironically, however, a mother's demanding and busy life presents one of the most relevant opportunities for which exercise may be extremely advantageous. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to determine the effectiveness of an exercise intervention for increasing physical activity levels and perceived social support for exercise among mothers of young children who serve as primary caregivers. Thirty one mothers with at least one child under the age of five were recruited to participate in the study. A treatment group (N=16) participated in an instructor-led "Squat-n-Swap" exercise program once per week for four weeks, followed by four weeks without instructor supervision. A control group (N= 15) did not participate in the exercise program. Participants completed a questionnaire before and after the study in order to assess their physical activity levels and perceived social support for exercise, and comparative analysis was used to evaluate the differences in pre to post-study levels of these variables. Mixed between-within groups ANOVAs with a significance of $p < 0.05$ were used to analyze the data, as well as a chi square analysis. Post-hoc t-tests were conducted to determine the source of differences among statistically significant ANOVA interactions utilizing a Bonferroni correction of $p < .0125$. Cross tabs revealed positive changes in women's perceptions of changes in their physical activity levels. Results also revealed significant interactions for support in the forms of *childcare, information, companionship,* and *validation*. The "Squat-N-Swap" model might be a useful option for mothers of young children who would benefit from social support to exercise; however, more research is needed to ascertain this program's effectiveness in increasing physical activity levels among this population.

Mental Skills Training infused into a College English Composition Course

Courtney Flynn, Jon Hammermeister & Lynn Briggs, Eastern Washington University

This study examines the viability of infusing a Mental Skills Training (MST) program into college English Composition courses. Our intent was to determine if MST – delivered in a non-traditional fashion – can impact the academic self-efficacy, psychological resilience, and study habits of students enrolled in a freshman level English course. A quasi-experimental design was utilized with three experimental conditions assessed at three time points over a ten-week period. The three conditions utilized in this study were: a) control condition of ENGL 100 students (n=29), b) a condition which taught the standard ENGL 100 curriculum but utilized MST trained Writer's Center staff (n=10) and c) a themed condition taught by the same English Department

Professor in two different courses (ENG 100 n=12, ENG 197 n=2). The themed condition utilized an experimental English comp curriculum in which all reading and writing assignments were related to MST concepts – with a particular emphasis on psychological resilience and "grit." The students in the ENGL 100 condition utilizing the Writer's Center were exposed to MST material only at the Writer's Center while the control condition received the traditional English comp curriculum with no exposure to MST. Repeated measures ANOVA revealed that students in the themed condition showed subtle improvement on several MST and student success variables of interest while the Writers Center and control condition showed little change over time. These results suggest that infusing MST material into pre-existing English Composition courses may be a viable option when it comes to enhancing students' cognitions, psychological resilience, study habits, and academic success.

Using a Creed as a Team Building Activity: An Internship with the Eastern Washington University Women's Tennis Team

Leah Parton, Eastern Washington University

Team building interventions have been shown to have a positive effect on performance and enhanced cognitions in athletes (Martin, Carron, & Burke, 2009). Meta-analyses data suggest that both males and females profit from these interventions, however, athletes participating in individual sports benefit significantly more from the activities than team sport athletes (Martin et al., 2009). Further, individuals at the intercollegiate level appear to benefit the most from team building initiatives with longer-duration programs displaying the most robust effects on performance and positive cognitions (Martin et al., 2009). This presentation will provide an anecdotal description of a team-building program designed for a NCAA Division 1 women's tennis team in the Pacific Northwest. The team building program was run by a sport psychology graduate student as part of her internship and has been on-going for the 2014-15 academic year. Along with attending two to three practices a week and matches on the weekend, a weekly team session is held that lasts roughly 30 minutes. At the beginning of the internship, the group of seven women developed a team creed that was based on the word, EAGLES, their mascot. E stands for effort, A-ambition, G-grit, L-love, E-energy, and S-support. A descriptive statement on how the word applies to the team is also present. The purpose of the creed is to unite the team on an agreed upon set of characteristics they wished to emulate. The creed is the standard for their actions on and off the court. The sessions following the original development of the creed consisted of digging deeper into the concepts that unite the team. Each session was structured in roughly the same fashion, beginning with an introduction to the concept, an activity, discussion, and ending with a final "punch-line" designed to maximize the take-home message. Lessons learned, implications for other sport psychology practitioners, and future research potential will also be discussed.

