A stylized, dark orange outline of a human brain is centered on the page. The background is a lighter orange color with a diagonal split: the top-left and bottom-right corners are a darker shade of orange, while the top-right and bottom-left corners are the lighter shade. The text is overlaid on the brain outline.

# CAROLINAS PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE

2026

## My Schedule

Morning Session	Presenter	Location
9:00		
9:20		
9:40		
10:00		
10:20		
Afternoon Session	Presenter	Location
1:00		
1:20		
1:40		
2:00		
2:20		
2:40		

### Presentation Etiquette

Please be courteous to the student presenter and do not leave or come in while they are speaking. Each oral presentation will run for 10 minutes with 2-3 minutes of questions. This schedule allows approximately 5 minutes between each presentation for audience members to switch rooms. The moderator in each session will indicate when it is appropriate to move to a different room. Thank you for your support!

### Information for Presenters

Please arrive 15 minutes early for your session (e.g., 8:45 am or 12:45 pm). The moderator will assist you in loading your PowerPoint from your flash drive onto the room's PC computer so that it can be easily accessed when it is time for your talk. The moderator will introduce you and let you know when you are out of time. Please direct any questions to your room's moderator. Good luck!

# 2026 Carolinas Psychology Conference Proceedings

Schedule of Events	4
Presentation Locations	4
Campus Map	5
Building Map	6
Keynote Speaker	7
Psychology Jeopardy	7
Past Invited Speakers	8
Schedule of Presentations	10
Presentation Abstracts	18
Index of Presentations by First Author	55

## Acknowledgements

### Conference Executive Committee

Student Coordinator	Hannah Crocker
Faculty Advisor	Dr. Katherine Van Allen
Administrative Coordinator	Este Tucker

### Committee Chairs

Registration Chair	Madeline Hysten
Moderator Chair	Leah Hodge
Door Monitor Chair	Liam Hester
Social Media Chair	Kayla Caulk
Hospitality & Entertainment Chair	Matthew Lytkey

## Save the Date!

The 52nd Annual Carolinas Psychology Conference will be held  
**Saturday, April 17, 2027**

## Schedule of Events

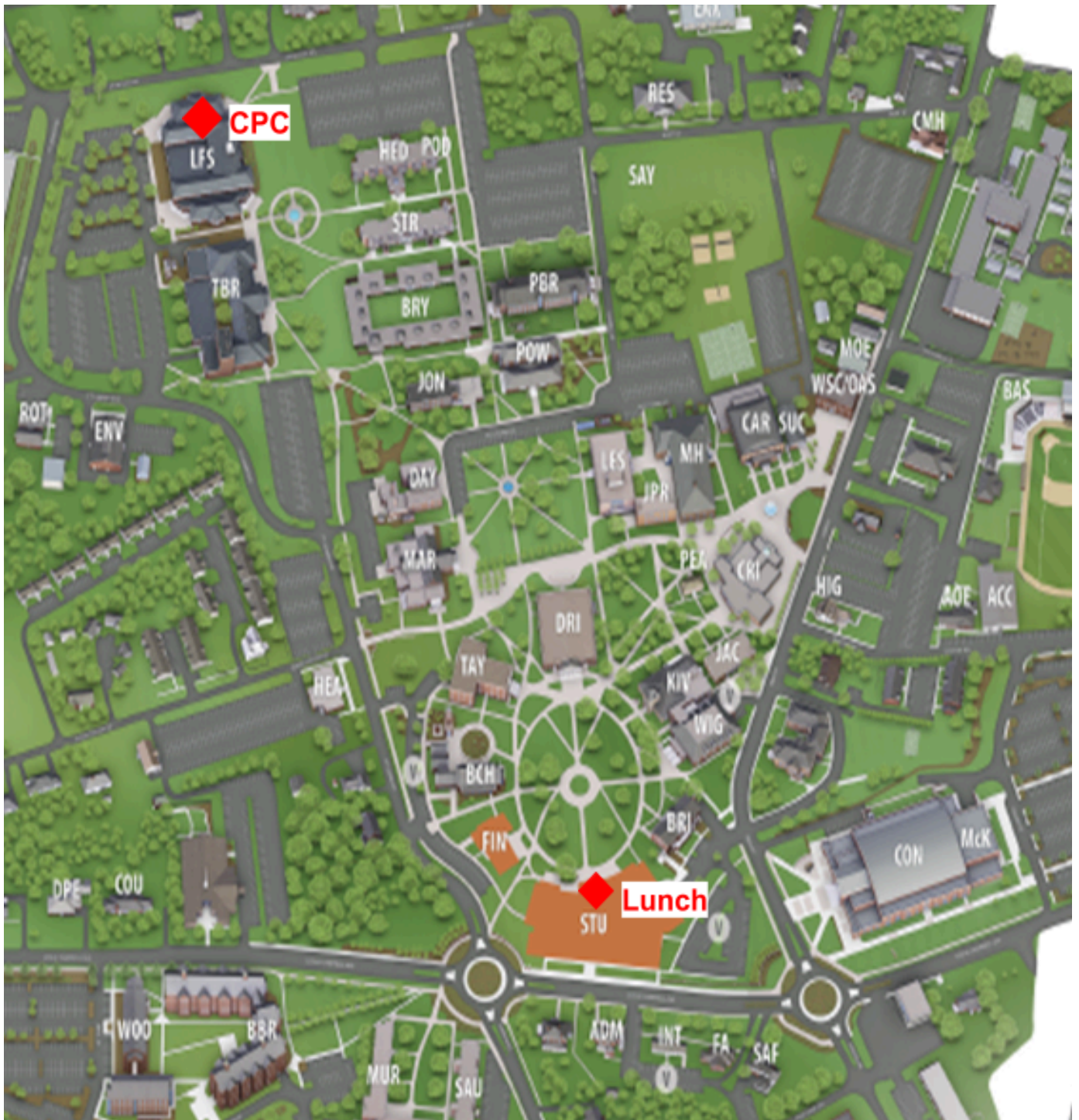
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Registration	Main Lobby
9:00 am – 10:40 am	Session I: Student Paper Presentations	Rooms 122 - 126
10:40 am – 10:50 am	Coffee & Networking Break	Main Lobby
10:50 am – 11:45 am	Keynote Address with Keely Muscatell	Lynch Auditorium
11:45 am – 1:00 pm	Lunch Break	Student Union
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Session II: Student Paper Presentations	Rooms 122 - 126
3:00 pm – 3:10 pm	Recharge Break	Main Lobby
3:10 pm – 4:00 pm	Psychology Jeopardy	Lynch Auditorium

## Presentation Locations

Room	Session 1 (9:00 - 10:40)	Session 2 (1:00 – 3:00)
121	Clinical/Developmental I	Clinical/Developmental II
122	Cognitive/Experimental I	Cognitive/Experimental III
123	Emotion/Health/Personality I	Emotion/Health/Personality II
124	Social/Community/Sports I	Social/Community/Sports II
125	Cognitive/Experimental II	Social/Community/Sports III
126	No Session Scheduled	Cognitive/Experimental IV + Emotion/Health/Personality III

Note: Student presentations rotate in 20-minute blocks during each presentation session.

# Campbell University Campus Map







## Keynote Speaker

Keely Muscatell, PhD

*“With a Little Help from My Friends:  
Personal and Scientific Evidence for  
the Role of Social Relationships in  
Shaping Health and Well-Being”*

Dr. Keely A. Muscatell grew up in a poor family (“one generation from the trailer park,” as her aunt likes to remind her), but that didn’t stop her from loving learning, school, and science. Now an associate professor in the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience at UNC Chapel Hill, Dr.

Muscatell’s research focuses on understanding links between social experiences such as stress, rejection, discrimination, and connection, and the immune system, an area of research she calls “social psychoneuroimmunology.” This work is conducted in interdisciplinary teams of diverse students and colleagues, otherwise known as Dr. Muscatell’s “lab family,” which is what makes it a joy for her to do. Dr. Muscatell has been fortunate to publish many papers, earn some grant money, and win some awards over her career, but her biggest accomplishments are when her students and trainees achieve their goals and dreams. In addition to being a proud lab mama, she is also mommy to her son, Archer, who brings her life joy and purpose outside of science.

## Psychology Jeopardy

3:10 pm, Lynch Auditorium

Campbell’s own Dr. Valerie Joseph, Assistant Professor of Psychology, will be hosting our Jeopardy game this year. Come cheer on the contestants from participating colleges as they compete in a game modeled after the television show (except all questions will pertain to various aspects of psychology). The winning team will receive a trophy to take home to its school. Additionally, the team will have its school’s name engraved on the trophy held with CPC, which identifies the winners from every year.

## Past Invited Speakers

Year	Date	School	Name	Topic
2025	April 5	Campbell	Sarah Gaither	Mixed Selves & Contexts
2024	April 13	Campbell	Antonio Puente	Psychological Science and Moral Priority
2023	April 12	Campbell	Kurt Gray	Understanding Moral Divides
2022	April 9	Campbell	Denzel Jones	Playing Inside the Box: The Importance of Creativity and Authenticity
2021	April 17	Campbell	Valerie Hoots	Virtual: Work for Today What You Want for Tomorrow
2020	April 18	Campbell	Sarah Gaither	Virtual: Multiple Identities = Multiple You's
2019	April 13	Campbell	Gabrielle Principe	How Everyday Conversations Shape Children's Memory for Experience
2018	April 21	Campbell	Lauren Fowler	Challenge Accepted! Turning research roadblocks into opportunities
2017	April 22	Campbell	Matthew McBee	Psychological Theories and Empirical Research: Closing the Loop for Better Science
2016	April 16	Campbell	Shelley L. Amen	Research Careers in the Psychological Sciences: A Case Study in Trial, Error and Perseverance
2015	April 18	Meredith	Jean Twenge	Modern Culture and Individualism: Has Self-Focus made Us Better or Worse?
2014	April 12	Meredith		NO SPEAKER
2013	April 20	Meredith	Lisa Amaya-Jackson	Trauma in the Lives of Children
2012	April 14	Meredith	Jerome Siegel	The Adaptive Function of Sleep
2011	April 9	Meredith	Jennifer Etnier	Can Exercise Make You Smarter?
2010	April 17	Meredith	David Sherman	Health Psychology: The Interface of Basic and Applied Research
2009	April 18	Meredith	Susan Clayton	Conservation Psychology: Understanding and Promoting Human Care for Nature
2008	April 4-5	Meredith	Abigail Baird	The Teen Species: Anatomy, Physiology and a bit of Zoology
2007	April 30-31	NCSU	Rachel Herz	Odor-Associative Learning and Emotion: Perception, Memory and Behavior
2006	April 21-22	Meredith	James Gallagher	The Role of Psychology in Public Policy
2005	April 15-16	NCSU	James P. Motiff	Reflections and Introspections: A look at life as a Psychologist
2004	April 11-12	Meredith	Jean M. Twenge	Individualism and Despair: Birth Cohort Changes in Personality and Live Outlook 1931-2002
2003	April 11-12	NCSU	Robert Provine	Laughter

2002	April 12-13	Meredith	G. Reid Lyon	The Neuropsychology of Learning Disabilities
2001	April 6-7	NCSU	Judy DeLoache	Becoming Symbol Minded...
2000	April 7-8	Meredith	James Pennebaker	(25th Anniversary) Trauma, Language, and Health
1999	April 9-10	NCSU	Stanley Finger	Publish or Perish: Two Sad Tales About the Brain and Behavior
1998	April 3-4	Meredith	Stephen Ceci	Is the truth in jeopardy? Cognitive and social factors that influence the accuracy of children's testimony
1997	April 11-12	NCSU	Allen Gardner	Signs of Language in Cross-Fostered Chimpanzees
1996	April 12-13	Meredith	Ann Howard	The Changing Nature of Work
1995	April 7-8	NCSU	Paul Rozin	The Cultural Evolution of Disgust
1994	April 8-9	Meredith	Margaret Matlin	Bimbos and Rambos: The Cognitive Basis of Stereotypes
1993	April 2-3	NCSU	Debra Baldwin	Stress and the Immune System
1992	April 10-11	Meredith	Alfred Owens	Psych for Real Life: Reviving the Early Functionalists' Agenda
1991	April 12-13	NCSU	Sandra Scarr	Love and Work: Challenge For Families Today
1990	April 20-21	Meredith	Jane Goodall	Thirty Years At Gombe Stream
1989	April 7-8	NCSU	James Butcher	Revising the MMPI
1988	April 8-9	Meredith	Elliott Aronson	Applic. Of Social Psychology
1987	April 3-4	NCSU	Susan Schiffman	Applied Taste/Smell Res.
1986	April 4-5	Meredith	Julian Rappaport	Univ. & Sense of Community
1985	April 12-13	NCSU	Elizabeth Loftus	Eyewitness Testimony
1984	April 6-7	Meredith	Wilse Webb	Nature of Sleep
1983	April 15-16	NCSU	Duane Rumbaugh	Great Apes & Language Debate
1982	April 6-7	NCSU*	Robert Baron	Control of Human Aggression
1981	April 10-11	NCSU	Jerre Levy	Cerebral Asymmetry
1980	April 18-19	Meredith	Joseph Wolpe	Anxiety & Depression
1979	April 6-7	NCSU	Jerome Singer	Stress, Control, and Coping
1978	April 14-15	Meredith	Roger Fouts	Communic'n - Man & Chimp
1977	April 22-23	NCSU	Peter Ornstein	Cognitive Proc. In Children
1976	April 9-10	Meredith	-----	-----

