Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference

Est. 2023

Program

Friday, November 6th, 2026

4th Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference

University of Southern Indiana
Psi Chi
Psychology Department

University Center: Carter Hall, 226, 227

1:00-1:15 pm **Check-in, presentation setup, and opening remarks**
Hallway, Carter Hall, UC 226, UC 227
Dr. Urska Dobersek, Psi Chi Advisor, UPRC Chair

1:15-3:35 pm **Oral Presentations**, *Carter Hall* & *UC 226, UC 227*

3:45-4:30 pm **Poster Presentations**, *Carter Hall*

4:30 pm **Awards Presentation & Closing Remarks**, *Carter Hall*
Dr. Urska Dobersek, Psi Chi Advisor, UPRC Chair

Faculty Mentors

- Ophalie Desmet, Ball State University
- Anjolii Diaz, Ball State University
- Urska Dobersek, University of Southern Indiana
- Julie Eyink, University of Southern Indiana
- George Gaither, Ball State University
- Rebecca Hahnel-Peeters, Indiana State University
- Katie Lawson, Ball State University
- Adam Lueke, Ball State University
- John McCreary, Ball State University
- Daniele Nardi, Ball State University
- Zachary Pilot, University of Southern Indiana
- Mackenzie Riggenbach, Ball State University
- Laurel Standiford-Reyes, University of Southern Indiana

1:15-3:35 pm
ORAL SESSIONS
Carter Hall

1:15 – 1:30 **Karma Chandler, Genesis Jones, & Phoenix Moody,** Ball State University
A Guide on Guidance: Support Group Facilitation Research

1:35 – 1:50 **Riya Talati & Aryan Chander,** University of Southern Indiana
Cognitive Decline Prevention for Older Adults through Hobbies: A Systematic Review

1:55 – 2:10 **Cameron Lynch,** Ball State University
Not 'Woman Enough' How Perceptions of Gender Impact Mental Health Outcomes in Women with PMOS

2:20 – 2:35 **Layla Brown & Ella Mayes,** University of Southern Indiana
Self-identification with ASD in the Search for Identity

2:40 – 2:55 **Ryanne O'Neill,** Ball State University
Psychopathic Traits and Emotionally Charged Information: Investigated Through DRM Lists

3:00 – 3:15 **Jacob Masse,** Ball State University
Examining Hopelessness and Relapse in Atheist LGBTQ+ in the 12-step Program

3:20 – 3:35 **Katie Richard,** Ball State University
Making or Breaking the Cycle

1:15-3:35 pm
ORAL SESSIONS
UC 226

1:15 – 1:30 **Meghan Seward,** Ball State University
Linguistic Anthropomorphization: The Appeal of Programmed Personhood in AI

1:35 – 1:50 **Ari Grogan,** Ball State University
Internalized Weight Stigma as it Relates to Social Isolation in Women

1:55 – 2:10 **Mackenzie Matney,** Ball State University
Weight Stigma in Queer College Students

2:20 – 2:35 **Aliyanna Garcia, Madilyn Clunie, & Hannah Hunt,** University of Southern Indiana
Digital Imagery

2:40 – 2:55 **Robin Disney,** Ball State University
Empathy Differences in Dissociative Identity Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Comparison

3:00 – 3:15 **Diamond Watson,** Ball State University
Hiring Discrimination of Transgender Women in Female Dominated Positions

1:15-3:15 pm
ORAL SESSIONS
UC 227

1:15 – 1:30 **Riya Talati, Gracesyn Looper, Isac Rodriguez, & William Williams**
University of Southern Indiana
Effects of AI Disclosure on Students' Perceptions of Instructor Credibility

1:35 – 1:50 **Mary Seitz,** Ball State University
Test Confidence and Debilitating Test Anxiety Across Levels of Cognitive Ability: A Path Analysis

1:55-2:10 **Catherine Williams,** Ball State University
Belief in a Just World and Assumptions About Abortion Aftereffects

2:20-2:35 **Addison Botts,** Ball State University
The Effects of Supplemental Photo-taking and Restudying on Memory Formation for Lecture Materials

2:40 – 2:55 **Surya Logeswaran, Xavier Walters, & Dadoucheka Louissaint**
University of Southern Indiana
Implicit Memory and Word-Stem Completion Tasks

3:00 – 3:15 **Surya Logeswaran,** University of Southern Indiana
Fall Versus Spring: Differences in Academic Performance in Introduction to Psychology

3:45-4:30 pm
POSTER SESSION
Carter Hall

Ava Goforth & Emily Phonsnasinh Indiana State University The University of Texas at Austin	Perceived Efficacy of Women's Defenses Against Sexual Assault
Emilee Shiver University of Southern Indiana	Examining the Impact of Religion on Death Anxiety in the LGBT+ Community
Adeline Jarrett University of Southern Indiana	Regret Inventory
William McDowell & Emilee Shiver University of Southern Indiana	Stigma as a Barrier to Anxiety Treatment in College Students

