

# Spring Preview: Extended Abstracts 2021

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## Executive Summary

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The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (YCEI) Annual Spring Preview is held each spring and provides emerging scholars and students the opportunity to present and gain constructive feedback. This publication provides the extended abstracts of the 2021 presentations.

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## Associations of School-Level Racial and Ethnic Homogeneity on Young Children's Emotional Competence

*Colleen Cassidy*

*Mentors: Craig Bailey & Irem Korucu*

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White/Caucasian preschoolers tend to attend homogenous White/Caucasian schools across all 50 states, and Black/African American preschoolers tend to attend homogenous Black/African American in nearly half of all states (Piazza, 2019). Research shows that early asymmetry in exposure to own versus other races has perceptual consequences regarding face recognition and categorization (Kim & Johnson, 2014). The current study investigates how children in racial/ethnic homogeneous preschools perform at recognizing and labeling emotions compared to children in racial/ethnic heterogeneous preschools.

Participants were 886 preschoolers (51% male; Mage in months=46.60,) from 187 classrooms in 61 preschools in a Northeastern US state. Families reported children as 47% White/Caucasian, 27% Black/African American, 9% other, and 11% multiracial as well as 44% as Hispanic/Latino. Preschool- and child-level data were collected from school records, family surveys, and direct child assessments. We used children's race and ethnicity to create three variables representing Black/African American, White/Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latinx membership at homogeneous or heterogeneous preschool (i.e., a "1" represented preschools with at least 75% Black/African American, White/Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latinx children; a "0" represented a racial/ethnic heterogeneous preschool). Children's Emotion Recognition ( $\omega=.79$ ) and Labeling ( $\omega=.83$ ) were measured using the Emotion Matching Task, a direct child assessment using expressive facial stimuli of racially/ethnically diverse children (EMT, Izard et al., 2003).

A multilevel structural equation model accounting for classroom (ICCs=.12-.14) and school nesting (ICCs=.04) was run in Stata 16.1. In addition to random effects, the model included the measurement models for Emotion Recognition and Labeling and a structural model with study predictors (i.e., Black/African American, White/Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latinx homogeneity) and covariates (i.e., preschool funding source and community average income, child race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, parental education, attendance, school enrollment, and attendance).

Results showed statistically significant covariates, including preschool funding source, children's enrollment, language, age, and gender, and parental education. Importantly, attending a homogeneous Black/African American preschool was associated with scoring *lower* in emotion recognition and labeling than peers at Black/African American heterogeneous preschools by 0.23 and 0.11 standard deviations. Furthermore, attending a White/Caucasian homogeneous preschool than peers at White/Caucasian heterogeneous preschools was associated with scoring 0.18 standard deviations *higher* in emotion labeling. Hispanic/Latinx homogeneous preschool membership was not statistically significant.

These findings partly contradict the existing literature indicating that minimal exposure to diverse peers impacts the accuracy of labeling and recognizing emotions of other-race peers. Due to systemic racism, communities and neighborhoods are segregated, especially in the Northeast (Epperly et al., 2014). Preschools operate within these communities and are an indirect byproduct of these societal forces, impacting access to quality programming. Due to how preschools are funded, access to resources is hyper-localized (LaRue & Kelly, 2015). Our results suggest mechanisms beyond financial resources in our model are likely responsible for these disparities, such as access to and type of professional development. High-resourced communities may be able to offer more or higher quality professional development (McCoy et al., 2015), and future directions should test classroom quality and moderate impacts by funding and community resources.



## Associations of Autism Spectrum Disorder Traits on Emotion Recognition Accuracy in Early Childhood

Lauren Costello

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Deficits in social cognition are particularly salient in individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Converging research suggests that all individuals vary in social-cognitive ability, ranging from typical development to severe ASD at the extreme end with continuously distributed subclinical autistic traits in the general population. Since the average age of ASD diagnosis is 4.5 years, it is important to understand how autistic traits relate to social-cognitive abilities in young children. Thus, this study's purpose was to investigate the associations of preschoolers whose teachers rated them higher on behaviors associated with ASD and their ability to accurately recognize and label emotions.