# Schedule of Morning Presentations

Clinical/Developmental I		Room 121	9:00-10:40
9:00	<p><b>Click, Post, Share: How Childhood Trauma Shapes Online Coping and Self-Disclosure</b>            Name: Shakira Moran &amp; Legacy White            College: UNC at Pembroke</p>	Faculty Mentor: Shilpa Regan	
9:20	<p><b>Little Ears, Big Reactions: Early Sensory Over-Responsivity and the Emergence of Misophonia Symptoms</b>            Name: Carson Lender            College: Duke University</p>	Faculty Mentor: Zachary Rosenthal	
9:40	<p><b>The Body and the Mind: Exploring Body Investment as a Mediator between Sexual Trauma and Suicidality</b>            Name: Catherine Gallagher            College: High Point University</p>	Faculty Mentor: Deborah Danzis	
10:00	<p><b>Computerized Vs. Non-computerized Performance Equivalency of a Word List Task</b>            Name: Caleb M. Barker            College: UNC Wilmington</p>	Faculty Mentor: Antonio Puente	
10:20	<p><b>Goal Pursuit: Comparing Grit and Goal Adjustment with Daily Measures of Goal Pursuit</b>            Name: Nikolai Tassin            College: UNC Greensboro</p>	Faculty Mentor: Kari Eddington	
Cognitive/Experimental I		Room 122	9:00-10:40

9:00	<p><b>Acute Exercise and Episodic Memory Performance in Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment</b>            Name: Allison Martinko            College: NC State University</p>	Faculty Mentor: Shevaun D. Neupert	
9:20	<p><b>Your Brain on Texting: How Working Memory, Impulsivity, and Emotion Shape Your Messages</b>            Name: Alalah Johnson            College: William Peace University</p>	Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Blush	

**9:40 Predictors of Conspiracy Mentality**  
Name: Kayla Caulk, Hannah Crocker, Camerin Foster, Madeline Hysten, & BryAnne Lee  
College: Campbell University Faculty Mentor: Valerie Joseph

**10:00 The Effects of Background Music on Memory and Retention in College Students**  
Name: Zoe Degn  
College: Elizabeth City State University Faculty Mentor: Kulwinder Kaur-Walker

**10:20 Achievement Goal Theory and Learning Objectives**  
Name: Lucy Worthington  
College: Queens University of Charlotte Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Samson

Emotion/Health/Personality I	Room 123	9:00-10:40
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**9:00 Predicting Attitudes towards Women from Dark Core of Personality in College Students**  
Name: Mariana McCottry & Gabrielle Hickey  
College: Fayetteville State University Faculty Mentor: Pius Nyutu

**9:20 Social Media Detoxing and its Effect on Self-Esteem**  
Name: Cali Younker  
College: Barton College Faculty Mentor: Tamara Avant

**9:40 Examining the Role of Adult Attachment and Parental Support in Same-Sex Relationship Satisfaction**  
Name: Kayla Dunn  
College: Meredith College Faculty Mentor: Gwynn Morris

**10:00 Problematic Mobile Phone Use, Attachment Styles, Emotion/Conflict Avoidance, and Motivation to Learn**  
Name: Sarah Moore, Ellie Lowry, & Frances Ulysse  
College: Longwood University Faculty Mentor: Chris Bjornsen

**10:20 Correlational Study on Spirituality and Resilience among International Students**  
Name: Andrii Maliuta  
College: Montreat College Faculty Mentor: Mark Hunter

**Social/Community/Sports I**

Room 124

9:00-10:40

- 9:00 Guided PETTLEP-Based Visualization and Free-Throw Accuracy Under Pressure in Collegiate Basketball Players**  
Name: Kaitlin Christian  
College: Warren Wilson College Faculty Mentor: April Bandy-Taylor
- 9:20 Stress and Athletic Performance**  
Name: Derrick Douglas Jr.  
College: Erskine College Faculty Mentor: Cynthia Midcalf
- 9:40 Effects of Recent U.S. Immigration Policy Changes on International Students**  
Name: Julia Virginio Cruz  
College: Wake Technical Community College Faculty Mentor: Jessica MacDonald
- 10:00 Job Resources Matter More: Relative Contributions of Demands and Resources to Job Satisfaction**  
Name: Savannah Gouch  
College: Meredith College Faculty Mentor: Candalyn Rade
- 10:20 The Psychological Factors Contributing to the Yips in Sports Performance**  
Name: Morgan Harold  
College: Barton College Faculty Mentor: Tamara Avant

**Cognitive/Experimental II**

Room 125

9:00-10:40

- 9:00 The Effect of Personality Traits and Political Affiliation on the Misinformation Effect in Fake News**  
Name: Leonie Hellum-Lilleengen  
College: Barton College Faculty Mentor: Tamara Avant
- 9:20 The Impact of Awe and Joy on Prosocial Interest in Narratives**  
Name: Mia Nicole Rodriguez & Andrinah Sweet  
College: North Carolina Wesleyan University Faculty Mentor: Ben Hiskes
- 9:40 Determinants of Variability in Rich-to-Lean Pausing on Fixed-Ratio Schedules of Reinforcement in Rats**  
Name: Emma Steckly  
College: College of Charleston Faculty Mentor: Chad Galuska

**10:00      Influence of SSRI Use, Impulsivity, & Medication Guidance on Alcohol-Induced Blackouts & Episodic Memory in College Students**

Name: Josie Parker

College: Coastal Carolina University

Faculty Mentor: Miranda Brenneman

**10:20      The Effect of Blindfolding on Flavor Identification**

Name: Anthony Brunson

College: Elizabeth City State College

Faculty Mentor: Kulwinder Kaur-Walker

## Schedule of Afternoon Presentations

Clinical/Developmental II	Room 121	1:00-3:00
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**1:00      College Students' Perception of Autism Based on the Gender of a Vignette Character**

Name: Elizabeth Barreras Hernandez

College: Queens University of Charlotte

Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Samson

**1:20      Toward Fairer Cognitive Testing: Challenges in Developing Normative Data for a Cloud-Based Verbal Memory Task**

Name: Liam Cayce

College: UNC Wilmington

Faculty Mentor: Antonio E. Puente

**1:40      Parental Discipline and Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes: A Longitudinal Cross-Cultural Study**

Name: Thulsy Krishnan

College: Duke University

Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Lansford

**2:00      Caffeine and Academics in Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder College Students**

Name: Connor Daniel

College: Queens University of Charlotte

Faculty Mentor: Jennifer Samson

**2:20      The Association Between Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Hypersexual Behaviors in Adults: A Literature Review of Neurobehavioral Mechanisms**

Name: Galicia Monforte

College: Shaw University

Faculty Mentor: Colin Adams

**2:40      Hidden Influences: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Academic Engagement, Integrity, and Performance Among College Students**

Name: Leland Sanders

College: High Point University

Faculty Mentor: Kirsten Li-Barber

**Cognitive/Experimental III**

Room 122

1:00-3:00

- 1:00 Online Storybook Read-Alouds as Contexts for Early Gratitude Development**  
Name: David Diaz, Chloe Bellia, Brianna Kiser, & Isabella Seip  
College: UNC Wilmington Faculty Mentor: Simone Nguyen
- 1:20 Optimizing Music Selection in Psychedelic Assisted Therapy: Emerging Insights from Practitioner and Patient Survey Data**  
Name: Milo Moskovitz  
College: Appalachian State University Faculty Mentor: MaryAnn Samad
- 1:40 Do Stimuli Associated with Upcoming Events Modulate Behavioral Disruption Occasioned by Negative Incentive Shifts in Rats?**  
Name: Alexandra Ford & Emma Steckly  
College: College of Charleston Faculty Mentor: Chad Galuska
- 2:00 Does Alpha-Band Activity Reflect Left Temporal Disengagement During a Repetitive Lexical Task?**  
Name: Catherine Edcel Aquino & Rachel Burke  
College: Coastal Carolina University Faculty Mentor: Brittney Bishop-Chrzanowski
- 2:20 Methodological Challenges in Developing an Olfactometer-Based Threshold Detection Paradigm in Mice**  
Name: Jennifer Burch  
College: UNC Wilmington Faculty Mentor: David MacQueen
- 2:40 Influence of Subliminal Brown Noise Audio on College Student's Mood, Confidence, and Problem-Solving Performance**  
Name: Jada Dixon  
College: Elizabeth City State University Faculty Mentor: Kulwinder Kaur-Walker

**Emotion/Health/Personality II**

Room 123

1:00-3:00

- 1:00 Do Optimists Effectively Cope with Stress Better than Pessimists?**  
Name: Maria Nix  
College: Charleston Southern University Faculty Mentor: Amanda Harmon

- 1:20 The Relationships Between Parental Characteristics, Picky Eating, and Body Dissatisfaction**  
 Name: Caitlin McCray  
 College: High Point University Faculty Mentor: Deborah Danzis
- 1:40 Dark Triad Traits: Do Levels of Religiosity Make a Difference?**  
 Name: Maritza A. Vasquez & Brandon Labar  
 College: Fayetteville State University Faculty Mentor: Pius Nyutu
- 2:00 How Interaction With Houseplants Can Reduce Psychological Stress in College Students**  
 Name: Tre'Khiayah Thorne  
 College: Elizabeth City State University Faculty Mentor: Kulwinder Kaur-Walker
- 2:20 Social Media and How it is Related to Self-esteem**  
 Name: Jaelyn Knolls  
 College: Montreat College Faculty Mentor: Mark Hunter
- 2:40 Coping Flexibility and Perceived Stress**  
 Name: Margaret Deviney  
 College: Montreat College Faculty Mentor: Mark Hunter

Social/Community/Sports II	Room 124	1:00-3:00
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- 1:00 Evaluating Automatic Biases Through Criminal Profiling: An Analysis of Professional Type, Depth, and Similarity**  
 Name: Abby Fort  
 College: High Point University Faculty Mentors: Martin Kifer, J.R. Moller, & Deborah Danzis
- 1:20 The Effects of Technology Use within Higher Education**  
 Name: Philip Riddle  
 College: Montreat College Faculty Mentor: Mark Hunter
- 1:40 Perceptions of Sexual Consent Across Time**  
 Name: Raina Rajkumar, Carlee Anderson, & Ella Bostic  
 College: Appalachian State University Faculty Mentor: Twila Wingrove
- 2:00 Advantages and Disadvantages of Taking a GAP Year Before Undergrad and Grad School**  
 Name: Takyla Graham  
 College: Barton College Faculty Mentor: Tamara Avant



Cognitive/Experimental IV +  
Emotion/Health/Personality III

Room 126

1:00-3:00

**1:00 Effect of Concussion on Driving Behavior**

Name: Calliope Warren & Lillian Airola

College: Coastal Carolina University

Faculty Mentor: Miranda Brenneman

**1:20 The Impact of Mindfulness on Emotional Regulation and Academic Performance in College Students**

Name: Dajiah Easter

College: Elizabeth City State University

Faculty Mentor: Kulwinder Kaur-Walker

**1:40 No presentation Scheduled**

**2:00 Correlational Study of Intellectual Humility and Gratitude in College Students**

Name: R. J. Manginello

College: Montreat College

Faculty Mentor: Mark Hunter

# Presentation Abstracts

## **Does Alpha-Band Activity Reflect Left Temporal Disengagement During a Repetitive Lexical Task?**

Catherine Edcel Aquino & Rachel Burke  
Coastal Carolina University

Attention is not constant but fluctuates. These lapses in attention (LAs) can influence cognitive performance, including how individuals respond during tasks. Studies show that LAs can be detected during repetitive tasks by monitoring response times (RTs) and possibly observed neurally using electroencephalography (EEG). Specifically, LAs may appear in the alpha frequency range (5–12 Hz), which is associated with internally directed attention. Additionally, tasks requiring lexical judgments rely on language and attentional processes. The left temporal region plays a central role in language processing, so alpha activity here may reflect lexical disengagement. This study examined whether left temporal alpha-band activity reflects RTs during a repetitive lexical decision-making task. Thirty-two individuals (Mage = 19.8, sd = 3.4) participated for course credit or as volunteers. The experiment was completed on a desktop computer while EEG was recorded. Participants saw and classified items as either words or nonwords, with 85% of trials coming from one category. The repetition induced LAs, with fast RTs indicating “zoned out” responding and slow RTs reflecting better attentional states ( $t(31) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .0046$ ,  $d = 0.54$ ). Alpha activity was also most prominent over the left temporal lobe during fast RTs ( $p = .003$ ). With analysis ongoing, it remains unclear whether this effect may be driven by words or nonwords. This study sought to establish novel EEG markers of LAs. Findings could help identify neural mechanisms involved in maintaining attention. Follow-ups could compare alpha activity in the left temporal lobe during lexical- versus image- or auditory-based tasks.

## **Computerized Vs. Non-computerized Performance Equivalency of a Word List Task**

Caleb M. Barker  
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Traditional neuropsychological testing has relied on face-to-face interactions between the clinician and patient. However, there is a significant modern trend toward computerized testing, urging researchers to validate these methods. This study aims to investigate computerized and non-computerized test performance from a cross-culturally adapted word list task. Participants (N = 192) were recruited from undergraduate classes at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington, as well as through convenience sampling. Using a between-subject design, age and education were controlled for using ANCOVAs across 19 dependent variables operationalizing test performance, and gender was included as an additional factor.

