

Undergraduate Research Awards - Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2023 Symposium Abstracts

Kyle A. Valido, Psychology (Dr Sarah Kraeutner)

Examining Interhemispheric Inhibition During the Simultaneous Combination of Multiple Action States

Practicing a movement can take place both physically (physical execution; PE) and non-physically (e.g., motor imagery; MI, and action observation; AO). Each involves different processes, but combined, their effects are unknown. Movement relies on an inhibitory connection between the two motor areas of the brain, termed 'interhemispheric inhibition' (IHI). This study investigated how much IHI occurs in combined practice. Participants practiced a movement during combined conditions: PE+MI, and PE+AO. IHI was measured using non-invasive brain stimulation. Results showed that IHI decreased in the combined PE+AO condition. Overall, this work expands our knowledge of combined forms of practice and their effects.

Jillian D. Law, Psychology (Dr Lauren Human)

The Zoom Speed Dating Study

The popularity of online platforms for modern dating continues to rise. However, little is known about the effects of online first impressions for romantic interest. This study invites participants to attend speed dating events on Zoom to interact in brief breakout-room dates. Our objective is to determine how forming accurate first impressions of unique personality traits is associated with feelings of attraction and liking in the Zoom speed dating context. We will compare these findings to previous in-person speed dating research, as well as examine the effects of online first impressions on romantic evaluations for both LGBTQ+ individuals and heterosexual individuals.

Emily Chisholm, History and Sociology (Dr Emily Snyder)

Patterns of hyper-individual discourses of sexual violence within sexual health education learning materials in British Columbia

Sexual violence is prevalent among young people across Canada. My research investigates how dominant stereotypes about sexual violence are perpetuated or resisted in public school educational materials. Applying feminist critical discourse analysis, I analyze how sexual violence is represented in 26 lesson plans, curriculum guides, and instructional samples created for sexual health educators in British Columbia. My analysis reveals language patterns where sexual violence is too often discussed as an individual problem in isolation from systems of oppression. I incorporate recommendations through a sample lesson plan on sexual violence that advocates for supporting survivors in educational settings.

Content Warning: This presentation contains information pertaining to the topic of sexual violence.

Ella Serber, Psychology (Dr Maya Libben)

Emotion amplification: Visual imagery, disgust, and OCD

The emotion amplification hypothesis posits that visual imagery (picturing something in your mind) enhances emotions. This study explored whether visual imagery ability affects the pre-established relationship between disgust and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Participants completed an online questionnaire to assess visual imagery, disgust sensitivity and propensity, and traits/symptoms related to OCD. The data demonstrate an expected positive correlation between disgust and OCD. Results suggest that the relationship between disgust and OCD is stronger among individuals with greater visual imagery ability. Understanding the links between visual imagery and mental disorders, such as OCD, could improve psychological treatment, education, and theory.

Aleyna Kirilmis, Economics, Philosophy and Political Science (Dr Min Hu)

The Opioid Crisis: A Call to Arms

This study is one of the first investigations exploring the effect of each dollar invested in mental healthcare on the opioid crisis. Previous research has explored the treatment of Opioid Use Disorder, but little has been done to predict how public health funding can prevent further casualties. This study uses the Canadian Alcohol and Drugs Survey to compare the outcome of the opioid crisis in provinces due to differences in funding. The preliminary results indicate that provinces prioritizing funding for mental healthcare are less likely to have victims of the opioid crisis, giving insight into the future of public policy.

Content Warning: This presentation discusses heavy topics including addiction, mental health, and death.

Cheyenne Kraig, Psychology (Dr Elena Nicoladis)

The role of experience on the category fluency test

In category fluency tests (CFT) participants are asked to generate as many examples as possible of a semantic category (e.g., animals) given 60 seconds. CFTs are used to assess cognitive function in clinical settings despite research suggesting CFT performance can be affected by other factors, like language proficiency. The purpose of the present study was to test possible effects of previous experience on CFT. The results showed clear effects for years of residence in Canada affected city names, yet no effects of major on body parts or colours. We discuss possible reasons for these different effects of experience.

Lilly H. Shoemaker, Psychology (Dr Jan Cioe)

A Plot Analysis of College Romance Novels: Tropes, Sexual Scripts, and Problematic Behaviours

In 2020, 37.9 million romance novels were sold, increasing to 47 million in 2021, with reader age shifting from 35–54 to 18–54 over the last 10 years. Due to growing popularity, researchers analysed 100 popular college romance novels to determine common themes and scripts depicted.

The most common trope was opposites attract. There were approximately 6.78 intimate scenes per book and five plot devices (e.g., happily ever after) that appeared in nearly every novel. This study has been the first to examine this information and may be useful in determining what readers are exposed to.

Jacklyn Awotwi-Pratt, Psychology (Dr Elena Nicoladis)

Does gesture encouragement improve children's reading comprehension?

When people produce gestures (meaningful hand movements), they tell better stories and more easily access difficult words. This research investigated whether gestures would help children retell a story that they had read, thereby demonstrating reading comprehension. We tested whether age (8 to 11 years), vocabulary, and gesture use predicted their story quality and the difficulty of the words they used. The results showed that the children's vocabulary predicted both story quality and words accessed. The use of gestures did not significantly impact their demonstration of reading comprehension. Possible reasons for the lack of gesture effect are discussed.

Aarohi Yadav, Psychology (Dr Liane Gabora)

A Computational Model of the Cultural Evolution of Innovations

Human cognition has the ability to innovate by cumulatively building on others' ideas and thus, like biological organisms, elements of culture evolve. Cultural evolution can be modelled in order to identify how innovations have shaped the course of human history. Researchers used Reflexively Autocatalytic Foodset-Generated (RAF) Theory to model the cognitive process of an inventor and trace the lineage of inventions. All inventions require a knowledgeable creator and a catalyst that dictates how those pieces of knowledge come together to form an invention. This study was the first to apply RAF theory to the field of inventions.

Aiisha Rishi, Psychology (Dr Elena Nicoladis)

Victim Blaming in the Media: A Study of Indigenous vs. White Women

Due to systemic discrimination, Canadian Indigenous women are seven times more likely to be murder victims than non-Indigenous women. This research investigates how Indigenous vs. white women's murders are reported in the media, particularly in terms of victim blaming. Analyzing The Globe and Mail and The Regina Leader-Post, I found that Indigenous women murders were more sensationalized, and articles were 35.08% more victim-focused than white female victims. There was 2.35% more victim blaming for Indigenous female victims compared to non-Indigenous victims. These results are discussed in terms of how news reports reflect and perpetuate systemic racism and sexism.

Content Warning: Sexual violence, mentions of murder, explicit language, systemic forms of discrimination, Indigenous-based violence, violence against women, violence against children

Danielle Gallina, Community, Culture and Global Studies (Dr Donna Senese)

From Tree Fruits to Grapes: Exploring the Conversion of Orchard to Vineyard in the Okanagan Valley

Since the 1960's, the finite land base of the Okanagan orchard industry has competed against demands of a growing population and urban sprawl, and more recently a growing wine industry, which have mainly targeted orchards for conversion. This research utilized quantitative data collection and analysis to examine the conversion of orchard to vineyard, which has not been explored to date in the Okanagan. The study found 110 orchards totalling 4,577.3 acres converted since 1932. The results represent an essential starting point for future research on agricultural land conversion and its social, economic, and environmental impacts on the Okanagan Valley.