Abstracts

Oral Presentations
Carter Hall

A Guide on Guidance: Support Group Facilitation Research

Karma Chandler, Genesis Jones, & Phoenix Moody, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. George Gaither**

The purpose of our study is to determine which traits and knowledge a support group facilitator should have by surveying current or former facilitators and creating a standardized guidebook on how to effectively lead a support group. Current facilitators have experience and knowledge of who it takes and what it takes to run a support group and will be able to provide valuable insight into what they would like to see in a guidebook. By conducting surveys, we can recognize areas of training that should be highlighted. Our research and the creation of this guidebook are matters of public health and safety. Support groups are an accessible way for people to seek help with life's struggles. There are active support groups all over the world that cover a variety of issues that someone could seek help with, like Alzheimer's or grief. While many support group facilitators do have some formal education or training in psychology, counseling, or a related field, many do not. How do we help them start and effectively lead a group of people who are seeking help and support? Create a research-backed guidebook on facilitation.

Cognitive Decline Prevention for Older Adults through Hobbies: A Systematic Review

Riya Talati & Aryan Chander, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Laurel Standiford-Reyes**

Dementia and cognitive decline pose a substantial and growing burden among aging populations worldwide, with rising prevalence placing increasing strain on healthcare systems and caregivers. As pharmacological treatments for dementia remain limited in effectiveness, growing attention has turned toward modifiable lifestyle factors that may help delay or prevent cognitive decline before it begins. Leisure and recreational activities have been proposed as one such protective factor, based on the premise that regular engagement in meaningful hobbies may help preserve neural function and build cognitive reserve in later life. However, the strength and consistency of this relationship across different types of activity have not been comprehensively synthesized, making it difficult to translate this research into clear, actionable guidance for older adults and the clinicians who support them. This systematic review will synthesize existing evidence on the relationship between engagement in leisure activities and dementia risk or cognitive function in older adults, with particular attention to how sustained participation in hobbies may help reduce the risk of developing dementia or slow the progression of age-related cognitive decline. A systematic search will be conducted across major academic databases (PubMed,

MEDLINE, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and Web of Science) using a combination of terms related to cognitive activity, dementia prevention, and stimulating activity. This review is expected to clarify which forms of leisure engagement are most strongly associated with reduced dementia risk or preserved cognitive function, while also identifying gaps in the current evidence base. By synthesizing the available evidence, this review aims to inform future research directions and support the development of accessible activity-based strategies for reducing dementia risk in aging populations.

Not 'Woman Enough' How Perceptions of Gender Impact Mental Health Outcomes in Women with PMOS

Cameron Lynch, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. George Gaither**

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), now referred to as Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovary Syndrome (PMOS), is a metabolic and endocrine disorder that affects approximately 15% of women in the U.S (PCOS Challenge, 2026). Common symptoms of PMOS include physically masculinizing symptoms (OWH, 2025; Kowalczyk, R. et al., 2012), with increased body hair (hirsutism), increased acne, and male-pattern baldness being common (OWH, 2025). Psychological distress has been well-documented in women who experience mastectomies (breast removal surgery), with one factor of psychological distress being tied to the loss of feminine traits (Ng, 2010). Similarly, it has been found that many women with PMOS experience challenges with their self-worth; feeling ashamed, depressed, and separated from their sense of womanhood because of their masculinizing traits (Amiri et al., 2014). The literature documents that Femininity Contingency of Self-worth, defined as how much a woman places value on their femininity and bases their self-worth upon it, is an indicator of how strongly distress may occur when feminine traits misalign with the status quo (Dara, 2012). Therefore, with PMOS masculinizing symptoms, there is potential for the psychological distress documented to be based upon how much the individual places value their femininity. Considering these findings, I hypothesize that women who have higher femininity contingency will experience more psychological distress from masculinizing PMOS symptoms than women with lower femininity contingency. I plan to survey up to 1000 women with PMOS through an online survey via Research Match, including measures of PMOS symptoms, femininity, femininity contingency, and mental health outcomes. Results will be discussed in terms of how masculinizing symptoms affect perceived gender and the subsequent impact on mental health. This research will provide an avenue for potential counseling recommendations for women with PMOS and could further reach other conditions that impact gender expression.

