

## 2019 Research Week Abstract

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### Presentations

**Title** – Contempt: The Silent “C” in PTSD

**Program of Study** – Behavioral Sciences, Professional Counseling

**Presentation Type** – **Choose one of the following** Oral Presentation

**Subtype** – **Choose one of the following for poster or oral presentation types:** Applied

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Statistics on veteran suicide have commanded both popular and academic attention. Influential factors mediating suicide vulnerability have been explored for mainstream cognitive emotional constructs and co-morbid mental health disorders. The role of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been well documented as a direct and indirect mediator of suicide vulnerability as have correlatives such as anger and affect. However, the emergence of the construct of contempt as a universal emotion has opened new paths of inquiry into contempt state and trait implications. The research topic under consideration is implication(s) of contempt in suicide vulnerability within the PTSD context of a military veteran population. A correlative study is proposed to examine the relationship between the variables of contempt, as expressed through moral injury, and suicide risk. The research findings are statistically significant based on simulated data statistical output from SPSS. Although the conclusion that moral injury causes increased suicide risk cannot be drawn, it is possible to predict the degree of suicide risk based on the score of moral injury and to infer, with a positive correlation ( $r = .457$ ), that as the severity of moral injury rises the degree of suicide risk tends to increase in US veterans with PTSD. The proposed study is relevant to the field of counseling in several aspects. The research has potential to enhance wellness for those who suffer from PTSD in the military veteran

population, an “at risk” population. Findings directly relate to the Department of Veteran’s Affairs appeal for innovative crisis intervention services for veterans with suicide vulnerability. The study also adds valuable insight to the body of professional knowledge on emotion, PTSD, and suicide prevention, and addresses the dearth in research literature on the construct of contempt. Investigation of contempt as an emotion more correlated with PTSD-suicide linkage than external anger, portends an adjustment to the focus of PTSD treatment allowing hope for innovative pre-crisis suicide treatment for military veterans, and overall diminishment of the prevalence of suicide presently experienced in the United States.