

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

# Psychology Research Day

FALL 2007 PROGRAM

December 4, 2007 Moyer Hall

# NOTES

## SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

4:20 - 4:50 Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

Welcoming Remarks

Keynote Speaker, Dr. Stefanie Sinno

**“WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?!”: HOW PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH CAN ILLUMINATE HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

Children, adolescents, and many times, adults, are caught behaving in ways that cause others to exclaim, “What were they thinking?!” This exclamation may be made because individuals are questioning the moral appropriateness of an act, or its incongruence with social expectations. In either case, psychological research can help one to understand or even somewhat explain human behavior. With psychology research techniques, scientists can uncover motivations, plausible causations, and underlying reasoning of behavior. Developmental research, in particular, allows psychologists to uncover the process of behavior and how it changes with age. Is this behavior influenced by outside factors such as parenting style or peer pressure, or is this behavior influenced by individual factors such as low self-esteem or personality? Another major component, as researched by the social domain model, is that each individual is constantly balancing all of these factors in order to make decisions about how to behave in social situations and that this ability to balance various sources of influence is affected by an individuals’ age and experience. Research indicates that with age and experience, individuals will more deeply question both the moral and social conventional behaviors of others and themselves, asking in essence, “What were they thinking?!”

4:50 - 5:00 Break

### CONCURRENT PRESENTATION SESSIONS

4:50-6:30 Posters - Miller Forum

5:00-6:20 Paper Session A - Moyer 106

5:00-6:20 Paper Session B - Moyer 109

*(break at 5:30)*

(SNACKS & BEVERAGES AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE EVENT)

# NOTES

# DETAILED SCHEDULE & ABSTRACTS

## Paper Session A

### Moyer 106

5:00-5:15

#### COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSESSMENTS OF GREEK STEREOTYPES

*Meghan Shober, Liz Stillman, Katie Tomasura, Jennifer Weaver*

The main goal of this study was to discover if when compared to non-Greek individuals, senior Greek members would be more likely to think critically about negative sorority stereotypes than sophomore new Greek members. We tested if after reading three scenarios portraying common negative sorority stereotypes, new or old members would be more likely to understand and think critically about why these stereotypes may exist. We also investigated if this was related to an individual's sense of self-identity. We anticipated a significant difference of the perception of stereotypes between senior and new sorority members.

5:15-5:30

#### ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: THE EFFECT OF SELF-ESTEEM IN THE INTERPRETATION OF FEEDBACK

*Keith Shalvoy, Anna Rossi, Rachel Hisler, Sara Gearin*

Research shows that individuals with low and high self-esteem interpret feedback differently (Silvera & Neilands, 2004). Individuals with low self-esteem feel discomfort when their partner gives them positive feedback because it is not self-verifying. This study predicts that one's level of self-esteem has an effect on his/her perception of his/her partner and relationship satisfaction. Half of the participants read scenarios where the partner gave them positive feedback, while the other half read scenarios where the partner gave them neutral feedback. Surveys assessing their relationship and perceptions of their partner were then administered.

(Break)

5:35-5:50

#### VICARIOUS DISSONANCE: AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION

*Brittany Barton, Lindsay Coughlin, Niki Kelman, and Emily Sidwaty*

Cognitive dissonance is social psychology's most influential theory describing one's attitude change. Norton et. al (2003) researched an extension of cognitive dissonance naming it vicarious dissonance. This new theory suggests that a person experiencing an in-group member behaving counterattitudinally will feel that person's dissonance and, as a result, change their own attitude. Our study proposes an alternative explanation for Norton et al.'s results. We anticipate that simple persuasion is responsible for the attitude change Norton et. al found. Our study uses the elaboration likelihood model paradigm to test this possibility.

5:50-6:05

#### THE EFFECT OF THE MALE GAZE ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF COLLEGE WOMEN

*Heather Brown, Samantha Greenberg, Katherine Nicol, Meghan Phillips*

Male gaze, or objectification theory, dictates that women view themselves through a man's eye and are constantly surveying themselves. In other words, women's self-concept is thoroughly

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH DAY

intertwined in objectification theory. The present study seeks to understand the effects of male gaze on the self-esteem of college women. It is hypothesized that women who seek self-esteem through appearance would have lower state self-esteem after being exposed to the male gaze prime.

6:05-6:20

### WANTING VS. LIKING IN LOVE ADDICTION

*Jared Mazzei, Alissa Constantinople*

The concept of romantic love is similar to drug addiction in a couple of ways. They both follow the rules of craving a reward and performing behaviors to obtain it, even if they do not like it. In this study I hope to find out if whether love-cued stimuli will elicit a desire for love (wanting) and because of that cause people to have more positive views of their relationship (liking). Arousal will be recorded before and during viewing the stimuli. The idea here is that the loved-cued group will cause a higher arousal and in turn more positive views of their relationships than in the neutral group.