Self-identification with ASD in the Search for Identity

Layla Brown & Ella Mayes, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zachary Pilot**

Since its earliest inclusion in the DSM, the definition of autism has undergone constant change. In recent years, there has been a massive increase in the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders (ASD), with some

estimates describing a 44-fold increase since the 1960s (OâNions et al., 2023). However, these increases are concentrated in females diagnosed after childhood (Salkic er al., 2026; Harrop et al., 2024). Though there are many explanations for these trends, the current work focuses on the possible influence of social definitions of ASD as it relates to the neurodiversity movement and self-diagnosis. Frith (2026) proposes that acquiring a diagnosis may provide an individual with a new way of being, a new self-concept (Hacking, 2009), thereby fostering a new sense of identity. The population in which diagnoses are increasing can be described as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2014), a prolonged period of self-exploration and identity development where instability is common. In the current presentation, we propose a design that investigates the intersection of these ideas using measures of identity processing style, self-identification with ASD, and common measures used in the ASD literature. We hypothesize that higher scores on the diffuse-avoidant identity processing style will be related to self-identification with ASD. We expect poorer performance on the objective ASD measures to be related to increased-self-identification regardless of identity processing style.

Psychopathic Traits and Emotionally Charged Information: Investigated Through DRM Lists

Ryanne O'Neill, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Mackenzie Riggenbach**

False memory formation occurs when an individual reports a detail that seemed plausible but did not occur in a previously experienced event. Previous research suggests that memory for an event can be easily contaminated by a variety of factors, and the resulting memory errors (i.e., the misinformation effect) can have broader implications for wrongful convictions (Otgaar et al., 2022). Memory is a reconstructive process and therefore can be error-prone (Lentoor, 2023). Internal forces affect memory accuracy. For example, individuals with higher psychopathic traits struggle to process visual information simultaneously (Hamilton & Newman, 2016), which may affect the retrieval or encoding of emotional material. These patterns raise questions regarding how individualistic psychopathic tendencies can shape false memory formation across different emotional situations. The Deese–Roediger–McDermott (DRM) paradigm is commonly used to test memory errors, although there is no work that examines psychopathic traits and the valence of these lists. This study aims to explore how individuals with differing psychopathic tendencies may remember emotionally charged information more intensely than someone else. We hypothesized that there will be an interaction between psychopathic traits and emotional valence. Individuals with higher psychopathic traits are expected to endorse fewer memory errors or confabulations regarding negative DRM lists but endorse more errors regarding positive information. This experiment will use the Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (LSRP; Levenson et al., 1995), which separates these features into primary (i.e., emotional detachment and callousness) and secondary (i.e., impulsivity and antisocial) psychopathy. The experiment will be conducted online using Qualtrics, and participants will be recruited via a university SONA pool. Participants will complete the LSRP and then be given a DRM task (i.e., positive, neutral, and negative). The dependent variables are the number of correctly recalled words, the number of false memories formed, and participants' confidence in their memory.

Examining Hopelessness and Relapse in Atheist LGBTQ+ in the 12-step Program

Jacob Masse, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Adam Lueke**

The 12-step program is designed to assist people in recovering from substance use disorders (SUDs). A core idea of the program is surrendering oneself to a higher power. Bill Wilson and Bob Smith created the 12-step program (Gross, 2010). Bill Wilson was an atheist, and he wanted to create it so that it could accept anyone, regardless of their religion. However, the original framework refers to the higher power as "God," which may alienate atheists if they feel unwelcome in traditional groups where the term "God" is more prevalent. (Bayley, 2022). Keeping this in mind, McGeough et al. (2023) state that people who are in the LGBTQ+ community are 2-6 times more likely to develop substance use disorders than cisgender heterosexual individuals, and members have expressed that it's harder to open in cisgender dominant groups. In other studies, they learned that roughly 52% of the LGBTQ+ members are atheist (Alper & Kallo, 2025). Because of the program's religious context and difficulties for the LGBTQ+ community to open up, the original design may not fully account for individuals who have both diverse sexual and atheistic identities, due to feeling disconnected. (McGeough et al., 2023). This research aims to understand the experiences of atheistic LGBTQ+ individuals who have participated in 12-step programs. Specifically, the study will investigate whether being part of a particular identity makes them feel more hopeless and more likely to relapse. To conduct this research, I will send demographic, 12-step involvement, relapse (AWARE), SUD, and hopelessness screening surveys online and in person. The goal of this analysis is to examine whether people who identify as atheist in the LGBTQ+ community have higher feelings of hopelessness, which leads to relapse. This study may contribute to a better understanding of how individuals' identities and their experiences shape their participation in the 12-step program.