Data was collected as part of an efficacy trial of a social and emotional learning program in fall 2019 from 822 children in 62 preschools across a Northeastern US state. Children's emotion recognition accuracy of happy, sad, angry, and afraid facial expressions was captured using the Emotion Matching Task. Teachers reported on children's social skills and problem behaviors using the Social Skills Improvement System, which includes the Autism Spectrum subscale.

To explore these relationships further, eight multilevel models were run. All four conditional models accounting for variance in covariates and teachers' ratings of children's behaviors associated with ASD explained between 19 and 33% of the variance in children's emotion recognition. Overall, children whose teachers rated them higher on behaviors associated with ASD tended to score lower in recognition of happy,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p < .001$ , and sad,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p = .007$ , with non-

recognition of happy,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p < .001$ , and sad,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p = .007$ , with non-statistically significant but similar trends for angry and afraid,  $ps = .061-.244$ .

To this end, previous studies have found those diagnosed with ASD have difficulty accurately recognizing emotions, specifically anger, disgust and surprise, sadness, and fear. Individuals with ASD have been found less accurate than controls for all six basic emotions, but virtually no studies have found statistically significant effects in recognizing happy.



## Emotional Experiences of Educators of Students with Learning differences during the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Abigail Eveleigh*

*Mentors: Christina Cipriano & Lauren Hunter Naples*

**Background.** Research conducted in Summer 2020 revealed that educators of students with learning differences (sLD) were feeling a continuum of emotions early in the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to distance learning. Educators described transformed relationships with colleagues, students and families (Eveleigh et al., IP).

**Methods.** During the 2020/21 school year, we created three monthly professional learning communities with 17 educators who work with sLD. Each focus group session began with a check-in using a Mood Meter tool where educators were asked to plot one emotion to describe how they were currently feeling, with a subsequent discussion to further understand the sources of their emotional experiences. Optional surveys sent out to participants also collected data on how their schools were serving their students each month, as well as items from the Educator Health Survey which gathered further data on their emotional experiences and their use of social-emotional skills.

**Initial Findings.** A first look at the data from focus group transcripts and survey items revealed that educators of sLD have been feeling a wide range of emotions throughout this school year, with many unpleasant feelings being attributed to lack of planning for educators and their sLD, as well as stresses related to both health concerns and distance learning. We also heard many positive emotions being shared, with these pleasant feelings often relating to connection with their colleagues and students.



**Data Analysis Plan.** A thematic analysis will be conducted of focus group transcripts and open-ended survey questions to identify the main themes, particularly in relation to both positive and negative emotional experiences. Exploratory analyses will be run to look at how the mode that educators were serving their students each month and their personal experiences with COVID-19 were associated with their emotional experiences.



## The Role of Emotions in COVID-19 Vaccination Uptake

*Jahnvi Jain*

*Mentors: James Floman & Annette Ponnock*

Despite substantial progress in nationwide COVID-19 vaccination efforts, vaccine hesitancy remains a point of concern as businesses, schools, and governments begin to reopen. Current literature on the role of emotions in vaccination behavior has shown that fear can be a driving force for adaptive health behaviors.

The current study investigated how vaccine or COVID-19 specific fears correlated with vaccination uptake behavior in a population of educators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We conducted further analysis to look at this relationship in the context of 2 moderators: COVID-impact (direct vs. indirect impact) and chronic illness status (presence or absence of illness). A large, diverse sample of educators (N = 1761) completed self-report measures of COVID-fear ( $\alpha = .913$ ) and vaccine-fear ( $\alpha = .933$ ) as well as a single-item measure assessing vaccination uptake as part of a national longitudinal study of educator well-being.