Hardiness and High Intensity Interval Training

Matt Vezzani, Western Washington University

CrossFit, a form of high intensity interval training (HIIT), has grown in popularity (Thompson, 2013). Some physiological benefits of CrossFit have been documented (O'Hara et al., 2013), yet psychological effects have not been investigated. Hardiness has been linked to the performance of elite athletes (Sheard, 2009). Hardy individuals tend to have a strong sense of commitment, control and challenge (Kobasa, 1979) that enables athletes to create opportunities from stressful situations (Maddi, 2006). The CrossFit training style (CrossFit, 2002) may promote the development of commitment, control and challenge. The purpose of the study was to see if CrossFit training affected individual scores of hardiness, and if the scores differed from a second type of HIIT program. The study included groups of participants trying CrossFit and boot camp for the first time.

Approximately 64 participants were approached for the study, and 30 (53.1 % attrition rate) agreed to participate and complete both the pre and post-assessments. The Personal Views Survey III-R (Maddi et al., 2006) was used to produce hardiness levels before and two months after their initial training session. A mixed between-within subjects ANOVA reveled no statistically significant interaction effect between group and time, Wilks' Lambda = .96, F (1, 28) = 1.04, p = .05, partial eta squared = .04. Further, there was no statistically significant main effect for time, F (1, 28) = .507, p = .05, with a small effect size (partial eta squared = .02) nor group, F (1, 28) = 1.042, p = .05, with a small effect size (partial eta squared = .04). Qualitative results indicated that some participants noticed various mental changes suggesting that for some, cognitions were affected by HIIT. While hardiness may have not been affected by HIIT, other psychological constructs may have. Further research examining the effects of HIIT training should look at other psychological constructs such as coping styles.

Life After Sport: A Glimpse into Student-Athlete Career Development and the Role of Sport Psychology Practitioners

Matthew Vaartstra, University of Idaho

Transitions are a critical and ever-present issue in the lives of athletes (Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011). The transition to life after sport is one of the largest changes an athlete will face during their career. For the 97% of NCAA student-athletes who do not move on to professional sport (Irick, 2013), this transition arrives much sooner than they typically anticipate. Sport psychology practitioners have suggested moving towards a holistic, proactive approach to assisting student-athletes in the transition to life after sport (Stambulova, 2000). Furthermore, providing student-athletes with support and knowledge through career development training has been proposed as a tool for sport psychology practitioners working with student-athletes (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). However, opportunities for sport psychology practitioners to become proficient in assisting student-athletes through the life after sport transition are relatively low in number. The primary purpose of this presentation will be to discuss resources for both practitioners and student-athletes that will enhance practitioners' ability to assist student-athletes with life after sport issues. Current career development training programs will be examined to look at content and topics that are central to effective career development such as career exploration, resume development, networking skills, job/internship search resources, and interviewing skills. Additionally, the opportunity to learn about current best practices will facilitate discussion about topics such as resource availability (for both student-athletes and practitioners), referrals, and career development content knowledge. By providing sport psychology practitioners with resources and knowledge about student-athlete career development, it is hoped that this will be an opportunity to enhance practitioners' ability to assist student-athletes in their transition to life after sport.

Program Compatibility: Exercise is Medicine, but What Should Be the Prescription?

Vanessa M. Martinez & Damon Burton, University of Idaho

Despite the evidence supporting numerous mental and physical health benefits associated with regular physical activity (PA; Little et al., 2013), designing and delivering programs that individuals want to incorporate into their lives on a permanent basis is a "tough sell" (Ekkekakis et al., 2012). Generally, exercise prescription and PA guidelines are based predominantly on biomedical models, which focus primarily on effectiveness, safety, and incorporate little or no evidence from the behavioral sciences. Additionally, exercise prescriptions based on exercise intensity and estimated heart rate ranges often result in inappropriate training and

adherence problems (ACSM, 2014). Therefore the objectives of this study is to investigate both psychological and physiological measures critical to design exercise program that are not just effective and safe, but also promote adequate amounts of PA and long-term adherence. Survey responses will be used to identify and group individuals to investigate program compatibility utilizing 2 acute, aerobic sessions matched for intensity using heart rate reserve (i.e., moderate-continuous and low-moderate interval bouts). Secondary outcomes will include exercise intensity associations with self-report responses and health-related measures before, during, and after the session to determine program compatibility. Participants will include faculty, staff, and students at a university setting. Non-parametric analysis and mediation/moderation analysis will be used. Measurement tools will include surveys, self-report instruments, and health-related markers. Surveys will measure a range of motivational variables, including: psychological needs for exercise, barriers to exercise, PA incentives, ability beliefs, and motivational orientations, along demographic variables such as previous exercise experience, and level of PA that will be used to identify and group individuals. Self-report instruments will also measure affective responses and exercise enjoyment. Heart rate, VO_{2max}, BMI, body fat percent, and salivary cortisol levels will be health-related measures. Finally, exercise intentions will be assessed to explore intentions to perform the study's exercise routine in the future.