Making or Breaking the Cycle

Katie Richard, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Anjolii Diaz**

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), stressful or traumatic events before the age of eighteen, are thought to contribute to the transmission of intergenerational trauma through several factors, including parenting (Rowell & Neal-Barnett, 2022). ACEs increase children's vulnerability to experiencing psychological, social, and physical distress, as well as their likelihood of experiencing psychological distress in adulthood. Consequently, these experiences can continue the cycle of trauma, as ACEs are linked to an individual's maladaptive caregiving practices (Burke et al., 2021). Positive childhood experiences (PCEs), by contrast, are correlated with positive childhood outcomes and greater engagement in positive parenting practices (Sousa et al., 2025). Nevertheless, conflicting empirical evidence (e.g., Han et al., 2023; Hoppe et al., 2026) suggests that the relationship between caregivers' ACEs and parenting behavior may be indirect, mediated by other factors. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate whether a caregiver's available resources, specifically their psychological capital (PsyCap), moderate the relationship between parents' early experiences and their parenting practices. Rooted in positive psychology and

based on the HERO framework, PsyCap represents an individual's reserve of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2004), which is hypothesized to help mitigate maladaptive caregiving practices. Data will be collected from approximately 200 parents of children ages 0-12, using a Qualtrics survey assessing demographics, ACEs (ACEs International Questionnaire; World Health Organization, 2018), PCEs (Childhood Centeredness Scale; Narayan et al., 2023), parenting practices (Multidimensional Assessment of Parenting Scale; Parent & Forehand, 2017), and psychological capital (Psychological Capital Questionnaire; Luthans et al., 2007). The data will then be statistically analyzed in SPSS using Hayes PROCESS Model 1. Results may contribute to the creation of intervention studies that focus on fostering PsyCap, ultimately helping to decrease the transmission of intergenerational trauma.

Oral Presentations
UC 226

Linguistic Anthropomorphization: The Appeal of Programmed Personhood in AI

Meghan Seward, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Daniele Nardi**

Artificial Intelligence has ramped up in the past few years, and information gathering is not the only cause of this rise in popularity. ChatGPT, in particular, can now serve as a friend, mentor, or even a therapist. (Bakas & Aafjes-van Doorn, 2026). This study aims to show that anthropomorphic linguistics will have a positive effect on both AI attachment and anthropomorphization compared with robotic language. It has also been designed to fill the gap between the recent rise of AI as therapists and the AI's use of language that is programmed to have a "shifting personhood" to encourage engagement and camaraderie with the individual (Hanley & Wohl, 2025). To start the experiment, participants will be randomly assigned to one of two groups. Depending on the random assignment, participants will receive a set of predetermined prompts and, based on their selected responses, will be given a robotic or human-like prompt to simulate an AI interaction. Participants will then complete the 15-item AI attachment scale (Kasturiratna & Hartanto, 2026) and a 16-item anthropomorphization scale based on Shen et al. (2024). Finally, a manipulation check will measure the effect of language on their perception of the AI being more human-like or robotic. If willing, participants will also provide demographics. An independent-samples *t*-test will then compare the groups' means and test the main hypothesis: language designed to be more human-like will elicit greater AI attachment and anthropomorphization. Upon acceptance of the thesis proposal, data collection will begin in January. Participants will be recruited via Ball State's campus advertising and online through a social media link. Future studies may expand on the effectiveness of linguistic anthropomorphization in manipulating human empathy for AI.

Internalized Weight Stigma as it Relates to Social Isolation in Women

Ari Grogan, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Katie Lawson**

Certain groups are more likely to experience social isolation than others, such as individuals in poverty, elders, and people of color (Umberson & Donnelly, 2023). Research acknowledges that stress exacerbates social isolation (Scott et al., 2012). However, little research has evaluated the prevalence of weight stigma as an impactful stressor, despite agreement that chronic stress plays a role in the development of obesity. The stigma associated with being overweight is uniquely denigrating because it is an identity that is largely unconcealable and perceived as a controllable deficiency. This study will primarily examine internalized weight-stigma, which is defined as "self-devaluation and the fear of enacted stigma that results from one's identification with a stigmatized group" (Lillis et al., 2012). This will better illustrate potential implications of the implicit social pressures of maintaining a certain size. Participants will complete an online survey that includes Zavaleta and colleagues' (2016) 15-item questionnaire to measure social isolation, and Lillis and colleagues' (2012) 12-item questionnaire to measure weight self-stigma. Participants will be recruited from Ball State University's campus and Reddit webpages. It is hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between weight self-stigma and social isolation. However, it is predicted that gender will be a significant moderator due to the distinct impact of weight stigma on women. More specifically, women are three times more likely to experience weight-based discrimination than men of the same weight (Puhl et al., 2008). Findings from this study can guide future theory and research on the potential impact of weight stigma on health, sense of belonging, and overall quality of life, and demonstrate the unique experiences of intersecting identities that contribute to social isolation. With this knowledge, practitioners and helping professionals can provide more comprehensive, accommodating care by understanding factors that exacerbate internal stigma and social isolation.