Main effect findings were largely consistent with predictions. Higher vaccine-fear was significantly negatively correlated with vaccination uptake ( $r = -.375$ ,  $p = .000$ ). However, there was only a small, nonsignificant positive correlation of COVID-fear with vaccination uptake ( $r = .049$ ,  $p = .079$ ). Using moderation analysis, we found that presence of a chronic illness significantly strengthened the relationship of COVID-fear correlating positively with vaccination uptake which was consistent with our prediction ( $p = .011$ ).

In addition, moderation analysis with COVID-impact found that being directly versus indirectly impacted by COVID-19 significantly strengthened the relationship of vaccine-fear correlating negatively with vaccine uptake which was counter to prediction ( $p = .000$ ).

Overall, the findings suggest that fear plays a role in vaccination behavior. Greater vaccine fear was associated with lower vaccine uptake especially in those who were directly impacted by COVID-19. Greater COVID-fear was associated with higher vaccination uptake in those who had a chronic illness. These findings reinforce the need for clear and consistent communication regarding concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine.



## A Measurement Model for Young Children's Emotional Intelligence

*Navsheen Kaur*  
*Mentor: Craig Bailey*

Various frameworks of emotional intelligence (EI) are being used in practice but few have been tested with young children despite claims about theorisation and applicability for this age group. The present study investigated the best-fitting model of EI in preschoolers by comparing the emotional competence framework (Denham et al., 2007), the ability model (Salovey et al., 1997) and the RULER framework (Brackett et al., 2019).

The sample comprised 1,000 preschoolers ( $M=3.93$ ;  $SD; 7.05$ ;  $min= 2.67$ ;  $max=5.67$ ; 47% girls) within 187 classrooms from 76 early childhood centers in Connecticut. Children were racially and ethnically diverse: 47% identified as White/Caucasian, 27% Black/African American, 9% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 5% Asian, 12% multiracial, and 44% identified as Hispanic/Latino.

Different aspects of children's EI were assessed using the Affect Knowledge Test (Denham, 1986) and the Emotional Matching Task (Morgan et al., 2010) as well as an adapted version of the Box Task (Russell and Widen, 2002; LoBue and Thrasher; 2015). The preschool Self-Regulation Assessment-Assessor Report (Raver et al., 2007) was filled out after the assessments were completed. Teachers also completed the Emotion Regulation Checklist (Shields and Cicchetti, 1997). Informed by theory, confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the best fitting model of EI with global and equation level fit explored. Factor reliability was explored using Omega, and factor validity by age and gender was explored using path analysis. It was found that the RULER was the best fitting model compared to other models of EI. Labelling was found to show

good internal consistency. Lastly, the model did not demonstrate good validity across age and gender. The empirical investigation of EI models will be beneficial for academics and practitioners who are considering utilising EI with young children in their research and/or practice.



## Who Feels More Stressed During COVID-19?

*Peihao Luo*

*Mentor: Matthew LaPalme*

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COVID-19 is a global pandemic that affects not only people's physical health, but also mental health. More than 25% people reported experiencing moderate to severe level of stress because of COVID-19. Studies have shown that demographic membership may affect the stress of COVID-19, while there is little research on the impact of personality differences on COVID stress.

The current study explores whether people deriving more joy from social interaction or using more social interaction emotion regulation strategy are more likely to feel stressful about COVID-19. The data was collected during June and July in 2020. The sample included 2183 preservice educators (75% female, 52% non-white, 28.7% queer). Participants were asked to write about their top three sources of stress, top three sources of joy, top three regulation strategies in open-ended format. The data was then transferred quantitatively using LIWC 2015.

The results of correlation indicated that there is no demographic membership effect on COVID stress in the sample: for race ( $r=-.01$ ,  $p=.86$ ), sexual orientation ( $r=.01$ ,  $p=.60$ ), and gender ( $r=.02$ ,  $p=.30$ ). Tobit regression model shows significant main effect on COVID stress for both social joy ( $\beta =.15$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and social emotion regulation strategy used ( $\beta =.23$ ,  $p<.05$ ), while the interaction effect was not significant ( $\beta =-.00$ ). This study add evidence to the literature that COVID stress is a social stressor. Social distancing limited the social strategies, and people rely more on social strategies may have more difficulties in coping with COVID stress.