A Benjamini-Hochberg correction was applied to the primary group effect to adjust for multiple comparisons with a false discovery rate of 0.05. ANCOVAs revealed no significant difference in performance between computerized and non-computerized following the correction for multiple comparisons. Education acted as a significant predictor for performance across five variables ( $F = 4.53-11.66$ ,  $p = .001-.035$ ,  $\eta^2p = .03-.06$ ), while gender was a significant predictor for one variable ( $F = 5.73$ ,  $p = .018$ ,  $\eta^2p = .03$ ). Age was not indicated as a significant predictor, and the overall model significantly explained variance across two variables ( $F = 2.84-3.38$ ,  $p = .011-.026$ ). Current power estimates suggest that medium-to-large differences between computerized and non-computerized testing are unlikely. Two one-sided t-tests are planned to establish equivalency and will utilize the same correction procedure for multiple comparisons, while continued data collection will improve power.

### **College Students' Perception of Autism Based on the Gender of a Vignette Character**

Elizabeth Barreras Hernandez  
Queens University of Charlotte

Previous studies that focused on perception of autism in college students use only male characters (e.g. Dickter & Burk, 2021). The hypothesis of the current study was there would be a difference in perception of autism by college students when the autistic peer is male versus female. Participants ( $n = 39$ ) took an online survey and were randomly assigned to read a vignette about either a male or female autistic peer and then answered questions measuring perception of autism. There was no significant difference between groups that viewed the male versus female vignette in openness ( $t_{36.4} = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.79$ ); social distance ( $t_{34.9} = -0.55$ ,  $p = 0.58$ ); cognition ( $t_{36.4} = 0.18$ ,  $p = 0.86$ ); negative affect ( $t_{30.2} = 0.37$ ,  $p = 0.72$ ); positive affect ( $t_{33.8} = -0.39$ ,  $p = 0.70$ ); positive behavior ( $t_{29.4} = 1.27$ ,  $p = 0.21$ ); negative behavior ( $t_{32.5} = -0.96$ ,  $p = 0.35$ ). Perceptions of autism were positive overall supporting previous studies that college students hold positive perceptions of autism (White et al., 2019). There may be a difference in how participants would believe they would act in hypothetical scenario versus in real life; future research should examine the differences between hypothetical and real-life reactions (Hughes & Huby, 2004).

### **The Effect of Blindfolding on Flavor Identification**

Anthony Brunson  
Elizabeth City State University

This study examined whether restricting visual input affects flavor identification accuracy and confidence among college students. Research on multisensory integration suggests that flavor perception is shaped by the interaction of taste, smell, texture, and vision, with visual cues playing an important role in forming

flavor expectations. Sixty undergraduate students participated in a between-subjects experiment in which they sampled vanilla, chocolate, and butterscotch pudding under either a blindfolded or sighted condition. Flavor identification accuracy (coded as correct or incorrect) and confidence ratings were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests and chi-square analyses. Results indicated a significant difference in confidence ratings for butterscotch,  $t(58) = 2.17$ ,  $p = .017$  and chocolate flavors,  $t(58) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .039$  whereas there were no significant differences for vanilla flavor. Sighted participants demonstrating substantially higher accuracy for all the flavors as analyzed with a chi-square test of independence that revealed a significant association between visual condition and correct identification for the three flavors: vanilla,  $\chi^2(1, n = 60) = 33.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ; butter scotch,  $\chi^2(1, n = 60) = 7.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and chocolate,  $\chi^2(1, n = 60) = 38.57$ ,  $p < .001$ . Visual input did not meaningfully influence subjective certainty for vanilla flavor. However, for chocolate and butterscotch, confidence ratings showed a slight trend favoring the sighted condition. Overall, the finding suggests that visual cues may contribute to confidence judgments when distinguishing between similar flavors. These findings support multisensory integration theory by demonstrating that visual input enhances objective flavor identification accuracy.

### **Methodological Challenges in Developing an Olfactometer-Based Threshold Detection Paradigm in Mice**

Jennifer Burch

University of North Carolina Wilmington

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is associated with numerous sensory and cognitive deficits, yet olfactory dysfunction remains one of its most overlooked consequences. Among individuals with moderate to severe TBI, approximately 15–30% develop post-traumatic olfactory dysfunction (PTOD), but the mechanisms responsible for this impairment remain poorly defined in preclinical models. PTOD may arise from several pathways, including shearing of olfactory nerve fibers at the cribriform plate, disruption of olfactory bulb circuitry, and broader central nervous system damage. However, the relative contributions of these mechanisms following blast exposure are not well understood. Because olfactory impairment is associated with TBI severity, odor detection measures may serve as a sensitive, noninvasive indicator of blast-related neural injury.

The objective of this study is to examine how blast-related brain injury affects olfactory sensitivity in mice and to establish a paradigm for measuring olfactory thresholds using the KNOSYS olfactometer. C57BL/6 mice ( $N = 13$ ; 9 females, 4 males) will be trained on an odor detection task using serial dilutions of ethyl acetate. Behavioral responses will be used to determine detection thresholds before and after exposure to a controlled blast. Following behavioral testing, brains will be collected for immunohistochemistry to quantify astrocyte and microglial coverage in the olfactory bulb, hippocampus, and cortex.

Blast-exposed mice are expected to show reduced odor detection sensitivity with increased astrocyte and microglial coverage, reflecting heightened neuroinflammation. By linking behavioral sensitivity with immunohistochemical markers, this study evaluates olfactory threshold performance as a behavioral biomarker of TBI severity.

### **Predictors of Conspiracy Mentality**

Kayla Caulk, Hannah Crocker, Camerin Foster, Madeline Hylan, & BryAnne Lee  
Campbell University

In the age of misinformation, understanding predictors of conspiracy mentality proves useful in combating the spread of false information. Existing research examining conspiracy mentality indicates evidence of correlations with predictors such as locus of control and demographic characteristics (i.e., age, socioeconomic status, education level, and race) (e.g., Pisl et al., 2021; Hamilton, 2022; Mao et al., 2020); however, there is limited research examining these relationships within certain demographics. In this study, we hypothesize that attributes such as an external locus of control, lower perceived socioeconomic status, and younger generation are associated with higher levels of conspiracy mentality. Using a correlational study design, this study assesses these associations via an anonymous online survey consisting of the McArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status, Conspiracy Mentality Questionnaire (CMQ), Internal Locus of Control Index (ICI), an adapted belief in conspiracy theory item, and a demographic questionnaire. Our sample will consist of adults (at least 18 years old) who currently reside in the United States. Recruitment for the study is underway and entails a combination of convenience and snowball sampling via social media, physical flyers, and emailing faculty contacts. Planned data analyses include correlation and regression analyses comparing CMQ scores with scores on the McArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status and the ICI, as well as an independent-sample t-test to compare conspiracy mentality across generations. The findings from this research are predicted to support existing literature on conspiracy mentality while utilizing measures not previously compared.

### **Toward Fairer Cognitive Testing: Challenges in Developing Normative Data for a Cloud-Based Verbal Memory Task**

Liam Cayce  
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Neuropsychological assessment relies on standardized cognitive tests to evaluate brain-behavior relationships. The interpretation of test performance relies on normative datasets allowing clinicians to compare an individual's performance to that of a reference population. Historically, many neuropsychological tests have been developed and normed in WEIRD (Western, industrialized, rich, and

democratic) populations, raising concerns about the cultural and linguistic validity of these measures across diverse groups. To address these limitations, there are increasing efforts by researchers to develop culturally informed neuropsychological batteries and digital platforms capable of collecting large-scale normative data. This presentation is grounded in the question: what methodological challenges arise when collecting normative data for a cloud-based neuropsychological battery designed to support culturally equitable cognitive assessment? The current project contributes to the development of a cloud-based neuropsychological battery by establishing normative data for a verbal memory word-list task adapted from Spanish to U.S. English. Planned participants include adult volunteers recruited through in-person and online platforms. The task will be administered digitally as part of a broader battery. Data collection procedures emphasize standardized digital administration and demographic info to support normative analysis. Data collection is ongoing. Preliminary work has focused on task adaptation, linguistic balancing of word lists, and the development of procedures for administration and participant recruitment. Establishing normative data for digitally administered cognitive tasks presents methodological challenges related to sampling, cultural validity, and tech variability.

### **Guided PETTLEP-Based Visualization and Free-Throw Accuracy Under Pressure in Collegiate Basketball Players**

Kaitlin Christian

Warren Wilson College

Background: Mental imagery is widely used in sport psychology to improve focus, confidence, and motor performance. The PETTLEP model emphasizes physical, environmental, and emotional realism, allowing athletes to mentally rehearse skills that mirror performance conditions. Although PETTLEP-based visualization enhances performance in controlled settings, less is known about whether its benefits persist under mild pressure.

Hypothesis: It was hypothesized that PETTLEP-based visualization would improve free-throw accuracy relative to no visualization, that mild time-based pressure would reduce accuracy, and that visualization would buffer performance declines under pressure.

Methods: Eighteen collegiate basketball players completed a counterbalanced repeated-measures experiment with four conditions: visualization only, pressure only, visualization plus pressure, and control. In visualization conditions, athletes read a PETTLEP imagery script before shooting. Pressure conditions included a ten-second countdown timer during free throws. Each condition consisted of 20 free-throw attempts, and shooting accuracy served as the dependent variable.

Results: A two-factor repeated-measures ANOVA revealed no significant main effect of visualization,  $F(1,17)=0.55$ ,  $p=.468$ , no significant main effect of pressure,  $F(1,17)=0.68$ ,  $p=.420$ , and no significant visualization $\times$ pressure interaction,  $F(1,17)=0.13$ ,  $p=.720$ .

Discussion: Visualization did not significantly influence performance at the group level, though variability across athletes suggests imagery effects may vary by player role or experience. Exploratory analyses will examine differences between primary shooters and non-shooters. These findings clarify when mental imagery strategies may support performance under sport conditions.

### **Effects of Recent U.S. Immigration Policy Changes on International Students**

Julia Virginio Cruz

Wake Technical Community College

In 2025, a new U.S. presidential administration took office and immediately introduced policy changes through executive orders, affecting several aspects, including immigration, education, and employment. International students were particularly affected by these changes, raising concerns about their legal status, academic continuity, and career prospects. This study examines the online discourse of international students surrounding US immigration policy changes from January 2025 until February 2026. Public posts on Reddit were used as data sources to discover how international students discussed recent policy changes. Using the key term “international student feelings about new immigration rules,” filtering for ‘past year’ publication, the first 30 posts were collected, with 22 meeting the inclusion criteria. The posts were examined through thematic and sentiment analysis. Results suggest recent immigration policy changes are affecting international students and their families in multiple ways, including uncertainty about their visa status, SEVIS cancellations, maintaining lawful status in the United States, OPT/CPT restrictions, and future job prospect uncertainty. Those concerns appear to be influencing academic planning, travel, and the decision to stay in the U.S. or explore alternative country destinations. Across these themes, language related to fear, stress, and insecurity was common, suggesting that recent policy changes are not only influencing practical decisions but also contributing to psychological stress. This study is limited by its reliance on online data; future research using direct interviews or surveys is needed to explore these issues and provide a more comprehensive understanding of international students' experiences.

## **Caffeine and Academics in Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder College Students**

Connor Daniel

Queens University of Charlotte

Caffeine is a stimulant often seen in the workplace and classrooms. It had little to no effect among habitual users until it was taken away resulting in poorer performance in laboratory tests (James, 1998). Childs and de Wit (2006) found that caffeine has a positive effect on both mindset and performance in regards to mood and memory in the general population. ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder) is a developmental disorder associated with symptoms such as irregular energy expenditure, hyperactivity, attention span issues and organizational skills (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). ADHD medication, often used to help increase academic success, is stimulant based and as caffeine is a stimulant, the goal of the current study was to see if caffeine usage and academic attitude had a relationship among ADHD college students. It is possible that people with ADHD who maintain use of caffeine are more positive about academics. In total, 14 participants who self-reported having an ADHD diagnosis answered a quick survey about their attitude towards academics (school, class, homework) and their caffeine usage. The study found no significant relationship between academic attitude and caffeine usage in ADHD college students ( $r = 0.254$ ,  $p = 0.381$ ). There may be other individual differences in factors such as medication that have a stronger relationship with academics than caffeine usage. The study had certain limitations such as a small sample and skewed gender participation. Future research should study just ADHD college males or take medication into account.

## **The Effects of Background Music on Memory and Retention in College Students**

Zoe Degn

Elizabeth City State University

This study examined how different types of background music influence retention among college students during a reading comprehension task. Prior research suggests that music, especially selections with lyrics or fast tempos, can increase cognitive load and interfere with learning. Calmer instrumental music may support focus and reduce distraction. Twenty-nine undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: upbeat lyrical, calm lyrical, upbeat instrumental, or calm instrumental. After listening to the assigned music while reading a standardized passage, participants completed a comprehension quiz. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA approached significance,  $F(3,25) = 2.856$ ,  $p = .057$ . Mean scores varied across groups, with the calm instrumental condition showing the highest performance ( $M = 12.17$ ,  $SD = 6.18$ ) and the upbeat instrumental condition the lowest ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 2.28$ ). Post-hoc Bonferroni comparisons were nonsignificant, though the contrast between the calm instrumental ( $M = 12.17$ ,  $SD = 6.18$ ) and upbeat instrumental ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 2.28$ ) groups neared significance ( $p$

= .052). Effect sizes were small to moderate (eta-squared = .255). The study was limited by unequal group sizes, substantial variability within conditions, and subject attrition, which reduced statistical power and generalizability. These findings highlight the complexity of auditory distraction during studying and emphasize the need for larger and more representative samples that I am continuing work on. I will continue to collect data to share the latest study findings at the conference.

### **Coping Flexibility and Perceived Stress**

Margaret Deviney  
Montreat College

Coping theory suggests that individuals who adapt their coping strategies to the demands of stressful situations may experience better psychological outcomes. The present study examined the relationship between coping flexibility and perceived stress among college students and tested the hypothesis that individuals with greater coping flexibility would report lower levels of perceived stress.