Weight Stigma in Queer College Students

Mackenzie Matney, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. John McCreary**

The term intersectionality refers to the interaction of disadvantaged categories of identity that shape experiences of discrimination, such that each marginalized category compounds the negative effects of others (Worthen, et al., 2023). LGBTQ+ individuals often report experiencing discrimination, microaggressions, and harassment. Individuals identified as being overweight suffer from weight stigma, or negative attitudes and behaviors directed towards individuals due to their body size. Intersectionality aside, college life comes with its own unique set of stressors (Barbayannis et al., 2022). Students affected by weight stigma can suffer from negative consequences such as increased anxiety, depression, and avoidance of campus spaces where discrimination has occurred (Roberts et al., 2025). The discrimination, microaggressions, and harassment experienced by members of the LGBTQ+ community add to college stressors in students, making it harder for them to connect socially to campus and peers. At the same

time, such students often find safety within the presence of other LGBTQ+ individuals to create a support system (Funarie et al, 2025). Based on that, I hypothesize overweight LGBTQ+ students who encounter weight stigma are likely to report lower self-esteem and feelings of ostracism than each of these identity statuses on their own. This study will use a Qualtrics survey sent to multiple colleges to assess demographics, weight stigma, self-esteem, and sense of social belonging, with data analyzed in SPSS. If my hypothesis were true, it would show a relationship between LGBTQ+ students and weight stigma as an intersectional identity, which can potentially put students at risk of lower self-worth and feelings of ostracism in their college community. These results could be used to create body-inclusive spaces within intersectional communities.

Digital Imagery

Aliyanna Garcia, Madilyn Clunie, & Hannah Hunt, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zachary Pilot**

Stress and anxiety are prevalent concerns among college students, impacting academic performance and overall well-being. While previous research demonstrates that physical interaction with companion animals, such as therapy dogs, can significantly reduce stress and promote emotional regulation, emerging studies suggest that visual exposure to animals alone may also elicit positive psychological benefits. However, existing literature primarily focuses on traditional pets (dogs), leaving it unclear whether stress reduction depends on the specific type of animal presented or cultural familiarity. This project investigates whether visual exposure to traditional household pets (dogs) reduces state anxiety more effectively than exposure to nontraditional pets (snakes) or a neutral stimulus (a mug). Using a between-subjects experimental design, undergraduate participants recruited via SONA are randomly assigned to view one image (a golden retriever, a ball python, or a white mug) for one minute; following visual exposure, participants complete a demographic questionnaire and the six-item short-form state-trait anxiety inventory (STAI-6) to measure current anxiety levels. Institutional review board approval has been secured, and data collection is currently underway. We hypothesize that participants viewing images of traditional pets will report significantly lower anxiety scores than those viewing non-traditional pets or neutral stimuli, and that participants viewing images of non-traditional pets will report significantly higher anxiety scores than those viewing traditional pets or neutral stimuli. We intend to isolate whether stress mitigation is driven by general animal exposure or conditioned emotional responses. This study aims to contribute valuable insight into a low-cost, accessible digital intervention strategy for student mental health and emotional regulation.

Empathy Differences in Dissociative Identity Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Comparison

Robin Disney, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. John McCreary**

Childhood maltreatment is a prominent issue in the United States, with over 2/3rds of adults reporting one or more adverse childhood experiences, which include abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (Gao et al., 2025). Childhood maltreatment can lead to a variety of negative mental health outcomes, two of the more severe being posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and dissociative identity disorder (DID). Additionally, childhood maltreatment can affect interpersonal and social skills (Pfaltz et al., 2022). One important mechanism in interpersonal relationships that can be impacted is empathy. Previous research has examined empathy in PTSD and the correlation between dissociation and empathy, but none has measured empathy in DID or compared empathy levels in the two disorders. This study aims to fill that gap. Participants will include those with PTSD or DID, along with controls with neither disorder. They will be recruited from ResearchMatch, the study submission portal for the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, DID-research.org, and Reddit, if needed. Participants will complete a one-time Qualtrics survey measuring empathy levels using the Questionnaire of Cognitive and Affective Empathy (QCAE), dissociation levels using the Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (DES-II), and demographics. A one-way ANOVA comparing overall empathy levels between those with DID, PTSD, and neither disorder will be conducted, along with two additional ANOVAs comparing cognitive and affective empathy between the three groups. An independent-samples *t*-test will also be conducted comparing dissociation and empathy levels. I hypothesize that (1) those with DID will have lower empathy than those with PTSD or neither, (2) those with PTSD will have significantly different empathy levels than those without PTSD, and (3) those with higher dissociation will have lower empathy. This will further understanding of how trauma and these disorders affect interpersonal domains, potentially informing clinical practice.