## The Implications of Educators Systematically Over-Predicting Student Anxiety on Hypothetical Vignettes

*Morgan Mannweiler*

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Teacher-student interactions greatly impact the classroom environment and students' academic and social outcomes. Educators' assumptions about students' emotions shape their response to student behavior and the supports they offer to them. We explored educators' assumptions about students' emotions by asking students and educators to predict the emotions that students would experience in hypothetical school situations.

During pilot-testing of a new vignette-based assessment of students' emotion regulation, we collected data from a small sample of secondary school students ( $n = 48$ ) and educators ( $n = 34$ ). Students were enrolled in an urban charter school and a suburban middle and high school. Students were predominantly white (83%) with a median household income of \$180,000. Educators were predominantly white (91%), 87% reported working in a public or charter school, and 79% were classroom teachers.

Participants were presented with sixteen identical vignettes depicting interpersonal and academic situations that were expected to elicit anger, anxiety, sadness, or boredom. Educators were asked how many students, in the grade level with which they are most familiar, would experience each emotion on a scale from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*all*) if this situation happened to them. Students were asked which emotion they would feel if the situation in the vignette happened to them.

Educators systematically over-predicted the likelihood that students would experience anxiety across various academic and interpersonal situations. Specifically, educators predicted that “many,” “most,” or “all” students would experience anxiety in 63% of the vignettes that were written to depict anger or sadness. Only 2 - 10% of students reported that they would feel anxious in these situations. Inaccurate assumptions about students’ emotions can adversely affect how educators respond to students’ emotional expression and behaviors in the classroom. These results highlight the importance of encouraging educators to ask students about their emotional experiences rather than relying on assumptions.





## Investigating Teachers' Attitudes about SEL and Implementation Infrastructure through an Exploratory Factor Analysis

**Tessa McNaboe**

**Mentors: Irem Korucu & Craig Bailey**

Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs are well known for their program effects by mitigating emotional distress and aggression while increasing prosocial behavior and positive attitudes (Durlak et al., 2011). Yet, even the strongest evidence-based programs face challenges (Jones et al., 2017), which may be because of inconsistencies in implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Previous research has investigated factors that may be associated with the quality of implementation and found that teachers' attitudes about SEL have substantial effects on implementation fidelity (Brackett et al., 2012). Additionally, implementation infrastructure (i.e., individual competencies, organizational processes, and administration) may support effective implementation (Fixsen, et. al, 2009; Metz, et. al, 2013; 2015). To date, these constructs have not been fully operationalized and used to support successful SEL implementation. In this study, we investigate the factor structure across two measures of teachers' attitudes about SEL and their perceptions of school climate and administrative support.

The sample includes 76 schools and 384 early childhood educators in the Northeastern US state. Teachers varied in their race and ethnicity with most reporting 64% White or Caucasian, followed by 26% Black or African-American and 6% Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and multiracial. Teachers also reported as 35% Hispanic or Latino. Regarding education, 41% of the teachers reported holding a bachelor's degree, 19% an associate's degree, 18% some college, 17% a graduate-school

degree, and 6% a high school diploma, GED, or lower. Teachers averaged about 12 years of experience ( $SD = 8.96$ ; 0-55).

Teachers' attitudes about SEL were collected using the 22-item Teachers Attitudes About Social-Emotional Learning (TASEL) with a 6-point Likert-type anchoring (Schultz et al., 2010). Teachers' perceptions of administrative supports and school climate were collected using the 24-item Readiness to Implement Social-Emotional Interventions (RISE) with a 5-point Likert-type anchoring (Wanless, 2014).