A convenience sample of 30 undergraduate students (ages 18–25) from Montreat College completed two self-report measures: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and the Coping Flexibility Scale. These instruments assessed perceived stress levels and the extent to which individuals reported using multiple coping strategies across different situations.

A Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between coping flexibility and perceived stress. Results indicated a statistically significant moderate negative correlation,  $r(28) = -.52$ ,  $p = .003$ . Coping flexibility accounted for approximately 27% of the variance in perceived stress ( $r^2 = .27$ ), indicating that higher coping flexibility was associated with lower perceived stress. These findings suggest that coping flexibility may function as a protective factor associated with lower perceived stress among college students. Future research with larger and more diverse samples may help clarify the role of coping flexibility in stress-related outcomes.

### **Online Storybook Read-Alouds as Contexts for Early Gratitude Development**

David Diaz, Chloe Bellia, Brianna Kiser, & Isabella Seip  
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Childhood is a critical period for cognitive development, during which children’s understanding of gratitude develops rapidly. Gratitude, defined as the tendency to notice and appreciate positive aspects of life, is an abstract social-cognitive construct that may be shaped by early experiences, including exposure to storybooks emphasizing gratitude-related concepts. Online storybook read-alouds are videos of narrators reading children’s books, providing widely accessible exposure to such concepts for children and families. The goal of the current study was to examine the sources and sources and frequency of gratitude-related

concepts in online storybook read-alouds. Transcriptions of 123 storybooks from two non-profit organizations, Storyline Online (SAG-AFTRA Foundation) and PBS Kids, were analyzed. These books, aimed at young children, received an average of approximately 3,655,829 views. To identify gratitude-related content, we systematically searched story text and narrator dialogue for three target terms: “gratitude,” “thanks,” and “appreciate.” Instances were identified separately for written text and narrator contributions. Across the 123 storybooks, gratitude-related concepts appeared 77 times in the text and 128 times in narrator dialogue. Findings indicate that children’s exposure to gratitude in online read-alouds occurs through both written content and narrator contributions, which may enhance engagement, deepen comprehension, and reinforce gratitude through explicit modeling. Because children may vary in their exposure to gratitude at home, online read-alouds may provide an accessible avenue for introducing, discussing, and reinforcing gratitude, thereby supporting early social-cognitive development.

### **Influence of Subliminal Brown Noise Audio on College Student’s Mood, Confidence, and Problem-Solving Performance**

Jada Dixon

Elizabeth City State University

Subliminal messaging has been proposed to influence affect and behavior outside conscious awareness, yet empirical findings remain mixed, particularly in applied academic contexts. The present study examined whether subliminal positive affirmations embedded in brown noise would enhance mood, task confidence, and problem-solving performance among college students. Twenty-two undergraduate students were randomly assigned to either a subliminal-affirmation audio condition or a brown-noise-only control condition. Results indicated that participants exposed to subliminal affirmations reported significantly higher positive mood than control participants,  $t(20) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .030$ ,  $d = 0.997$ , and significantly greater task confidence,  $t(20) = 2.48$ ,  $p = .022$ ,  $d = 1.06$ . The strongest effect emerged for problem-solving performance: participants in the subliminal condition solved significantly more anagrams than those in the control condition,  $t(16.59) = 4.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.08$ . These findings suggest that brief exposure to subliminal positive affirmations embedded in brown noise may enhance affective states and cognitive performance during academic tasks. Data collection is ongoing to further examine the reliability and validity of these effects in a larger and more diverse sample.

### **Stress and Athletic Performance**

Derrick Douglas Jr.

Erskine College

This study will use a qualitative approach to explore how stress affects athletic performance based on athletes’ individual experiences. The goal is to understand

what athletes experience as stress, what triggers it (e.g., pressure to perform, academics, injuries, expectations from coaches, teammates, and family), and how they believe it impacts their performance before and during competition. The hypothesis for this study is that athlete stress is triggered by a combination of pressure to perform as both an athlete and as a college student. Participants were collegiate athletes (N = 22) from multiple sports (including both team and individual sports) Participants were recruited through university athletic programs and athletic department outreach. Including athletes from different sports allowed for a broader range of stressors and competitive demands to be examined. Participants completed one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Interview questions covered sources of stress, emotional and physiological responses to stress, perceived impact on performance (e.g., focus, confidence, decision-making), and coping strategies used to manage stress. Interviews were conducted in a private setting or secure video platform, audio-recorded with participant consent, and transcribed for analysis. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes across participants. Codes were developed from repeated concepts within the data and organized into broader themes that explain how stress influences athletic performance. Results indicated a difference in performance stress between group sports and individual sports; however, both groups felt pressure to please their coaches and contribute to their teams. All participants remarked on the personal pressure to do well in their classes, and stress when they had to be absent from class for games.

### **Examining the Role of Adult Attachment and Parental Support in Same-Sex Relationship Satisfaction**

Kayla Dunn

Meredith College

Relationships are a central aspect of many people's lives; they foster our emotional needs for security, belonging, and safety. While many studies have looked at relationship satisfaction in heterosexual couples in regards to adult attachment, few have looked particularly at adult attachment and parental support in same-sex relationships. Past research shows that those with more secure adult attachment and high parental support report higher relationship satisfaction and those with insecure attachments and less parental support report lower relationship satisfaction. There were two primary aims of this study: 1. To investigate the role of parental support on the perceived relationship satisfaction of individuals in a same-sex couple. 2. To ascertain the impact of adult attachment on relationship satisfaction of same-sex couples. A sample of 26 participants predominately from an all-female private college in NC completed a survey about adult attachment, relationship satisfaction, and parental support. A Pearson's correlation between parental support and relationship satisfaction had no significance ( $p = .174$ ). An Independent-samples t-test indicated no significant difference between secure and insecure attachment groups when it comes to relationship satisfaction ( $p = .078$ ).

These findings suggest that relationship satisfaction may be shaped by other factors besides parental support and adult attachment in same-sex relationships.

### **The Impact of Mindfulness on Emotional Regulation and Academic Performance in College Students**

Dajiah Easter

Elizabeth City State University

This study examined whether a brief mindfulness intervention improved stress, emotion regulation, and academic performance among college students. Participants (N = 20) were assigned to either a mindfulness group or a control group and completed pre- and post-assessments of emotional regulation (DERS-16), perceived stress (PSS), and academic performance (APS). Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare groups at both time points. Results indicated no significant group differences at pre-test for all the three measures suggesting that groups were comparable at baseline. Post-test comparisons showed no significant differences for DERS-16 and PSS indicating that the mindfulness intervention did not produce differential effects on emotion regulation or stress relative to the control group. However, a significant group difference emerged for APS post-test scores,  $t(18) = 4.26, p < .001$ , with the mindfulness group reporting higher academic performance (M = 33.30, SD = 3.50) compared to the control group (M = 27.40, SD = 2.63). Effect size estimates supported this finding, with a large Cohen's d of 1.91. No other variables demonstrated significant effects. Overall, the results suggest that while the mindfulness intervention did not significantly impact stress or emotion regulation compared to the control condition, it was associated with higher academic performance at post-test. These findings highlight the potential academic benefits of brief mindfulness practices, even when emotional outcomes do not show significant group differences. Additional data will lead to better interpretation of results.

### **Do Stimuli Associated with Upcoming Events Modulate Behavioral Disruption Occasioned by Negative Incentive Shifts in Rats?**

Alexandra Ford & Emma Steckly

College of Charleston

In a typical negative incentive shift paradigm, rats' lever presses sometimes produce a signaled large amount of food reinforcement (a rich component) and sometimes produce a signaled smaller amount (a lean component). When they complete a rich component and then switch to a lean component (a rich-lean transition), significant disruption occurs. Post-reinforcement pause duration increases dramatically, and other adjunctive behaviors such as ethanol self-administration and aggression occur at higher rates. These behaviors are maladaptive because they delay the next food presentation, even though future rich components may follow the lean. This research seeks to modulate pausing

during rich-lean transitions by providing information during the transition about whether the following component will be rich or lean. Four male Long-Evans rats lever pressed on multiple fixed-ratio schedules with either 4 pellet (rich) or 1 pellet (lean) reinforcers, which alternated pseudorandomly. In the baseline condition, the upcoming component was signaled by the lever inserted into the chamber. In the experimental condition, the status of a stimulus light signaled the following component. It was hypothesized that rich-lean transitions would engender substantially more disruption, measured by post-reinforcement pausing, than other transition types. It was also hypothesized that a signaled lean component following the negative incentive shift would enhance disruption and a signaled rich component would reduce it. As predicted, rich-lean pause durations were much longer. No consistent effects of the signaled following component were found across rats, suggesting that the immediate past and upcoming components influence rates of maladaptive behaviors more than the following component.

**Evaluating Automatic Biases Through Criminal Profiling: An Analysis of Professional Type, Depth, and Similarity**

Abby Fort

High Point University

Criminal profiling is a controversial investigative tool that has historically been both beneficial and harmful to police investigations. Although criminal profiling itself has been widely studied and debated, little research has examined how professional type, depth/ length of profile, and perceived similarity to a profile influences perceptions of profile validity and subsequent reliance on it. Data were collected through a High Point University Survey Research Center poll of United States residents; participants were presented with a mock homicide case and criminal profile. Profiles differed on professional type (Psychologist, FBI Agent, or Profiler) and depth (deep/ long profiles or shallow/ short profiles) with otherwise consistent information. Participants' similarity to the profile was determined retrospectively using demographics including race, gender, and age. Analysis consisted of using a quasi-experimental between-subjects design examining the effects of depth and similarity. Due to significant participation loss in manipulation checks, the effect of professional type was analyzed separately with a one factor between-subjects design. It is hypothesized that participants who receive the FBI Agent profile, who receive the deep profile, and who are more demographically similar to the profile will perceive the profile as more valid – consistent with authority, conjunction fallacy, and familiarity theories. This study is the third iteration of the project, replicating previous conflicting results with an expanded national study. The continuation of the current study is vital to developing the investigation practices that keep us and our society safe.

## **The Body and the Mind: Exploring Body Investment as a Mediator between Sexual Trauma and Suicidality**

Catherina Gallagher  
High Point University

Sexual violence is a major public health concern, especially considering the robust positive relationship between sexual trauma and suicidality across genders (Alix et al., 2017). Body investment, an individual's engagement with and care for their body, may be a mechanism to help explain this relationship (Orbach et al., 2001). While prior research has established strong relationships between sexual trauma and suicidality, and separately between low body investment and suicidality, the interaction between sexual trauma, body investment, and suicidality remains unexplored (Lamis et al., 2020; Scheffers et al., 2017). The present study investigates how body investment is related to experiences of sexual trauma and suicidality among young adults. I hypothesized that body investment would mediate the relationship between sexual trauma and suicidality, and that a history of sexual trauma would be positively correlated with suicidality and negatively correlated with body investment, while body investment would be negatively correlated with suicidality. Participants were 128 young adults (Mage = 19) who completed demographic information and variable measures of each construct. A mediation model was tested using sexual trauma as the predictor, body investment as the mediator, and suicidality as the outcome. The effects of sexual violence frequency on body investment and of body investment on suicidality were significant. The indirect effect of sexual violence frequency on suicidality through body investment was significant ( $b = .02$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI: .004, .04), demonstrating partial mediation. Results highlighted the significant role of body investment in explaining the relationship between sexual trauma and suicidality.

## **Job Resources Matter More: Relative Contributions of Demands and Resources to Job Satisfaction**

Savannah Gouch  
Meredith College

Building upon Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory, the present study examines how perceived job resources and job demands relate to overall job satisfaction. Job resources such as supervisor support, role clarity, and perceived productivity may enhance positive work experiences, whereas job demands such as workload and hours worked may contribute to strain and reduced satisfaction. Using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2022, this study investigated the relative contribution of these demands and resources to job satisfaction. We hypothesized that job resources would positively predict job satisfaction, job demands would negatively predict job satisfaction, and that job resources would more strongly predict job satisfaction than job demands. Data were obtained from NORC at the University of Chicago, with  $N = 2,292$  valid responses. A series of bivariate and

relative weights analyses were conducted to evaluate our hypotheses. A relative weights analysis indicated that when both resources and demands are considered ( $R^2 = .26$ ), supervisor support (48.9%) and productivity (31.1%) were the strongest contributors to job satisfaction, while demands such as work overload (12.0%) and hours worked (0.2%) were not as strong predictors. Overall, results suggest that job resources play a larger role in predicting job satisfaction than job demands emphasizing the importance of organizational support and resources. For future research, we suggest examining additional types of job resources and identifying which most strongly predict job satisfaction, so that organizations can better understand which resources are most important for promoting employee satisfaction.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Taking a GAP Year Before Undergrad and Grad School**

Takyla Graham  
Barton College

Taking a gap year can improve students' academic performance, likely because those students adopt a growth mindset (Clark, 2005). I hypothesized that participants who took a gap year (before entering either undergraduate and graduate school) would be more prepared and have better academic performance than students who did not take a gap year. Participants ( $N = 46$ ) were current and former college students who answered a questionnaire on their gap year status, self-assessments (i.e., how they feel), and an evaluation (i.e., their behavior/actions) of their academic preparedness and performance. Independent t-tests showed that results did not match my hypothesis as there was no significance difference in perceived performance for those taking a gap year ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) or not ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ),  $t(44) = 1.29$ ,  $p = 0.20$ . There were also no significant differences in their perceived preparedness for college,  $t(44) = 1.38$ ,  $p = 0.17$ . However, students who felt more prepared for college had a higher average performance evaluation ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), than students who felt less prepared for college ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ),  $t(44) = 2.88$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between the preparedness and performance evaluations for all participants ( $r(44) = 0.86$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), but this relationship was stronger for participants who took a gap year ( $r(3) = 0.95$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) than those who did not ( $r(41) = 0.83$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

### **Examination of Neuroticism and Acute vs. Chronic Stress in College Athletes**

Irma Granstam  
Barton College

Student-athletes' acute and chronic stress affects their wellbeing and confidence before competition (Malone, 2022). College athletes face various challenges, such as managing school, athletics, and personal life, all under pressure internally and

externally. However, it is unclear how specific demographics (e.g., academic year, gender, individual/team sport) play a part in the perception of acute/chronic stress and neuroticism. Participants (N = 69) completed three different scales of chronic and acute stress (PSS, STAI, respectively) and personality traits (BIG5). It was hypothesized that higher neuroticism scores would positively correlate with higher acute and chronic stress scores and that females/younger student-athletes would perceive both more acute and long-term stress, and have higher neurotic scores. It was also hypothesized that people participating in individual sports would express higher stress levels. There was a significant positive correlation with all three scales,  $r_s(67) = 0.40-0.67$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was a significant gender difference that women experience greater chronic stress,  $t(66) = -2.45$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , acute stress,  $t(66) = -3.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and higher levels of neuroticism,  $t(66) = -3.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Freshmen experienced significantly more neuroticism than upperclassmen,  $F(2, 63) = 5.43$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.17$ . When controlling gender and year, student-athletes participating in individual (versus team) sports have higher levels of acute stress,  $F(12,55) = 1.82$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.28$ . To conclude, freshman, female, individual sport athletes experienced greater chronic/acute stress and have neurotic personality types.