Hiring Discrimination of Transgender Women in Female Dominated Positions

Diamond Watson, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Katie Lawson**

Hiring discrimination has been studied across many social minority groups, with an increase in studies focusing on transgender individuals within the past five years. Experimental studies on the topic include evaluations of perceptions of gender conformity based on voice recordings at different stages of transition (Fasoli et al., 2024). Rarely did existing studies present transgender applicants in varying degrees of transition or 'passability' This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating discrimination of transgender women applying for a stereotypically feminine position based on gender conformity. Participants will be randomly assigned to a job application of the transgender applicant with masculine or feminine facial features. Two headshots from Eames' (2026) study on hiring discrimination will be presented to participants with their description of 'cis woman' and 'trans woman' changed to 'passing' and 'non-passing' trans woman. This will illustrate potential discrimination based on gender non-conformity. Participants will then evaluate the

application with questions adapted from the Competence and Warmth (Fiske et al., 2002) model. The job position will be for a preschool teacher, a female-dominated position with feminine gender implications. I hypothesize that participants will discriminate against applicants based on the 'non-passing' condition. If these predictions are supported, this research can reflect people's sentiments regarding the gender conformity of transgender individuals, as well as the gender roles expected of them. This can illustrate the importance of inclusive hiring practices and gender-affirming care.

Oral Presentations
UC 227

Effects of AI Disclosure on Students' Perceptions of Instructor Credibility

Riya Talati, Gracesyn Looper, Isac Rodriguez, & William Williams, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zachary Pilot**

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education is expanding rapidly, with teachers increasingly relying on these tools to draft lesson plans, grade assignments, and write individualized education plans. While AI can reduce workload and free instructors to focus on more creative aspects of teaching, its growing use raises ethical questions about authenticity and transparency. Schools have introduced strict guidelines and detection software to address student use of AI, yet far less attention has been given to teachers who use AI without disclosing it. Because AI remains stigmatized as a potential source of plagiarism, students may view instructors who acknowledge using it as less trustworthy. Without a clearer understanding of this relationship, it is difficult to develop practical guidance for how educators can use AI responsibly in the classroom. This study will use a between-subjects design to examine how disclosure of AI use affects college students' perceptions of instructor credibility. Undergraduates recruited through SONA will be randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Participants in both conditions will read the same instructor feedback excerpt on an English 201 assignment, which was generated by ChatGPT. One group will see the excerpt presented as instructor-written with no AI disclosure, while the other will see it accompanied by a statement disclosing AI use. Participants will then rate credibility using an adapted version of McCroskey and Teven's Source Credibility Measure, which assesses competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness. Credibility scores will be compared between conditions using a one-way ANOVA. We predict that students who see the AI disclosure will rate the feedback as less credible than students who do not.

Test Confidence and Debilitating Test Anxiety Across Levels of Cognitive Ability: A Path Analysis

Mary Seitz, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Ophalie Desmet**

Test anxiety can interfere with students' well-being and academic performance. Students who are more confident in their ability to perform on tests tend to report less test anxiety, and confidence and cognitive

ability, although related, are distinct. It remains unclear, however, whether the association between test confidence and test anxiety is similar across levels of cognitive ability, particularly in early adolescence. This study examines whether the association between test confidence and debilitating test anxiety varies across levels of measured cognitive ability among Dutch seventh-grade students aged 11-13. Data were drawn from a group screening dataset of 4,251 students from 17 schools in the Netherlands, collected from the 2012-2013 through the 2024-2025 school years. Test confidence was measured with the test-confidence composite of the Dutch School Questionnaire (Schoolvragenlijst), debilitating test anxiety with the negative test-anxiety subscale of the Achievement Motivation Test for Children, Second Edition (Prestatie Motivatie Test voor Kinderen 2), and cognitive ability with the total composite of the Dutch Intelligence Structure Test. A path analysis will estimate the associations among the three constructs, including an interaction between test confidence and cognitive ability. I hypothesize that higher test confidence will be associated with lower debilitating test anxiety. I will examine whether the strength of this association differs across levels of cognitive ability as an exploratory question. Findings will clarify whether the link between test confidence and test anxiety holds across the ability range or is stronger for some students than others, informing how schools identify and support students experiencing test anxiety.

Belief in a Just World and Assumptions About Abortion Aftereffects

Catherine Williams, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. George Gaither**

Abortions have been a divisive topic for decades in the United States, especially since the recent overturning of Roe v. Wade (1973). With a lack of access becoming more prevalent, it raises the question: does denial of access to care lead to the same or worse outcomes for people seeking an abortion? Through a thorough review of current literature and previous studies, I have developed a survey asking individuals about their assumptions about abortion and the individuals who receive the procedure. Participants will be asked to complete questions from the Belief in a Just World (BJW) (Dalbert, 1999) and review two vignettes: one where a person has access to abortion healthcare and one where the individual lives in a state where abortion is illegal. The questions will ask participants to review the scenarios in the vignettes (Sohr-Preston et al., 2018) and report on which person would be more likely to experience different hardships. These hardships will be centered on how abortion impacts self-esteem, mental well-being, and how relationships with others and themselves are affected. The purpose of the study is to look at current opinions on abortion compared to a participant's outlook and belief in a just world. I hypothesize that participants with a stronger belief that the world is just will report that abortions have a stronger negative impact on an individual's life if they have access to abortion healthcare and receive that care. With this study, I hope to open the discussion surrounding abortions and encourage further research to compare beliefs about the effects on self-esteem, mental well-being, and relationships to how people who have received an abortion believe they were affected.

