

Stereotypes and Perceptions of the Mentally Ill

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INTRODUCTION

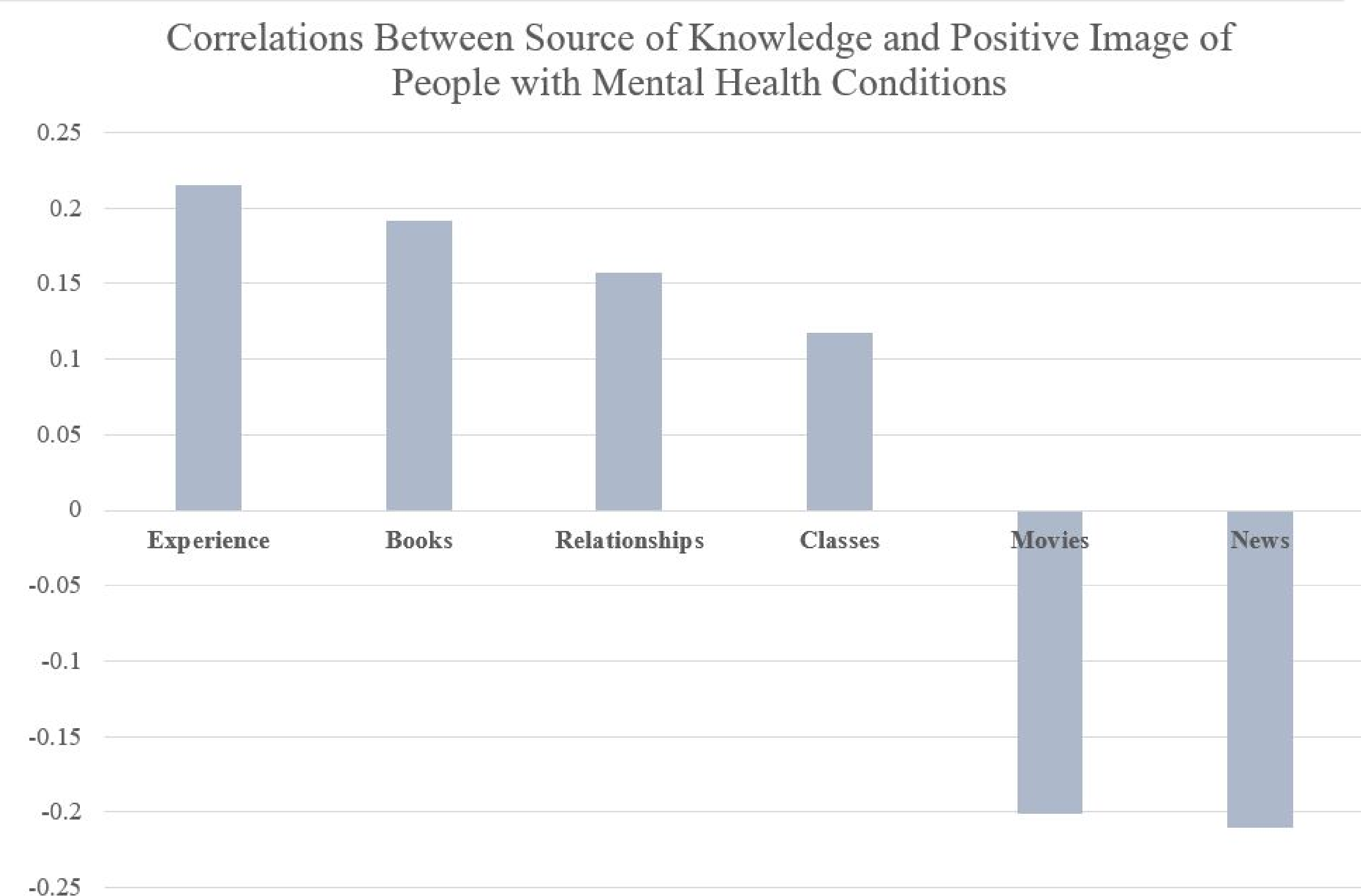
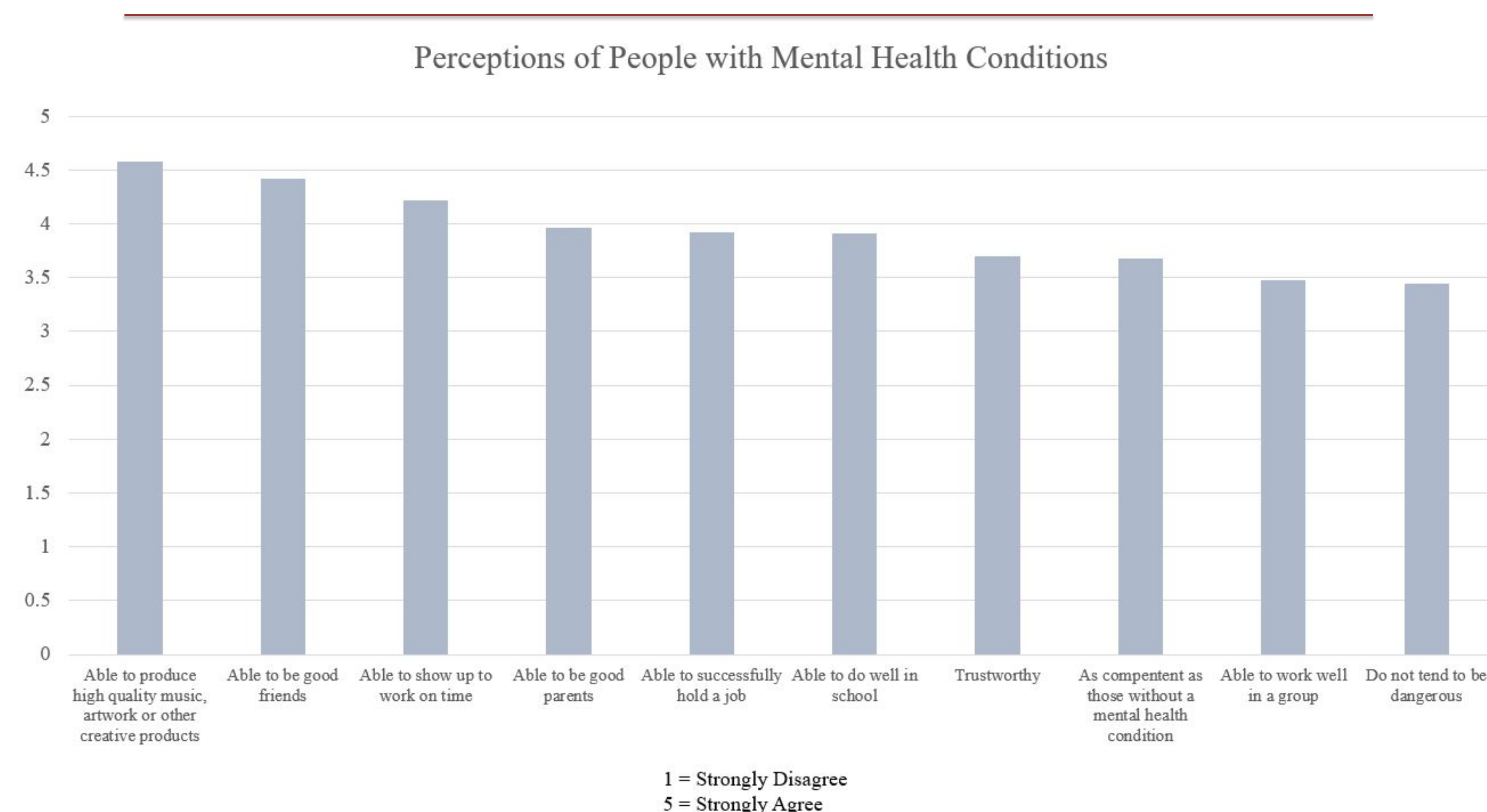
- The prevalence of mental illness is high among college students with 1 in 5 students facing a mental health condition (NAMI, 2017).
- Many individuals living with mental health conditions feel as though the stigma is more debilitating than the actual diagnosis (Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, 2013).
- A significant portion of the mentally ill population does not utilize mental health resources despite the positive effects of mental health treatment. Among the college population, only 36% of students with an apparent mental health condition received treatment in a given year (Eisenberg et al., 2011).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do individuals who have personal experience or who know people who have personal experience with mental health conditions have more positive views of the mentally ill?
2. Do classes that provide scientific information about mental health conditions affect people's views of those with mental health conditions?
3. What influence does the media (movies and news) have on people's views of individuals with mental health conditions?
4. What influence do books have on people's views of those with mental health conditions?