### **The Psychological Factors Contributing to the Yips in Sports Performance**

Morgan Harold  
Barton College

The present study examined how psychological pressure contributes to the yips, a performance breakdown characterized by involuntary disruptions in fine motor control during athletic tasks (e.g., McDaniel et al., 1989; Saleh, 2023). It was hypothesized that athletes experiencing greater psychological pressure and anxiety would report yips-like disruptions and poorer performance under high-pressure conditions. Participating student-athletes (N = 43) averaged 8-10 years of sport experience, with nearly half reporting experiencing yips. Participants completed a survey measuring competition anxiety, overthinking, and fear of mistakes, followed by a sport-specific skill task performed under low- and high-pressure conditions. They reported moderate competition anxiety (M = 5.86, SD = 2.04), higher anxiety during high-pressure moments (M = 6.83, SD = 2.32), as well as moderate levels of overthinking (M = 3.02, SD = 1.20) and fears of mistakes (M = 3.50, SD = 1.21). Contrary to hypotheses, there was no effect of experience on factors contributing to poorer performance; however, participants with a history of choking under pressure were significantly more concerned about impact of pressure (M = 6.23, SD = 1.59) than those without this experience (M = 4.56, SD = 2.24),  $F(2, 38) = 4.99$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.21$ . A subset of participants who completed a sport-specific skill task and performed marginally better in the low-pressure condition (M = 83.5%, SD = 19.6),  $t(3) = 2.45$ ,  $p = 0.09$ . These findings contribute to understanding psychological mechanisms underlying the yips and may inform targeted interventions to reduce anxiety and improve performance.

## **Identifying Links in Generative AI Dependency and Creative Self-Concept**

Sidney Hartness  
Montreat College

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly used by students to personalize learning, offering rapid feedback, improved grades, and convenience. However, unregulated AI usage has been linked to reduced critical thinking, disoriented self-concept, social isolation, and fragmented authorship. This study examined the relationship between creative self-concept (CSC) and generative AI dependency (GAID) among college students. A convenience sample of 106 undergraduate students completed two self-report measures: the Short Scale of Creative Self and the Generative AI Dependency Scale. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the association between CSC and GAID. Results indicated a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between CSC and GAID,  $r(104) = -.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI  $[-.50, -.16]$ , explaining approximately 12% of the variance in generative AI dependency. Fisher  $r$ -to- $z$  tests were conducted to determine whether the correlation differed by gender, academic year, or major. Although none of these differences were statistically significant, the correlation was strongest among sophomores ( $r = .60$ ,  $n = 14$ ), and the largest negative association appeared among STEM majors, which was the only within-major correlation reaching statistical significance. These findings suggest that stronger creative self-concepts may be associated with lower reliance on generative AI tools. Limitations include the use of a convenience sample and potential cultural bias. Results indicate the need for intentional generative AI usage that maintains students' intrinsic motivation and social learning through scaffolding techniques. Future research may further examine how generative AI use interacts with students' creative autonomy and authentic identity.

## **The Effect of Personality Traits and Political Affiliation on the Misinformation Effect in Fake News**

Leonie Hellum-Lilleengen  
Barton College

The misinformation effect is a cognitive bias where, after being exposed to misleading information, individuals recall an event inaccurately (Ayers & Reder, 1998). Despite the rise of "fake news," it remains unclear what makes an individual more susceptible to misinformation. The present study examined how personality traits and political affiliation influenced susceptibility to the misinformation effect in fake news. Using a between-subjects quasi-experimental design, participants were (1) asked about their political affiliations, (2) completed the Big 5 Personality Assessment (Lang et al., 2011), and (3) chose whether they believed 20 news article headlines were real or fake. Accuracy scores were calculated as the percentage of correct responses (i.e., higher scores indicated better ability to distinguish between real/fake headlines). Contradictory to hypotheses, political affiliation was unrelated

to susceptibility to misinformation, but personality traits were significant predictors of accuracy. Overall, accuracy was significantly positively correlated with conscientiousness [ $r(57) = 0.109, p < 0.0001$ ], openness [ $r(57) = 0.314, p < 0.0001$ ], and agreeableness [ $r(57) = 0.171, p < 0.0001$ ], suggesting that participants with higher levels of these traits were more accurate/less susceptible. However, accuracy was significantly negatively correlated with both neuroticism [ $r(57) = -0.295, p < 0.0001$ ] and extraversion [ $r(57) = -0.103, p < 0.0001$ ], suggesting that participants with higher levels of these traits were less accurate/more susceptible. Although the negative correlation between accuracy and neuroticism was significant for all political affiliations, the relationship was strongest for Republicans, [ $r(20) = -0.401, p < 0.0001$ ].

### **Impact of Skincare Branding on Perceptions of Aging in College Students and Older Adults Using Implicit Associations Test**

Kylie Huffman  
Meredith College

In Western society, the beauty industry has expanded its focus towards combatting the natural aging process by promoting products that emphasize “youthfulness” and “anti-aging”. These unrealistic beauty standards and products, mostly targeted at women, reinforce the ageist notion that having an older appearance is equivalent to unattractiveness. This messaging is harmful as it can perpetuate already existing age-related biases. Previous research has shown a strong implicit preference for younger over older adults across age groups, but little research has examined whether exposure to anti-aging branding influences these implicit attitudes. The present study investigated whether viewing anti-aging in comparison to neutral skincare advertisements would increase negative implicit attitudes toward older adults among younger and older adult women. Participants ( $N = 64$ ) consisted of female college students (ages 18–24) and older adult women (ages 55–87) from the Southeastern United States. Participants completed a survey where they were assigned to view either a series of neutral or anti-aging skincare advertisements prior to completing an Age Implicit Associations Test (IAT). On average, participants reported a moderate to strong automatic preference for young compared to old people, in both the neutral and anti-aging conditions. However, analyses revealed no effect of age or branding on this preference. Findings suggest that brief exposure to neutral versus anti-aging branding did not significantly influence implicit age-related attitudes in either group, suggesting further research should be conducted.

## **Your Brain on Texting: How Working Memory, Impulsivity, and Emotion Shape Your Messages**

Alalah Johnson

William Peace University

Texting has become one of the most common forms of social interaction and everyday communication, yet the psychological factors such as cognitive and behavioral aspects that influence how an individual composes and sends messages remains unknown. This study explored whether working memory capacity, impulsivity, attachment styles, and demographic characteristics predict preferences for two distinct texting styles: short, rapid “burst” messages and longer paragraph style messages. A total of 154 participants completed a demographic questionnaire, working memory assessments, impulsivity measures (BIS-11 and IMT/DMT), adult attachment inventory, and self reporting measures to assess texting behavior and texting style. Correlational analyses were conducted to explore relationships between these factors and texting style. Additional statistical testing were conducted such as a one way ANOVA and independent samples two tailed t tests in order to evaluate demographic and relational factors. Results concluded that higher self reported impulsivity was positively correlated with short text messaging behavior, while heightened emotional states were associated with a greater tendency to send longer messages. In contrast, working memory capacity and attachment styles were not significantly related to texting style preferences. Age was also an associating factor with texting behavior; older participants had greater tendency of sending longer messages rather than rapid short messages. These results highlight how cognitive control, age, and emotion shape texting behaviors, providing insight into the psychology of digital communication. Future research should integrate direct message analysis to improve generalizability.

## **Social Media and How it is Related to Self-esteem**

Jaelyn Knolls

Montreat College

Social media use has been widely discussed as a potential influence on self-esteem among young adults. Prior research suggests that social media platforms may affect self-esteem through processes such as social comparison and selective self-presentation. The present study examined the relationship between daily Instagram use and self-reported self-esteem among college students.

A convenience sample of undergraduate students (N = 26) completed a brief self-assessment measure of self-esteem using a 10-point Likert-type scale. Participants also recorded their average daily time spent on Instagram as reported in their smartphone screen-time settings. All responses were collected anonymously.

It was hypothesized that greater daily Instagram use would be associated with lower self-esteem scores. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the association between daily Instagram use and self-esteem. The correlation was not statistically significant,  $r(24) = -.02$ ,  $p = .909$ , 95% CI  $[-.41, .37]$ , indicating no evidence of a linear relationship between time spent on Instagram and self-reported self-esteem in this sample.

These findings did not support the hypothesized relationship between Instagram use and self-esteem. The results suggest that time spent on a single social media platform may not be a reliable predictor of self-esteem among college students. Future research may benefit from examining multiple platforms and distinguishing between different forms of engagement, including active posting, passive browsing, and social comparison processes.

### **Parental Discipline and Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes: A Longitudinal Cross-Cultural Study**

Thulsy Krishnan  
Duke University

A primary goal of parenting is to foster children's prosocial behavior (i.e., helping and sharing), while discouraging aggression and other antisocial behavior. Research has linked explanatory disciplinary practices (i.e., inductive reasoning) to prosociality in children. In contrast, power-assertive discipline—including verbal aggression and corporal punishment—has been linked to increased child antisocial behavior. Limited work has explored the association between psychologically controlling discipline (i.e., love withdrawal, shaming, and guilt induction) and child moral development. Consequently, the present study simultaneously examined three parental disciplinary styles—inductive reasoning, psychological control, and power assertion—during middle childhood as predictors of both prosocial and antisocial behavior in adolescence. Data were drawn from the Parenting Across Cultures project, a longitudinal study of families from nine countries (China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States;  $N \approx 1,400$  families). Parents' disciplinary practices were obtained from parental and child self-report surveys when children were 9 years old, and children's self-reported prosocial and antisocial behaviors were obtained at age 13. Multilevel linear mixed-effects models indicated that inductive discipline in middle childhood was positively associated with prosocial behavior in adolescence, whereas psychologically controlling discipline was negatively associated with prosocial behavior; furthermore, power-assertive discipline was positively associated with antisocial behavior. These findings underscore the importance of using inductive disciplinary practices while avoiding violent and psychologically controlling disciplinary practices.

## **Little Ears, Big Reactions: Early Sensory Over-Responsivity and the Emergence of Misophonia Symptoms**

Carson Lender  
Duke University

Misophonia is a condition characterized by intense emotional and physiological reactions to specific sounds, such as chewing or sniffing. Although individuals with misophonia often report that symptoms begin in childhood, little is known about early developmental risk factors. One potential contributor is sensory over-responsivity (SOR), defined as exaggerated or prolonged behavioral responses to ordinary sensory stimuli. Prior research suggests that individuals with misophonia exhibit heightened sensory sensitivity, but no longitudinal studies have examined whether early SOR predicts later misophonia symptoms. The present study examined whether sensory over-responsivity in early childhood predicts the emergence of clinical misophonia in adolescence and whether negative affect moderates this relationship. Participants were drawn from three longitudinal studies conducted through the Duke Preschool Anxiety Study (DPAS; N = 917), the Learning About the Developing Brain Study (LADB), and the Study of Toddler to Teenager Anxiety and Resiliency (STTAR). Early childhood sensory over-responsivity and negative affect were assessed using the Preschool Age Psychiatric Assessment and the Children's Behavior Questionnaire. Adolescent misophonia symptoms were measured using the Duke Misophonia Questionnaire. Logistic regression analyses indicated that preschool sensory over-responsivity significantly predicted later clinical misophonia in adolescence ( $B = 0.418$ ,  $SE = 0.195$ ,  $p = .032$ ). These findings suggest that heightened sensory sensitivity in early childhood may represent a developmental risk factor for misophonia. Identifying early sensory and emotional risk markers may help researchers and clinicians better understand the developmental pathways of misophonia.

## **Correlational Study on Spirituality and Resilience among International Students**

Andrii Maliuta  
Montreat College

International students often encounter academic, cultural, and social challenges that may affect their psychological well-being and adjustment to college life. Resilience and spirituality have been identified as factors that may support adaptation in stressful environments. The present study examined the relationship between daily spiritual experiences and resilience among international students at Montreat College.

A convenience sample of 21 international undergraduate students completed an online questionnaire that included the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES), the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), and demographic items. It was hypothesized that higher levels of spirituality would be positively associated with greater resilience.

A Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted to examine the association between daily spiritual experiences and resilience. The correlation was not statistically significant,  $r(19) = .02$ ,  $p = .926$ , 95% CI  $[-.41, .45]$ , suggesting that any association between spirituality and resilience in this sample was likely small. A Spearman rank-order correlation produced a similar non-significant result,  $\rho = .12$ ,  $p = .602$ .

These findings suggest that spirituality and resilience may not be strongly associated within this sample of international students. Limitations include the use of a small convenience sample and limited generalizability, and the modest sample size may have limited statistical power to detect small relationships between spirituality and resilience.

### **Correlational Study of Intellectual Humility and Gratitude in College Students**

RJ Manginello  
Montreat College

This study investigated the association between intellectual humility and gratitude, two positive psychological traits that have been extensively studied independently but seldom examined in conjunction. Intellectual humility is defined as awareness of cognitive limitations and openness to alternative perspectives, while gratitude involves recognizing and appreciating positive aspects of life and the contributions of others. Previous research has associated intellectual humility with prosocial traits such as forgiveness and has shown that gratitude enhances well-being and relational functioning; however, the direct relationship between these constructs remains understudied.

Participants are drawn from a convenience sample. Participants ( $N = 25$ ; ages 18–25) also completed self-report measures of intellectual humility and dispositional gratitude using a cross-sectional correlational design. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a positive association between intellectual humility and gratitude,  $r(23) = .39$ ,  $p = .058$ , 95% CI  $[-.01, .68]$ . Although this relationship did not reach statistical significance, the effect size suggests a moderate association.

These findings contribute to the growing body of research on positive character strengths and indicate that intellectual humility may be meaningfully related to gratitude among college students. Further research with larger samples is necessary to clarify the nature of this relationship.

## **Acute Exercise and Episodic Memory Performance in Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment**

Allison Martinko  
North Carolina State University

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is the disease state between normal cognitive function and dementia. Physical activity has been found to be beneficial for cognitive functioning in older adults, but less is known about the potential benefits of acute exercise for those with MCI. The current study examined cognitive abilities of 5 participants with MCI in sedentary and physically active (recumbent bicycle) states at two laboratory visits one week apart. Participants completed cognitive tests through the NIH Toolbox (i.e., the Picture Sequence Memory Test Form B) after physically active and sedentary states. The Picture Sequence Memory Test Form B was designed to assess episodic memory by asking participants to recall a series of illustrated events in a specific order on an iPad. We anticipated that adults with MCI would perform better on the Picture Sequence Memory Test Form B on the days they were physically active compared to the sedentary test sessions. Preliminary findings indicated that cognitive performance was better in the physical activity condition than in the sedentary condition, but due to the small sample size, the difference was not statistically significant ( $n = 5$ ,  $r = -.04$ ,  $p = .475$ ). As this served as a pilot study, future research should focus on increasing power by having more participants with MCI. Overall, these findings could add to the understanding of the effects and benefits of acute physical activity on cognitive performance for older adults with MCI.

## **Predicting Attitudes towards Women from Dark Core of Personality in College Students**

Mariana McCottry & Gabrielle Hickey  
Fayetteville State University

Background: College aged students are at a stage of life where formation of relationships is important to future outcomes (Boisvert et al., 2023). Research has indicated that dark personality traits may be associated with behavior, with the common core of dark personality traits being behavior that puts self-interest at the expense of others' safety (Moshagen et al., 2019). There has also been evidence associating dark core of personality with roles in sexual attitudes and behaviors (Craib et al., 2024). It is therefore likely that dark personality may affect how college students develop relationships especially with women. This study was therefore designed to examine the relationship between dark core of personality and attitude towards women.

Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between dark core of personality and attitudes towards women in college students.

Methods: Data collected from 2,297 college students for a larger study was reanalyzed for the variables of dark core of personality (Moshagen et al., 2019) and attitudes towards women (Spence & Helmreich, 1972).

Results: Regression analysis predicting attitudes towards women from dark core of personality yielded a significant model:  $F(1,2295) = 348.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .13$ , indicating that about 13% of views towards women can be associated with the dark core of personality.

Discussion/Implications: The findings add to the existent pool of research on dark personality traits and how they can impact college student's attitudes towards women. The implications for counseling and psychotherapy with clients presenting dark personality traits will be discussed at the presentation.

### **The Relationships Between Parental Characteristics, Picky Eating, and Body Dissatisfaction**

Caitlin McCray  
High Point University

Picky eating and body dissatisfaction are issues that can be detrimental to a person's social life and self-esteem. For many individuals, issues related to eating behaviors and body image first arise during childhood. As such, it is important to investigate how parents' behavior toward their children can have long-term effects on their children's body perception and eating habits. This study evaluated the relationships between parental warmth and control during childhood, and picky eating and body dissatisfaction in young adulthood. To measure these relationships, 86 undergraduate students completed an online survey, which included scales measuring perceptions of retrospective parental characteristics, picky eating behaviors, and body image. Maternal warmth was negatively correlated with negative fat beliefs and positively correlated with positive body beliefs. Paternal warmth was positively correlated with positive body beliefs. Neither parent's warmth was significantly correlated with picky eating. Maternal control was found to be positively correlated with negative fat beliefs. Paternal control was positively correlated with picky eating. Finally, it was found that picky eating was positively correlated with body dissatisfaction. Overall, the results indicate that parental warmth and control are related to picky eating and body dissatisfaction in some aspects, but not all. Further, maternal and paternal characteristics, particularly control, differ in their relationships with picky eating behaviors and body dissatisfaction.

## **Leadership Styles and How They Affect Student-Athlete Well-Being**

Joshuah Miller  
Barton College

This research focused on the foundation of organizational management and leadership and correlated it with college athletics. Throughout this research, the main question that was posed is “How do leadership styles affect student-athlete well-being?”. Participants were 42 student athletes, both men and women of various athletic teams. A modified version of Mefi and Asoba’s (2021) Leadership Styles and Employee Job Satisfaction Scale was used to assess their coach(es)’ leadership style and how their coach(es)’ made them feel personally, using a 5-point Likert scale. In general, the positive correlation between player satisfaction between head coaches and assistant coaches was significant,  $r(30) = 0.534$ ,  $p < .002$ . Overall, participants were satisfied with their head coaches ( $M = 3.565$ ,  $SD = 0.478$ ) and their assistant coaches ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.326$ ). The relationship between player satisfaction and leadership styles followed the same pattern for head and assistant coaches. Athletes were least satisfied with autocratic leadership styles, [ $r(30) = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.791$  for assistant coaches,  $r(41) = -0.21$ ,  $p = 0.183$  for head coaches]. They were most satisfied with transactional leadership styles, [ $r(30) = 0.82$ ,  $p < 0.0001$  for assistant coaches,  $r(41) = 0.822$ ,  $p = 0.0001$  for head coaches]. This data will be presented pertaining to each individual athletic team and their satisfaction, and implications will be discussed.

## **The Relationship Between ADHD Symptom Severity and Hypersexual Behaviors in Adults: A Cross-Sectional Correlational Study**

Galicia Monforte  
Shaw University

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in early adulthood is often characterized by impulsivity and altered reward processing, which have been linked to engagement in maladaptive behaviors. “Emerging adults, particularly college students, may experience heightened vulnerability to behavioral dysregulation due to developmental and environmental factors” (Arnett, 2000). This cross-sectional correlational study examined

the association between ADHD symptom severity and hypersexual behaviors in a geographically diverse sample of adults aged 18–24. Participants completed an anonymous online survey including the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS-v1.1) to assess inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms, and the Hypersexual Behavior

Inventory (HBI-19) to assess behavioral control and coping strategies. Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the collected data. Results indicated a significant positive correlation between overall ADHD symptom severity and hypersexual behavior scores, with hyperactive/impulsive symptoms showing a stronger relationship than inattentive symptoms. Regression

analyses confirmed that ADHD symptom severity could predict the severity of hypersexual behaviors. A conclusion for these research findings suggest that impulsivity-related ADHD symptoms may contribute to dysregulated sexual behaviors in emerging adults, highlighting the importance of routine screening and targeted psychoeducational interventions in college and clinical settings.

### **Problematic Mobile Phone Use, Attachment Styles, Emotion/Conflict Avoidance, and Motivation to Learn**

Sarah Moore, Ellie Lowry & Frances Ulysse  
Longwood University

Our study focused on the challenges faced by GenZ that may be related to problematic digital media / mobile phone use. GenZ tend to report lower levels of emotional expression and greater conflict avoidance compared to Generation X and Y (Umul & Güloğlu, 2023). Problematic digital media use has been associated with higher levels of social avoidance and distress (Ahmed et al., 2021), anxious attachment (Huang et al., 2025), and lower motivation to study (Reed & Reay, 2015). Our study hypothesized that higher levels of problematic mobile phone use (PMPU) is related to (a) anxious attachment, (b) emotional / conflict avoidance, and (c) lower interest in learning among University students. Participants were recruited through flyers, emails, and social media posts that invited students to complete a 49-item voluntary anonymous online questionnaire. Complete data were collected from 156 participants (22 male, 131 female, 3 non-binary) between the ages of 18 and 26 ( $M = 20.4$ ). The survey included measures of PMPU, anxious and avoidant attachment, emotional or conflict avoidance, and motivation to read assigned material and learn factual information. Results supported all three hypotheses. Higher PMPU was associated with higher anxious attachment and emotional / conflict avoidance, and lower interest in learning by reading outside of class. Overall, these findings suggest that higher levels of problematic media use among young adults is associated with attachment insecurity, conflict avoidance, and reduced academic engagement, highlighting important implications for understanding how digital media habits relate to students' interpersonal functioning and motivation to learn.

### **Click, Post, Share: How Childhood Trauma Shapes Online Coping and Self-Disclosure**

Shakira Moran & Legacy White  
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Background: College students exposed to adversity in childhood are at risk for problematic internet and phone usage. Attempts to relieve psychological distress may inadvertently increase negative effects of problematic online usage and maladaptive coping behaviors (Forster et al., 2012). Anonymity, as a form of

self-disclosure, is prevalently seen among youth (Pohan & Llbs, 2022). While self-disclosure on social network sites (SNS) serves as relief for negative experiences and self-expression, individuals who engage with unfamiliar users are often at higher risk of excessive self-disclosure and posting regret (Xie & Kang, 2015). This study examined how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) shape online coping and self-disclosure on social network sites (SNS).

Hypothesis: Individuals with high trauma exposure will engage in self-disclosure and online coping on SNS, present higher depression and social anxiety symptomatology, and greater posting regret.

Method: Participants were 130 college students from a rural Southwestern region. They completed the ACE scale, the CES-D scale, the severity measure for social anxiety disorder for adults, the social media use scale, the self-disclosure scale, the online coping instrument, and a demographic questionnaire.

Results: Online coping was moderately used across all groups. Participants with high ACE exposure (23.1%) reported significantly higher social anxiety symptomatology and depression. Those who reported creating anonymous accounts and confiding with online users were more likely to report SNS posting regret and higher depression and social anxiety symptomatology.

Conclusion: While online coping is prevalently used, reliance on SNS for confidence and self-disclosure via anonymity presents poorer psychological well-being.

### **Parasocial Rejection: Emotional and Aggressive Responses to Media Figures**

Eva Morris

High Point University

Parasocial relationships are one-sided psychological bonds individuals form with media figures, such as influencers or television characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956). While these relationships are often associated with feelings of connection and entertainment (Tukachinsky, 2011), research has indicated that strong negative emotional responses may arise in situations where expectations regarding these relationships are violated. Currently, comparatively little research has examined the nature of parasocial relationships with social media influencers. The present study examined the relationship between parasocial relationship investment and rejection on aggressive tendencies. 70 undergraduates, drawn from a medium-sized university in the Southeast (n= 59 females), completed an online survey that included the Character Identification Scale (CIS), the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ), the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS), as well as study-specific questions related to rejection and engagement. Pearson Correlations indicated significant relationships between emotional reactivity and rejection ( $p=.003$ ), as well as between perceived rejection and aggression ( $p=.022$ ), but in TV parasocial relationships only. A two-way ANOVA examining the relationship between parasocial relationship strength and emotional instability on aggressive tendencies. Results indicated a significant main effect of emotional instability ( $p<.001$ ), but not relationship strength, and a significant

interaction between emotional instability and parasocial relationships strength ( $p=.024$ ). For TV characters, a hierarchical regression analysis indicated that both parasocial closeness ( $p=.003$ ) and engagement ( $p=.034$ ) predicted aggressive tendencies, but this relationship was not reported in

### **Optimizing Music Selection in Psychedelic Assisted Therapy: Emerging Insights from Practitioner and Patient Survey Data**

Milo Moskovitz  
Appalachian State University

Current research indicates that psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) shows great promise in treating a wide range of psychological conditions, with music playing a central role in the process. Although there is general consensus regarding the importance of music during PAT, little research has examined how the music is selected and presented. In my recent paper, *The Research Deficit and Expert Disagreement Regarding Music Selection for Psychedelic Assisted Therapy* (*ACS Pharmacology & Translational Science*, 8(10)), I argue that, given the limited research to date, it is unreasonable to claim that any current PAT music selection guidelines are firmly based on scientific evidence.

With the aim of understanding common practices and opinions regarding PAT music selection, I conducted a survey study of PAT practitioners ( $n= 15$ ) and patients ( $n=19$ ). While my research is still underway, I have noticed key trends that promote interesting findings. Examples of trends include: (a) Strong evidence to suggest that listening to a PAT playlist after the session is complete is both very common and therapeutically beneficial; (b) Lack of consensus regarding individualized versus standardized playlists; and (c) More favorable opinions regarding the use of silence than previous research suggested.