The Effects of Supplemental Photo-taking and Restudying on Memory Formation for Lecture Materials

Addison Botts, Ball State University

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Mackenzie Riggenbach**

With increased use of technology, students often take photos of lecture slides, intending to refer to the images before an exam. However, previous research has found impaired memory for information that is photographed compared with information that is viewed (i.e., Photo-Taking Impairment Effect (PTIE) (Lurie & Westerman, 2021; Soares & Storm, 2018, 2022). Two theoretical accounts have been proposed to explain this PTIE: cognitive offloading and attentional disengagement. Cognitive offloading refers to the reliance on an external memory store, which reduces internal encoding and impairs later memory performance (Li et al., 2026). Whereas attentional disengagement suggests that if attention is directed to the task beforehand, taking a photo will impair memory by rerouting attentional resources necessary for memory (Soares & Storm, 2018). However, findings are inconsistent when the PTIE is investigated in an academic context. Ditta et al. (2023) found a photo-taking benefit, rather than impairment, when comparing photographed versus non-photographed lecture content. Related work has also examined the differences between viewing, taking notes, and taking photos of lecture material and reported no significant difference between viewing lecture material and taking photos of it, suggesting note-taking is most effective (Wong & Lime, 2023; Trego et al., 2025). The effects of photo restudying in educational contexts remain largely unexplored. This project aims to examine, in the context of last-minute studying, the gap between taking photos of lecture materials and whether or not restudying those photographs can reverse the proposed PTIE. This study will employ a 2x2 within-subjects design with photo-taking and restudying as the independent variables. After exposure to the learning material and an opportunity to restudy some of the material, participants will complete a memory test. The dependent variable will be the number of correct responses.

Implicit Memory and Word-Stem Completion Tasks

Surya Logeswaran, Xavier Walters, & Dadoucheka Louissaint, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zachary Pilot**

The present study examined whether semantic and perceptual priming influence decision-making during a word-stem completion task. Priming is a form of nondeclarative memory in which prior exposure to a stimulus or related information can influence subsequent processing or behavior. Although previous research has demonstrated that both semantic and perceptual priming can affect subsequent responses, relatively little is known about which is more effective at producing a desired response. Undergraduate students at a mid-sized public university were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: semantic priming, perceptual priming, or a control condition. Participants in the semantic priming condition completed word-scramble tasks designed to activate concepts related to the target words, whereas participants in the perceptual priming condition viewed images corresponding to the target words.

Participants in the control condition did not receive a priming manipulation. Following each manipulation, participants completed word stems by providing the first word that came to mind. Responses were scored according to whether they matched the predetermined target words, with higher scores indicating a greater influence of the priming manipulation. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the effects of priming on producing a target word. We hypothesized that participants in both priming conditions would produce more target-consistent responses than participants in the control condition. We also hypothesized that the semantic priming condition would produce more target-consistent responses than the perceptual priming group, due to an increased level of processing.

Fall Versus Spring: Differences in Academic Performance in Introduction to Psychology

Surya Logeswaran, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Zachary Pilot**

Academic performance can vary between college semesters for a number of reasons, including students' academic preparation, workload, study habits, and adjustment to college. Previous research has found that factors such as prior academic performance and engagement can influence students' success in university-level courses. The current study examines whether students perform differently in an Introduction to Psychology course depending on whether they take the course during the Fall or Spring semester. This course is primarily taken by first-year college students. The dataset includes more than 1,930 students who took the course between Fall 2019 and Spring 2026. Students' academic performance, measured by their overall point totals, was compared between the two semesters. The results showed that students who took Introduction to Psychology during the Fall semester had average scores that were significantly higher ($p < 0.0001$) than students who took the course during the Spring semester. This difference suggests that factors related to the semester in which students take the course may influence their academic performance. Possible explanations include differences in students' academic preparation, overall course workload, study habits, engagement, and adjustment to college. We will also present findings related to whether performance differences are affected by COVID and the increasing ubiquity of AI models. Understanding these factors could help explain why students perform differently across semesters and may help identify ways to support students in introductory psychology courses.