## Paper Session B

### Moyer 109

5:00-5:15

### MATE SELECTION THEORY APPLIED ACROSS SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS

*Jeremy L. Banner, Samantha J. Borah, and Zachary, H. Itzkowitz Shifrinson*

Our study was designed to look at how mate selection criteria and preferences vary between different sexual orientations. To accomplish this, we posted a survey on a site called zoomerang.com. We had a total of 37 male and 81 female participants, including partially completed surveys. We intend to analyze and present data we have. Though, our initial hypothesis is that people will prefer others who have similar attributes to them, for a long term partner. When it comes to a short term relationship, we anticipate that people will choose a partner who they perceive to have better attributes than themselves.

5:15-5:30

### THE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON PERFORMANCE OF A COGNITIVE TASK

*Katie Mulford, Natalie Puorro, Jenn Lagosz, Caroline Pottash*

Different types of environmental noise may differentially affect anxiety levels. We had two noise conditions: natural (coughing) and unnatural (pen tapping) noise. Determining if different types of noise cause an increase in anxiety can lend greater understanding on the effects of environmental noise on productivity. Results will compare performance on a cognitive task as compared to measured anxiety level in each noise condition. Results will be analyzed and implications will be presented at Psychology Day.

(Break)

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH DAY

5:35-5:50

### JEALOUSY IN RELATIONSHIPS

*Juliann Gilbert, Amanda Wade, and Lauren Tatz*

Our experiment compared male and female's perceived jealousy for different levels of relationships and situations. The four different relationships looked at are: a serious, committed relationship, friends with benefits, just friends, and a one night stand. We looked at these relationships in regards to different levels of sexual and emotional infidelity. We wanted to gain an understanding of what causes jealousy in relationships and if gender plays a role in admitting feelings of jealousy. These findings could help individuals understand what may be causing their jealousy and how to contain these feelings. Data will be collected and analysed.

5:50-6:05

### PERCEPTIONS OF ATTRACTIVENESS OF PREGNANT WOMEN

*Meg Coleman, Nicole DeMaio, Leslie Jordan*

We predicted that women during their first trimester of pregnancy would be rated as significantly less attractive than women during pre-pregnancy or third trimester. Also, we predicted the more a participant is influenced by the media, the lower they would rate the attractiveness of the women. Each participant was randomly assigned to the pre-pregnancy, first trimester, or third trimester condition. They were then asked to rate the attractiveness of four different women in the corresponding stage of pregnancy. Next participants filled out a modified version of the Media Influence Scale and their demographics. Results will be analyzed and presented.

6:05-6:20

### BIOPHILIA AND FAMILIARITY

*Emily Phelan, Jillian Schrage, Kris Denboske*

We chose to investigate the bio/psychological tendencies toward biophilia or familiarity. Biophilia is an innate connection with nature, familiarity is the tendency to prefer what we know. People were given a simple task in a biophilic condition and a familiar environment, and the differences were studied. Data will be analysed and presented.

## Poster Session

## Miller Forum

### THE EFFECT OF SOUND AND BACKGROUND MUSIC ON RECALL

*Caryn Viverito, Jillian Seeley, Jenna Van Waalwijk*

Muhlenberg College students participated voluntarily in a study measuring the effects of sound and background music on recall of details in a video clip. It was hypothesized that participants would recall more details in the no sound condition. It was also hypothesized that participants in the sound condition will experience a stronger negative mood shift. Therefore, we hypothesize that the negative mood will be negatively correlated with recall of details

### ROMANTIC MEDIA, BIRTH ORDER, AND IRRATIONAL RELATIONSHIP BELIEFS

*Laura Tumulty, Hannah Poles, Alison Long*

The study examined the effect of birth order and romantic media on irrational relationship beliefs. Participants took a modified version of the Relationship Belief Inventory and filled out a Media Exposure Questionnaire. Demographics and birth order were collected. We predict

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH DAY

results will show that First-born children will hold the most irrational relationship beliefs followed by middle children then the youngest children. We also predict that participants with more romantic media exposure and enjoyment will hold more irrational relationship beliefs. The discussion will explore possible rationales for the effect of birth order and media exposure.

### MEMORY TEST

*Andrea Shulman, Ariel Unger, Mallory Russo, Amit Sid*

The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of food on mood. Participants were divided into three groups. Each group was given chocolate, fruit, or no food at all. After being given the food or no food, subjects were shown a five minute movie clip. After the clip was shown, a memory test pertaining to the clip was given as well as a mood assessment questionnaire. Following the memory test and mood assessment participants were debriefed in the form of a handout explaining the experiment. Anticipated results include participants offered chocolate will have more elated moods.

### BMI AND PERSONALITY

*Sarah Rutstein, Lauren Bernstein, Wendy Hartmann, Janelle Mentrikoski*

This study investigated the effect of women's individual body mass index and the perception of their own personality on their perceptions of other women's personality based on body image. Participants were given a Big Five personality assessment for themselves and images of other women. We predicted that when shown pictures of various body sizes, women would perceive similar personalities to women with the closest body size to themselves.