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to investigate the underlying factor structure between TASEL and RISE using principal axis factoring and oblique Promax rotation. Eigenvalues, scree plots, and theory were used to decide on item retention and factors extracted (e.g., Domitrovich et al., 2019; Malthouse, 2001; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The EFA revealed three reliable factors explaining 36% of the total variance (see Table 1): SEL Capacity (10 items, Composite Reliability [CR] = .86), SEL Culture (5 items, CR = .76), and Teacher SEL efficacy (6 items, CR = .70). Although all loadings were above .45, factors did not fully demonstrate convergent validity by way of Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) between 0.29 and 0.39 but did demonstrate discriminant validity with AVEs greater than shared interfactor variance, .01-.28,  $ps < .05$ .

Despite growing support for SEL, implementation science lacks literature and tools to investigate SEL implementation. Reliable and valid measurement is critical for advancing implementation research and evidence-based practice. Findings highlight what constitutes a school's readiness to change and inform future research to support high-quality SEL implementation.



## Preliminary Analyses of the School Climate Walkthrough

*Jennifer Seibyl*

*Mentors: Rachel Baumsteiger & Jessica Hoffmann*

School climate refers to the quality of a school, including factors such as a sense of safety, the quality of student-teacher relationships, and the physical environment (Wang & Degol, 2016). School climate is associated with students' academic success and psychological well-being (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018; Zullig et al., 2010). Although there are multiple measures of school climate (e.g., Marraccini et al., 2020), no measures to our knowledge are free, validated, and provide instantaneous reports with group breakdowns and concrete steps for improving school climate that can be distributed directly to students. The School Climate Walkthrough web-based application was developed to fulfill these needs.

The purpose of this pilot study was to test the psychometric properties of the Walkthrough with students from 7 U.S. middle and high schools. The preliminary sample included 9080 students (grades 6 - 12; 43% male, 42% female; 43% Non-white). Participants completed the School Climate Walkthrough, which includes questions about subjective feelings (e.g., “I feel safe at this school”) and observations (e.g., “Today, I saw adults at my school helping each other”), and measures of theoretically-related constructs. The results of regression analyses indicate that scores on the Walkthrough tool predicted scores on the U.S. Department of Education School Climate Survey after controlling for School ( $\beta = .14 - .62$ , all  $p$  values  $< .001$ ). The Walkthrough could replace current measures of school climate that schools use which are often costly, longer, or difficult to interpret. This measure also has the potential to engage students in not just the data collection but also conversations around solutions.



## Associations Between Classroom Quality and School Readiness in Early Childhood

*Gina Schnur*

*Mentor: Craig Bailey & Irem Korucu*

*Co-Authors: Craig Bailey, Irem Korucu, & Colleen Cassidy*

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observational framework measuring classroom quality through teacher-child interactions. Literature exploring the association between CLASS and child outcomes has been mixed. The current study explores the associations between CLASS scores and preschooler's EF, pre-academic, and social-emotional skills.

The sample consisted of 187 classrooms and 886 children (51% male,  $M_{age}=48$  months) across 61 preschools in a Northeastern US state. Children were racially and ethnically diverse: 47% were White or Caucasian, 27% Black or African American, 9% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5% Asian, 12% multiracial, and 44% identified as Hispanic or Latino. CLASS Pre-K assessed classroom quality, children's EF was measured by the Day & Night Stroop and the Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders Task. Social and emotional skills were measured by the Affect Knowledge Task, Emotion Matching Task, and the Box Task. Pre-academic skills were measured by the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement-IV Applied Problems and Letter-Word Identification subtests.

Three multilevel models with children nested within classrooms and schools were estimated in Stata 16.1 including child's age, race, ethnicity, gender, parent's education, and income-to-needs ratios as covariates. The CLASS total score was significantly associated with children's EF ( $b=0.12$ ,  $p=.017$ ) but not with social-emotional ( $b=0.06$ ,  $p=.216$ ) or pre-academic skills ( $b=0.62$ ,  $p=.736$ ). Post-

hoc analysis of CLASS domain scores revealed small associations between children's EF and Instructional Support ( $b=0.13$ ,  $p=.039$ ), Classroom Organization ( $b=0.11$ ,  $p=.014$ ), and Emotional Support ( $b=0.05$ ,  $p=.186$ ).