Poster Presentations
Carter Hall

Perceived Efficacy of Women's Defenses Against Sexual Assault

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Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Rebecka Hahnel-Peeters**

Previous research established that women use myriad psychological and behavioral defenses before, during, and after sexual victimization (Hahnel-Peeters & Buss, 2026). Across 19 categories containing 48 behavioral tactics, these defenses include avoiding potentially dangerous situations or people, physically or verbally resisting an assailant, relying on social allies for protection, and managing information about an assault in its aftermath. Despite this documented diversity, little is known about whether particular defenses are perceived as more effective at mitigating specific costs of sexual victimization or whether their perceived efficacy depends on the circumstances in which they are used. Using a mixed repeated-measures design (n = 608), we examined the perceived efficacy of three defense categories: avoidance, reliance on bodyguards (i.e., social allies), and information management. Participants evaluated defenses used before or after sexual assault perpetrated by either a stranger or a romantic partner. For each scenario, participants rated the effectiveness of each defense at reducing harm across ten domains, including sexual and social reputation, sexual functioning, physical and psychological health, and social relationships. Preliminary findings will identify when and under what circumstances different defensive responses are perceived to mitigate the diverse costs associated with sexual victimization. By examining defenses as potentially condition-dependent responses to distinct forms of harm, we provide a more nuanced account of the efficacy of women's defenses against sexual violence.

Examining the Impact of Religion on Death Anxiety in the LGBT+ Community

Emilee Shiver, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Julie Eyink**

Death anxiety is a common experience that involves fear of dying, fear of loved ones dying, and avoidant behavior (e.g., Arredondo & Caparrs, 2022). The research examining death anxiety and its relationship with religion and spirituality is abundant but mixed, with some finding that religion does have an impact (positive and negative; e.g., Heidari Gorji et al., 2024), others finding no impact at all (e.g., Bassett & Bussard, 2021), and some finding that the impact can change according to the strength one has in their identity or community (e.g., Pashak et al., 2025). Despite this abundance of research on the topic, very little has been done with an LGBT+ population. Being part of the LGBT+ community may impact the relationship between death anxiety and religion due to the complicated relationship many members of this community have with religion (e.g., Cline & Hampton, 2024). This study aims to fill the existing gap in the literature. We predict that those who consider themselves part of a religious community and the LGBT+ community will have more death anxiety than those who are part of one or neither. Additionally, we predict that those who have higher strength in their respective identities will have less death anxiety.

If the findings of the study align with our predictions, it implies that LGBT+ status can be an important factor when addressing the relationship between religion and death anxiety. Additionally, it supports a change in how death anxiety is treated and studied in those who are part of the community.

Regret Inventory

Adeline Jarrett, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Urska Dobersek**

Regret has long been recognized in philosophical and psychological discussions of decision-making as a complex emotional and cognitive experience. Despite its importance, existing measures of regret vary considerably in their conceptualization and assessment, with some focusing on decision-related regret and others emphasizing emotional responses to actions/inactions. Given this variability, there is a need for a comprehensive and psychometrically sound measure that captures the multidimensional nature of regret. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop a new regret inventory that more extensively measures regret by assessing its emotional and cognitive dimensions. Scale development followed established procedures for psychological measure construction, including conceptual definition of the construct, item generation, expert evaluation, and empirical examination of the scale's factor structure. The initial item pool of a Regret Inventory comprised 35 items, which were narrowed to 28, with 14 items measuring emotion and the other 14 measuring cognition. Half of the items were reverse-scored to increase reliability and are anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The total score for the emotional and cognitive subscales is calculated by summing all item scores, with higher scores indicating greater regret. Participants were recruited through personal contacts and the Psychology Subject Pool or SONA. They (n =86) completed an online survey using Qualtrics, including a Demographic Questionnaire, the Regret Inventory, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Maximizing Versus Satisficing: Happiness Is a Matter of Choice. After screening, 26 participants were removed due to completing the survey in less than 60 seconds or not completing it at all. The inventory showed high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. Inter-item correlations were predominantly positive and ranged from low to moderately high, indicating consistency across the inventory. The results of the exploratory factor analysis suggest that the items load onto three factors rather than two, and that some items show cross-loadings across multiple factors.

Stigma as a Barrier to Anxiety Treatment in College Students

William McDowell & Emilee Shiver, University of Southern Indiana

Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Julie Eyink**

Anxiety impacts a significant portion of the college population. Anxiety has a negative impact on overall success and well-being. Those with anxiety and other mental disorders have historically been stigmatized. Higher levels of internal stigma indicate stronger judgment towards those with anxiety. Higher levels of external stigma indicate stronger belief in judgment by others towards those with anxiety. The current study aims to understand stigma as a barrier to anxiety treatment. Using an adapted version of Link's (1987) Perceived Devaluation and Discrimination scale, participants were asked about views towards

people with mental disorders. Participants were also asked about their experiences with anxiety, anxiety treatment, and views on the effectiveness of different treatments. Results indicated that those with prior experience with anxiety and anxiety treatment had greater levels of external stigma. This indicates that experience with anxiety and treatment may make individuals more aware of the perception of anxiety, increasing external stigma, without impacting internal stigma. Professional treatment was viewed as less effective than self-help strategies or pharmacotherapy. Researchers believe this is due to differences in accessibility of treatment.