These findings are a step forward in understanding optimal music selection for PAT. Given the subjective nature of psychedelics and music, it's reasonable to assume that the kind of music and how it's played can greatly influence the session and the outcomes. If PAT continues to show positive results in treating many conditions, optimal musical selection is crucial.

### **Do Optimists Effectively Cope with Stress Better than Pessimists?**

Maria Nix  
Charleston Southern University

Optimists are individuals who believe that their future is bright, and pessimists are individuals who do not expect good things to happen in their future (Carver et al., 1994). Conversano and colleagues (2010) reported that optimists use problem-solving coping strategies to endure their stressful situations. Gasper and colleagues (2019) found that without coping strategies, pessimists do not change

their negative mindset brought on by stressful situations. The first hypothesis is that optimism is related to stress-coping skills. The second hypothesis is that pessimism is related to stress. The present study will examine the relationship between coping skills and coping strategies in pessimistic and optimistic individuals. The study begins with the informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, College Student Stress Scale (Feldt, 2008), Coping Strategies Scale (Chapman et al., 2022), and the Optimism-Pessimism Prescreening Questionnaire (Norem & Cantor, 1986). The study takes no longer than 15 minutes. Students are able to access the study through Blackboard on their laptops or by scanning a QR code with their cell phones. The results have not been confirmed at this time because the study is still open to collect more participants' data.

### **Influence of SSRI Use, Impulsivity, & Medication Guidance on Alcohol-Induced Blackouts & Episodic Memory in College Students**

Josie Parker

Coastal Carolina University

Alcohol-Induced Blackouts occur when alcohol disrupts hippocampal-dependent memory encoding, affecting the brain's ability to form and store memories, resulting in episodic gaps. Although blackouts are common among college students, little is known about how selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) use, impulsivity, and medication-related guidance may interact to influence blackout risk and memory performance. Because SSRIs alter serotonergic signaling and impulsivity is associated with increased alcohol consumption and risk-taking behaviors, these factors may increase susceptibility to memory disruption when alcohol is consumed.

It was hypothesized that students reporting SSRI use, higher impulsivity, and limited medication guidance would experience more frequent blackouts and have greater alcohol-related memory impairment compared to students not taking SSRIs. Undergraduate students aged 18-25 were recruited through the SONA Psychology Research System at Coastal Carolina University. Participants completed self-measures assessing alcohol consumption patterns, history of alcohol-induced blackouts, SSRI use, impulsivity, and medication guidance. Verbal episodic memory was evaluated using the Rey Audit Verbal Learning Test (RAVLT).

Preliminary findings suggest that higher alcohol consumption and greater impulsivity may be associated with increased blackout frequency. Students currently taking SSRIs appear to have slightly more blackouts and demonstrate somewhat lower RAVLT performance compared to non-users. Trends also indicate that limited medication guidance use may slightly contribute to increased blackout. By examining these findings, this research aims to help improve awareness of alcohol-medication interactions and reduce blackout risks in college students.

## **Self-View and Resource Access: Exploring the Relationship Between Measures of Self-Perception and Food Security**

Emily Parris

William Peace University

Food security is a fundamental physiological need that is necessary to form the basis of belonging and esteem. The ability to perform effectively in contributory roles in society (e.g., student and employee) rely on this strong foundational hierarchy (McLeod, 2026; Maslow, 1970). According to Rabbitt et al. (2024), at least one in ten households since 2010 has been food insecure, and between 2022 and 2023, this number went up .7%, a statistically significant growth. Existing research affirms the correlation between resource insecurity and poor mental and physical health outcomes (Oberholser & Tuttle Reeves, 2004).

We hypothesize that food insecurity will have a significant association with self-perception. Specifically, those findings will demonstrate decreased self-worth, higher rates of burnout, and decreased self-efficacy.

Preliminary data (N = 44) was collected via surveys primarily at William Peace University and Meredith College. Results showed a significant negative relationship between food insecurity and global self-worth,  $p < .05$ . Significant positive relationships were also found between food insecurity and overall burnout and all four of its subsets (exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, emotional impairment). Together, these findings support both a) the idea that non-clinical aspects of poor mental health amongst students may be mediated by addressing resource insecurities (namely food) and b) the importance of advertising, supporting, and funding university food pantries when considering issues of student academic success. These findings could be used to enact meaningful change by informing policy and practice at both university and industry levels.

## **How sleep affects athletic performance**

Candela Pérez Castellanos

Warren Wilson College

Research shows that sleep duration and quality can improve physical and mental outcomes in elite athletes (Fullagar et al., 2014). However, there is limited research on college basketball players at small colleges. Few studies focus on specific skill-based tasks like free-throw accuracy (Watson, 2017; Charest & Grandner, 2020). This study examined the relationship between sleep variables, fatigue-related factors, and free-throw performance in 15 men's and women's basketball players at Warren Wilson College. Participants completed a brief online survey measuring sleep duration, subjective sleep quality, and fatigue-related variables, followed by 30 free-throw attempts. Pearson correlations were used to assess relationships between sleep and performance, with dichotomous variables

analyzed via point-biserial correlations (Cohen, 1988). Results indicated that sleep duration ( $r = -0.18$ ,  $p = 0.54$ ) and subjective sleep quality ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.60$ ) were not significantly related to free-throw accuracy. Subjective daytime sleepiness ( $r = -0.41$ ,  $p = 0.14$ ) and early morning practice participation ( $r = -0.44$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ) showed moderate negative associations with performance, though these did not reach statistical significance, likely due to small sample size, single-session testing, and self-reported sleep measures. These results highlight the need for larger samples and objective sleep measures in future research to better understand how sleepiness and fatigue affect skill-based athletic performance, with implications for athlete scheduling, recovery, and coaching strategies.

### **Perceptions of Sexual Consent Across Time**

Raina Rajkumar, Carlee Anderson & Ella Bostic  
Appalachian State University

This study was created to assess how the variables of gender and setting can influence one's perception of how they view consent across time (CAT). For the initial study, CAT 1, we hypothesized that perceptions of sexual consent would increase as the intimacy of the encounters between two people, Kim and Mike, increased. We extended CAT 1 by manipulating gender and setting. In CAT 2, college students received surveys containing a vignette of four variations—two were set in a coffee shop, and the other two were set in a bar where the couple met for drinks. Each setting contained a scenario where either Kim or Mike was unsure. There were ten points of encounter during the scenario, and participants were asked to rate Kim and Mike's willingness and consent in each. Afterward, they were presented with three dichotomous questions: was consent given, did a sexual assault occur, and did a rape occur? With CAT 2, we predicted a similar result as CAT 1, but with the addition that existing stigmas will lead to a higher perceived consent for Mike than for Kim, even if he is unsure. Additionally, we hypothesized that the bar setting for drinks would lead to higher perceptions of consent due to previous studies indicating that sex was presumed after going home from a bar. Data collection is complete. Results and implications will be included in the poster.

### **The Effects of Technology Use within Higher Education**

Philip Riddle  
Montreat College

The increasing presence of digital technology in higher education has raised concerns about its potential effects on students' attention and engagement during classroom instruction. The present study examined the relationship between smartphone usage and perceived classroom abilities among undergraduate students at Montreat College. It was hypothesized that greater smartphone usage would be associated with lower levels of confidence in key classroom skills.

A convenience sample of 25 undergraduate students completed a Technology Usage Assessment and a Key Skills Confidence Questionnaire measuring confidence in skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, self-direction, critical thinking, and educational technology use. Scores were calculated as the sum of responses on a 5-point Likert scale.

A Pearson product–moment correlation was conducted to examine the association between technology usage and confidence in key skills. The correlation was not statistically significant,  $r(23) = -.19$ ,  $p = .371$ , 95% CI  $[-.54, .22]$ , suggesting that any relationship between smartphone usage and perceived classroom abilities in this sample was likely small. A Spearman rank-order correlation produced a similar non-significant result,  $\rho = .17$ ,  $p = .423$ .

These findings did not provide evidence that greater smartphone use was associated with lower perceived classroom abilities in this sample. Future research using larger samples and more objective measures of technology use may further clarify these relationships. These findings also highlight the importance of examining how students integrate digital technologies into learning environments without assuming that technology use necessarily undermines academic confidence.

### **The Impact of Awe and Joy on Prosocial Interest in Narratives**

Mia Nicole Rodriguez & Andrinah Sweet  
North Carolina Wesleyan University

Research has shown awe can promote prosocial behavior. However, little research has targeted whether awe in narratives has similar effects. In this experiment, we examined whether awe in narratives can increase prosocial interest. We particularly looked at whether experiencing awe as compared to joy and a neutral control affects the memorability, likeability, and meaningfulness of a character and their experience. Overall, we hypothesized that compared to both the joy and neutral conditions, the awe condition would result in greater memorability, likability, and meaningfulness. We recruited 93 participants through Prolific who were divided into 3 groups. Based on their condition, participants then read a short story in which the character experienced either awe, joy, or something neutral. They then answered memory questions about details related to the character and responded to Likert scales about the character’s likeability and the experience’s meaningfulness. Overall, we found a small positive effect of both awe and joy on memory as compared to the neutral condition. Contrary to our hypothesis and past research, we also found that compared to both the awe and neutral conditions, joy resulted in more likeability and meaningfulness, though this difference did not reach significance. While our study has potential limitations regarding sample size, story length, and story realism, it has implications for future research. The effect of awe and joy on memory suggests emotionality promotes great memory

encoding. Similarly, our finding that awe did not produce more likeability and meaningfulness suggests awe in narratives may have less prosocial impact than awe experienced in real life.

### **Hidden Influences: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Academic Engagement, Integrity, and Performance Among College Students**

Leland Sanders  
High Point University

Childhood trauma is associated with long-term psychological and behavioral outcomes that may extend into academic settings. Exposure to adverse childhood experiences can influence self-worth, motivation, emotional regulation, and coping processes that shape how students engage with academic environments (Gresham & Karatekin, 2023). The present study examines the relationship between childhood trauma exposure and academic functioning among college students, with particular attention to classroom engagement, study behaviors, attitudes toward academic integrity, and academic performance. Participants consisted of 73 undergraduate students from a medium sized university in the southeast who completed self-report measures including the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACES), the Higher Education Student Engagement Scale (HESES), and an Attitude Toward Cheating scale (ATC). Academic outcomes were assessed through self-reported cumulative GPA, Dean's List status, and a Perceived Academic Performance scale (PAP). It was hypothesized that greater exposure to childhood trauma would be associated with lower academic engagement, less effective study behaviors, poorer academic performance, and more permissive attitudes toward cheating. Engagement and study behaviors were expected to partially mediate the relationship between trauma exposure and academic performance. Results indicated no significant relationships between ACES scores and perceived academic performance, attitudes toward cheating, or student engagement. These findings may reflect limitations related to the sample size and variability in ACES exposure. Future analyses will examine the distribution of ACES scores within the sample, particularly the proportion of participants reporting a score of 4 or more.

### **Exploring Differences in Compassionate Traits Within Adult Virtual-Pet Hobbyists**

Seth Stallings  
Barton College

Tsai and Kaufman (2010) demonstrated that caring for virtual pets (i.e., consistent interactions between children and a virtual pet dog) led to greater empathetic/humane behavior. This study examined compassionate behavior in adult fans of virtual pets (V-Pets) by examining how differences in playing behavior may be connected to participants' levels of compassion. A survey was sent out to online spaces dedicated to V-Pet hobbyists (e.g., websites and discussion forums) asking participants (N = 303) about their favorite parts of interacting with V-pets,

followed by the 5-point Compassion Scale (2019). Findings show overall high total compassion scores ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ). Those who reported caretaking as a preferred way of play scored significantly lower on the common humanity subscale ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) than those who did not ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ),  $F(1, 301) = 4.48$ ,  $p < .05$ . Common humanity scores were also influenced by how they reported playing with V-Pets; those who used both sites and devices showed the lowest mean common humanity scores ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ), followed by just devices ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), with V-Pet site players having the highest common humanity scores ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ),  $F(2, 300) = 4.76$ ,  $p < .01$ . These findings suggest that higher common humanity scores may impact how adults choose to interact with V-pets, preferring V-pet sites, which have more inherent human interaction, over devices, which can be operated individually and without additional social interaction.

### **Determinants of Variability in Rich-to-Lean Pausing on Fixed-Ratio Schedules of Reinforcement in Rats**

Emma Steckly  
College of Charleston

On fixed-ratio (FR) schedules of reinforcement, transitions from rich-to-lean reinforcement contexts occasion extended pausing. Pause durations during this transition tend to be highly variable and positively skewed. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that affect this variability. The determinants that potentially account for pausing variability examined in this analysis were the ordinal position of the transition within the sequence of 21 rich and lean components and the number of consecutive rich reinforcers preceding the rich-to-lean transition. This study reanalyzed previously published data from food-restricted rats lever pressing on a two-component, multiple FR schedule with signaled rich (4 pellets; lower FR) and lean (1 pellet; higher FR) components. During each session of 21 components, four transitions between food reinforcers were arranged pseudorandomly: lean-to-lean, lean-to-rich, rich-to-rich, and rich-to-lean. This reanalysis focused only on rich-to-lean pausing and analyzed 50 individual rich-to-lean pauses per rat. Correlational analyses revealed that the duration of the rich-to-lean pause was positively correlated with position in the session, with longer pauses occurring later in the session. In addition, the results indicate that the more rich components before a lean component, the longer the pause. Understanding the variables that contribute to the stochastic nature of rich-to-lean pausing may ultimately help predict problem behavior occasioned by these favorable-to-unfavorable shifts in applied situations.