METHODS

- Students enrolled in any of 4 introductory Psychology or Communication Studies classes (PSYCH 101, 230, 280 or COMST 101) were recruited to participate in an online survey in exchange for 1 course/credit point.
- A total of 77 students (28 males and 49 females) completed the survey. The average age of the sample was 19.30 years. Participants self-described as Caucasian ($n = 61$), African American ($n = 2$), Hispanic or Latino ($n = 6$), Asian/Pacific Islander ($n = 5$), and Other ($n = 3$).



RESULTS

1. People's views were the most positive regarding individuals with mental health conditions' ability to produce high quality music, artwork or other creative products, ability to be good friends, and ability to show up to work on time.
2. People's views of the mentally ill were the least positive regarding dangerousness, ability to work well in a group, and competency when compared to that of individuals without mental health conditions.
3. Personal experiences and books about people with mental health conditions were the strongest predictors of positive views of those with mental health conditions ($p < .10$).
4. Gaining information from movies and the news were the strongest predictors of negative views of those with mental health conditions ($p < .10$).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Personal experience with a mental health condition is the strongest contributor to a positive view of the mentally ill.
- The news is the strongest contributor to a negative view of the mentally ill.
- The stereotype that the mentally ill are dangerous, although factually incorrect, remains widespread.
- Movies and the news need to work towards accurately portraying the symptoms and prevalence of mental health conditions.
- More programs such as NAMI In Our Own Voice are needed to increase personal exposure to mental health conditions.