### STEREOTYPES TRIGGERED BY AUDIO CUES

*Allison Gadon and Valori Ferrigno*

Research by Edwards (1999) showed that stereotypes can be evoked through listening to a person speak. We compared participants' stereotypes of a British accented speaker, Southern vernacular English speaker, and a Standard American speaker to determine if individuals can label groups based solely on audio samples and apply specific stereotypes to those groups. It was hypothesized that the British will be rated as most intelligent, unfriendly, cultured, and arrogant. Southern will be rated as least intelligent, hard working and most racist and friendly. Standard American will be rated as most rushed and driven and average in the other stereotypes.

### THE EFFECT OF INPUT METHODS ON VERBAL FREE RECALL

*Becca Zafran, Jason Tenenbaum, Ben Katz, Rebecca Scarborough*

We hypothesized that participants would have better recall if viewing actual objects instead of memorizing a word list. Previous research done on memorization of text and pictures shows that pictures lead to superior recall, based on the dual-encoding theory (Joseph, Waln, and Stone 1984). Subjects were given a list of 20 words to memorize, or shown 20 objects corresponding to the words on the list. Participants then verbally recalled all objects or words that they could remember.

### EMPATHY AND GENDER

*Jessica Apicella and Courtney Toth*

The goal of this study was to look at the relationship between empathy and gender. It was predicted that women would be more empathetic than men. In addition, when watching a confrontation between a man and woman, we expected that men would empathize for a male character whereas women would empathize for a female character. Participants then watched a

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH DAY

five minute video clip of a confrontation between a man and a woman. Finally, they completed a survey assessing their opinion of which character they empathized for. Participants were then debriefed.

### SELF BODY SATISFACTION AND PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

*Nicole Lapin, Lori Kerzner, Angelica Pavone*

We studied the effect of a person's perception of their own body satisfaction and how they perceive the physical appearance of others. We used female participants and had them fill out the Body Esteem Scale and the Measure of Body Apperception Scale. The participants viewed three pictures of the same woman with three different weights: under BMI, within the normal BMI, and over the healthy BMI and the participants rated the pictures on attractiveness and health. We hypothesized that participants with a healthy perception of their own body would be more objective in judging other women's body image.

### THE EFFECTS OF STEREOTYPE THREAT ON WOMEN'S VIDEO GAME PERFORMANCE

*Dana Glassman, Kristin Garbutt, Carly Rotfeld, Stephanie Morffi*

We attempted to observe the effects of Stereotype Threat on women's performance in video games. We had Muhlenberg College female undergraduates participate in a Nintendo 64 racing video game and recorded their finishing times. Half were primed with a Stereotype that women perform poorly in video games while the other half were given no stereotype. We predict that the women who were given the prime would perform worse than the women who were not.



## WANT TO PRESENT YOUR RESEARCH?

Spring 2008 Psychology Research Day is tentatively scheduled for May 6. If you would like to present your research, speak with a professor and/or visit the Psychology Department website for more information!

### **ABOUT RESEARCH DAY**

Psychology Research Day is an opportunity for students from all class years to present and discuss findings from the research projects they have conducted that semester or year. It is an opportunity for new majors to look ahead at the types of research conducted in Research Methods, Advanced Lab, Research Apprenticeships and Independent Studies. It is also an opportunity for more senior majors to look back, note their own intellectual development, and mentor younger students. Most of all, we hope that students (from any major) and faculty join together as colleagues to celebrate student research.

### **ABOUT CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

Through research experiences, psychology students develop systematic, rigorous ways of thinking about people. Students also practice valuable communication skills by presenting their research at Psychology Research Day, the LVAIC Undergraduate Psychology conference, and professional conferences.

### **Research in Courses**

Students are introduced to research in Introductory Psychology. This foundation continues through other courses in the major including Psychological Statistics, Research Methods, Advanced Lab. In these courses students develop a unique hypothesis and design a research study to test it. They then follow-through by running, analyzing and presenting the study.

### **Research Apprenticeships**

Many students (freshmen through seniors) work with faculty members as research assistants and collaborators. After an apprenticeship, students also often develop their own research ideas and go on to Independent Research or Honors Theses. For more information about doing an independent research project, contact the faculty member who has an area of expertise related to your interests.

### **Independent Research**

We encourage juniors and seniors in particular to consider conducting an Independent Research (PSY970). Students work

closely one-on-one with a faculty mentor in developing and implementing their ideas. Any type of research, but especially independent theses such as these are very positive additions to a graduate school application. For more information contact the [faculty member](#) who has an area of expertise related to your interests.

### **Honors in Psychology**

Students with a psychology major G.P.A. of 3.50 or higher may wish to consider conducting an Honors Thesis in their senior year. Visit the department web page for more information about this program.