## **Goal Pursuit: Comparing Grit and Goal Adjustment with Daily Measures of Goal Pursuit**

Nikolai Tassin

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Grit and goal adjustment capacities are both trait-like aspects of goal pursuit style. The aim of this study is to analyze the predictive capabilities of these trait measures for rates of self-reported daily goal pursuit. The subscales of both trait measures will be used, including perseverance of effort and consistency of interest for grit, and goal disengagement and goal reengagement for goal adjustment. Using secondary data analysis from a sample of university students, various statistical models will be tested to assess relationships between the grit and goal adjustment and how well they predict the frequency of negative affect and high rates of daily goal pursuit. It is anticipated that grit (specifically, perseverance of effort) and goal reengagement will positively correlate with one another, while grit (perseverance of effort) and goal disengagement will negatively correlate with one another. Goal adjustment will better predict daily goal pursuit than grit, and the interactions between grit and goal adjustment will be associated with the level of daily positive and negative affect. Findings will contribute to understanding the validity of trait measures of goal pursuit in predicting daily goal pursuit and their relationships to one another.

## **How Interaction With Houseplants Can Reduce Psychological Stress in College Students**

Tre'Khiayah Thorne

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This study investigated the impact of a short plant intervention on psychological stress reduction on the bases of three senses: smell, touch, and sight. A total of twenty-one undergraduate and graduate student participants were separated into three different groups depending on the task: (1) smelling the plants; (2) touching the plants; or (3) simply observing the plants. Participants were asked to complete their interactions with plants as instructed for 15 minutes. Participants also completed the STAI (State Trait Anxiety Inventory Scale) and the WEMWBS Scales (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) after they finished their assigned tasks. Findings suggested that there was a statistically significant difference in response to stress reduction following interacting with plants through touch and observation, reporting lower tension/anxiety levels when feeling or observing plants. A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants in the sight (observation) group experienced greater stress reduction (STAI Scale scores) ( $M = 55.60$ ,  $SD = 10.1$ ) as compared to touch group ( $M = 53.78$ ,  $SD = 11.89$ ) and smelling group ( $M = 50.67$ ,  $SD = 9.70$ ),  $F(8,13) = 1.39$ ,  $p = .026$ . These findings suggested that through plant care (specifically through touching and observing plants), stress reduction

patterns emerge, though smelling did not show any effect. Limitations of the study include a small sample size and non-equitable responses as I am still collecting data.

### **Dark Triad Traits: Do Levels of Religiosity Make a Difference?**

Maritza A. Vasquez & Brandon Labar  
Fayetteville State University

Background: Central character elements of these three constructs of dark triad include the 'manipulative personality' (Machiavellianism), grandiosity, entitlement, dominance and superiority (narcissism), and high-impulsivity, thrill-seeking, and low-empathy (psychopathy) (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Religiosity, on the other hand, has been linked to various beneficial outcomes in psychological functions, including lessened aggression (Huesmann et al., 2011) and better health (Maltby et al., 2010). The study of spirituality/religiosity in psychology has widened as scientific evidence on the relationship with mental health has accumulated (Lucchetti, 2021). This study was therefore conducted to examine the possible connection between religiosity and the dark traits.

Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant effect of level of religiosity on dark personality traits in college students.

Methods: Data collected from 2,465 college students for a larger study was reanalyzed for the variables of religiosity and dark traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Short Dark Triad by Jones & Paulhus, 2014).

Results: The result of analysis of variance indicated a statistically significant effect of level of religiosity on the overall dark triad:  $F(3, 2326) = 4.71, p = .003$ , and on each of the three traits ( $p < .001$ ). Those with high level of religiosity had a lower mean for the overall dark triad, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy but a higher mean for narcissism than those with lower levels of religiosity or not religious at all.

Discussion/Implications: The results indicate that higher religiosity may be connected to lower levels of dark traits. In contrast, there seems to be a connection between high religiosity and narcissistic traits.

### **Effect of Concussion on Driving Behavior**

Calliope Warren & Lillian Airola  
Coastal Carolina University

Mild traumatic brain injuries (tBI) also known as concussions are the most common type of brain injury affecting millions of people every year. Young athletes are the most susceptible population and also most commonly studied. Extensive research has focused on how tBI effects abilities necessary for sports and school. This

research has helped develop a set of standards for returning to sport and academic participation. However, there is a lack of research on how tBI affects abilities needed to operate a motor vehicle and when it is safe for a concussed individual to do so. We utilize a driving simulator to assess performance of both control (non-concussed) and experimental (concussed individuals) in a directed driving task. Participants are recruited using SONA and all complete the same tasks. After the driving task, all participants complete two neuropsychological inventories to determine current brain impairment and concussion history. These groups are then compared to assess driving performance differences in those with a history or current concussion and concussion-free individuals. Preliminary data shows those with a concussion history averaged lower driving scores than non concussed individuals. Individuals with a more recent concussion scored lower than those with less recent concussions. Analysis of the statistical significance and more details of these findings is ongoing. These findings will increase knowledge of concussion effects and potentially inform development of safety protocols for returning to driving after concussion.

### **Achievement Goal Theory and Learning Objectives**

Lucy Worthington

Queens University of Charlotte

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT, Nicholls, 1984) categorizes goals into mastery (focused on understanding) and performance (focused on outcomes). AGT research links goal orientations to student success in education (Wolters, 2004). Mastery goals are associated with adaptive learning strategies and higher self-efficacy (Katz-Vago & Benita, 2023). Students frequently adopt personal goals as a reflection of their classroom goal orientations (Ames & Archer, 1988). Learning objectives define desired outcomes or standards for student understanding (Benson & Brack, 2010). While goals and learning objectives overlap, research on their relationship and impact on motivation is limited. Using the AGT framework, this study examines whether higher-level learning objectives increase motivation. Participants (N = 39) completed an online survey in which they were randomly assigned to view high level learning objectives or low level learning objectives and then complete the situational motivation scale (Guay, 2000) which produced a Self-Determination Index (SDI), and four subscales (Intrinsic Motivation, Identified Regulation, External Regulation, and Amotivation). The overall SDI was significantly different between the groups [ $t(31.12) = -2.85, p = 0.01$ ] with the group that viewed low level learning objectives scoring higher, indicating a stronger sense of perceived autonomy and intrinsic motivation. This was the opposite of the original hypothesis. Possible explanations for these findings include accessibility and familiarity with assignments. Because participants were predominantly underclassmen, the lower-level learning objectives may align more

with their previous academic experiences, enhancing self-efficacy, which in turn contributes to higher motivation levels (Lin et al., 2022).

### **Social Media Detoxing and its Effect on Self-Esteem**

Cali Younker  
Barton College

A person's well being can very easily be affected by social media. Lui et al. (2025) explains how social media leads to information overload, social comparison, and digital fatigue. I predicted that most people are highly affected by social media and allow other people's content to affect how they feel about themselves. I predicted that social media would subconsciously change their everyday habits because they were influenced to do so. Participants of this study were mostly freshmen. After conducting a t-test, correlation, and ANOVA, results showed that women ( $M = 16, SD = 4.02$ ) and men ( $M = 15, SD = 4.84$ ) had no significant differences in Social Media Addiction (SMA). When measuring the correlation between gender and social media with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSS), results indicated a significance for female participants. For women, there was a moderate negative correlation between RSS total and SMA total,  $r(21) = -.42, p < .05$ . For men, the correlation between RSS total and SMA total was not statistically significant,  $r(11) = -.30, p = .325$ . These results indicated that women's self esteem was more negatively related to social media than men's. Because of this, a social media detox for both genders would improve self esteem and well being overall.

## Index of First Authors

Last Name	First Name	Title
Aquino	Catherine	Does Alpha-Band Activity Reflect Left Temporal Disengagement During a Repetitive Lexical Task?
Barker	Caleb	Computerized Vs. Non-computerized Performance Equivalency of a Word List Task
Barreras Hernandez	Elizabeth	College Students' Perception of Autism Based on the Gender of a Vignette Character
Brunson	Anthony	The Effect of Blindfolding on Flavor Identification
Burch	Jennifer	Methodological Challenges in Developing a Olfactometer-Based Threshold Detection Paradigm in Mice
Caulk	Kayla	Predictors of Conspiracy Mentality
Cayce	Liam	Toward Fairer Cognitive Testing: Challenges in Developing Normative Data for a Cloud-Based Verbal Memory Task
Christian	Kaitlin	Guided PETTLEP-Based Visualization and Free-Throw Accuracy Under Pressure in Collegiate Basketball Players
Cruz	Julia	Effects of Recent U.S. Immigration Policy Changes on International Students
Daniel	Connor	Caffeine and Academics in Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder College Students
Degn	Zoe	The Effects of Background Music on Memory and Retention in College Students
Deviney	Margaret	Coping Flexibility and Perceived Stress
Diaz	David	Online Storybook Read-Alouds as Contexts for Early Gratitude Development
Dixon	Jada	Influence of Subliminal Brown Noise Audio on College Student's Mood, Confidence, and Problem-Solving Performance
Douglas Jr.	Derrick	Stress and Athletic Performance
Dunn	Kayla	Examining the Role of Adult Attachment and Parental Support in Same-Sex Relationship Satisfaction
Easter	Dajiah	The Impact of Mindfulness on Emotional Regulation and

		Academic Performance in College Students
Ford	Alexandra	Do Stimuli Associated with Upcoming Events Modulate Behavioral Disruption Occasioned by Negative Incentive Shifts in Rats?
Fort	Abby	Evaluating Automatic Biases Through Criminal Profiling: An Analysis of Professional Type, Depth, and Similarity
Gallagher	Catherine	The Body and the Mind: Exploring Body Investment as a Mediator between Sexual Trauma and Suicidality
Gouch	Savannah	Job Resources Matter More: Relative Contributions of Demands and Resources to Job Satisfaction
Graham	Takyla	Advantages and Disadvantages of Taking a GAP Year Before Undergrad and Grad School
Granstam	Irma	Examination of Neuroticism and Acute vs. Chronic Stress in College Athletes
Harold	Morgan	The Psychological Factors Contributing to the Yips in Sports Performance
Hartness	Sidney	Identifying Links in Generative AI Dependency and Creative Self-Concept
Hellum-Lilleengen	Leonie	The Effect of Personality Traits and Political Affiliation on the Misinformation Effect in Fake News
Huffman	Kylie	Impact of Skincare Branding on Perceptions of Aging in College Students and Older Adults Using Implicit Associations Test
Johnson	Alalah	Your Brain on Texting: How Working Memory, Impulsivity, and Emotion Shape Your Messages
Knolls	Jaelyn	Social Media and How it is Related to Self-esteem
Krishnan	Thulsy	Parental Discipline and Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes: A Longitudinal Cross-Cultural Study
Lender	Carson	Little Ears, Big Reactions: Early Sensory Over-Responsivity and the Emergence of Misophonia Symptoms
Maliuta	Andrii	Correlational Study on Spirituality and Resilience among International Students
Manginello	R.J.	Correlational Study of Intellectual Humility and Gratitude in College Students

Martinko	Allison	Acute Exercise and Episodic Memory Performance in Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment
McCottry	Mariana	Predicting Attitudes towards Women from Dark Core of Personality in College Students
McCray	Caitlin	The Relationships Between Parental Characteristics, Picky Eating, and Body Dissatisfaction
Miller	Joshuah	Leadership Styles and How They Affect Student-Athlete Well-Being
Monforte	Galia	The Association Between Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Hypersexual Behaviors in Adults: A Literature Review of Neurobehavioral Mechanisms
Moore	Sarah	Problematic Mobile Phone Use, Attachment Styles, Emotion/Conflict Avoidance, and Motivation to Learn
Moran	Shakira	Click, Post, Share: How Childhood Trauma Shapes Online Coping and Self-Disclosure
Morris	Eva	Parasocial Rejection: Emotional and Aggressive Responses to Media Figures
Moskovitz	Milo	Optimizing Music Selection in Psychedelic Assisted Therapy: Emerging Insights from Practitioner and Patient Survey Data
Nix	Maria	Do Optimists Effectively Cope with Stress Better than Pessimists?
Parker	Josie	Influence of SSRI Use, Impulsivity, & Medication Guidance on Alcohol-Induced Blackouts & Episodic Memory in College Students
Parris	Emily	Self-View and Resource Access: Exploring the Relationship Between Measures of Self-Perception and Food Security
Pérez Castellanos	Candela	How Sleep Affects Athletic Performance
Rajkumar	Raina	Perceptions of Sexual Consent Across Time
Riddle	Philip	The Effects of Technology Use within Higher Education
Rodriguez	Mia	The Impact of Awe and Joy on Prosocial Interest in Narratives
Sanders	Leland	Hidden Influences: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Academic Engagement, Integrity, and Performance Among College Students

Stallings	Seth	Exploring Differences in Compassionate Traits Within Adult Virtual-Pet Hobbyists
Steckly	Emma	Determinants of Variability in Rich-to-Lean Pausing on Fixed-Ratio Schedules of Reinforcement in Rats
Tassin	Nikolai	Goal Pursuit: Comparing Grit and Goal Adjustment with Daily Measures of Goal Pursuit
Thorne	Tre'Khiayah	How Interaction With Houseplants Can Reduce Psychological Stress in College Students
Vasquez	Maritza	Dark Triad Traits: Do Levels of Religiosity Make a Difference?
Warren	Calliope	Effect of Concussion on Driving Behavior
Worthington	Lucy	Achievement Goal Theory and Learning Objectives
Yunker	Cali	Social Media Detoxing and its Effect on Self-Esteem