In sum, there were small associations between CLASS scores, specifically Classroom Organization and Instructional Support scores, and EF, but no associations with social-emotional or pre-academic skills. Due to CLASS's impact on policy initiatives for promoting children's outcomes, it is critical to find greater reliability in the measurement of classroom quality and teacher-child interactions.



## A Latent Class Analysis of Attitudes towards Technology in Adolescents

*Tse Yen (Violet) Tan*

*Mentor: Rachel Baumsteiger*

*Co-Author: Annette Ponnock*

Adolescents spend a lot of time on the internet, whether for academic, social, or entertainment purposes. Therefore, there is much discussion over what constitutes productive, healthy internet use, as opposed to unhealthy online behaviors such as internet addiction. However, differences in self-perceptions of internet use may differentiate types of adolescent online citizens. The current study evaluated differences in feelings of empowerment regarding various types of internet use (forming social connections, carrying out pro-social behaviors, and using technology for academic purposes) and prosocial behavioral intentions across six empirically derived online citizenship classes.

Middle- and high-school participants ( $n = 5144$ ) completed online measures of prosocial intentions, youth empowerment regarding different aspects of internet usage, and basic demographics. Using latent class analysis (LCA), six classes were identified: a class where with low ratings of empowerment across all domains and low intentions to help (1% of population), labeled “1) Unempowered and unmotivated”; 2) “Empowered and motivated” (70.9%); students that had high pro-social intentions but lacked empowerment in technology use domains other than academics, labeled “3) Academically empowered with helpful intentions” (8.0%); 4) “Academically empowered with low helpful intentions” (7.6%); 5) “Connection-focused”; 6) “Academically empowered and empowered to do good online”.

Chi-squared tests conducted to look at patterns between class membership with basic demographic variables found that there were significant

associations between class membership and grade ( $\chi^2(35) = 111.439, p < 0.05$ ), and gender ( $\chi^2(35) = 42.867, p < 0.05$ ), but not ethnicity. The “Empowered and motivated” group had the highest proportions of high school students. Meanwhile, the “academically empowered with low helpful intentions” had a higher proportion of males than the “academically empowered with helpful intentions” group. Identifying different patterns in student attitudes towards technology may be beneficial in creating relevant interventions to promote healthy technology use, especially in tailoring methods to specific grade levels.



## Teachers' Perspectives on Health and Well-Being: An Analysis of Qualitative Data from the RCT of RULER in Connecticut Preschools

*Meghan Tuttle*  
*Mentor: Craig Bailey*

Preschool staff turnover rates are between 26-40%, and preschool staff turnover rates have increased during the 2020 pandemic. To better understand teacher wellbeing, preschool teachers' and administrators' open ended responses to the following question were analyzed: "What could schools do to better support teacher health and well-being?" Responses were recorded during an online survey in Summer 2020 and Fall 2020. 119 educators responded in the summer, 89 educators in the fall, and 50 educators at both timepoints. The sample was 70% White, 23% Black, and 1% Asian, with 61% missing responses. The sample was 20% hispanic with 65% missing responses.

13 themes were found from the data through an iterative exploratory coding process undertaken collaboratively by two research associates. Educators most often mentioned the themes Communication and Teacher Perspectives, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services, Time Off and Breaks, Classroom Support, and Community Building. No statistically significant differences were found in theme choice between Teachers vs. Administrators at both timepoints, Treatment sites vs Control sites at both timepoints, or between Time One vs. Time Two. Future efforts should strive to triangulate this qualitative data with related quantitative measures collected during this study. Future efforts can focus on policy efforts to improve teacher wellbeing.