



Schedule of Events

9:00 am – 9:15 am	Opening Address <i>Coffee and Light Refreshments Provided</i>	McNally Auditorium
9:30 am – 10:45 am	Oral Presentations 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D	1A – Loyola 171 1B – Sobey 160 1C – Sobey 255 1D – Loyola 173
11:00 am – 12:15 pm	Oral Presentations 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D	2A – Loyola 171 2B – Sobey 160 2C – Sobey 255 2D – Loyola 173
12:25 pm – 1:35 pm	Lunch and Poster Session	McNally Auditorium
1:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Research Keynote Speaker Christopher Lively, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology St. Francis Xavier University	McNally Auditorium
3:00	<i>Coffee and Light Refreshments Provided</i>	McNally Auditorium
3:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Oral Presentations 3A, 3B, and 3C	3A – Loyola 171 3B – Sobey 160 3C – Sobey 255
Closing Reception and Awards Ceremony		
4:45 pm – 7:45 pm	Alumni Keynote Speaker Jennaecia Lewis, B.A. (Hons, 2020) EDI Training & Education Consultant People and Culture, SMU	The Anne J. & Albert T. Isaacs Commons (Loyola Academic Building)
<i>Light Refreshments Provided</i>		

Oral Presentation Session Topics at a Glance

Session	Location	Zoom Breakout Room	Topics
1A	Loyola 171	A	Social I
1B	Sobey 160	B	Developmental and Cognitive I
1C	Sobey 255	C	Forensic I
1D	Loyola 173	D	3-Minute Thesis Session I
2A	Loyola 171	A	Social II
2B	Sobey 160	B	Cognitive II
2C	Sobey 255	C	Industrial-Organizational
2D	Loyola 173	D	Forensic II; 3-Minute Thesis Session II
3A	Loyola 171	A	Forensic III
3B	Sobey 160	B	Mental Health and Wellbeing
3C	Sobey 255	C	Evolutionary and Health

Conference Committee

Drs. Eden-Raye Lukacik, Patrick Carolan, Margherita Cameranesi, and Veronica Stinson

Attending the SMU Psychology Student Research Conference

ONLINE

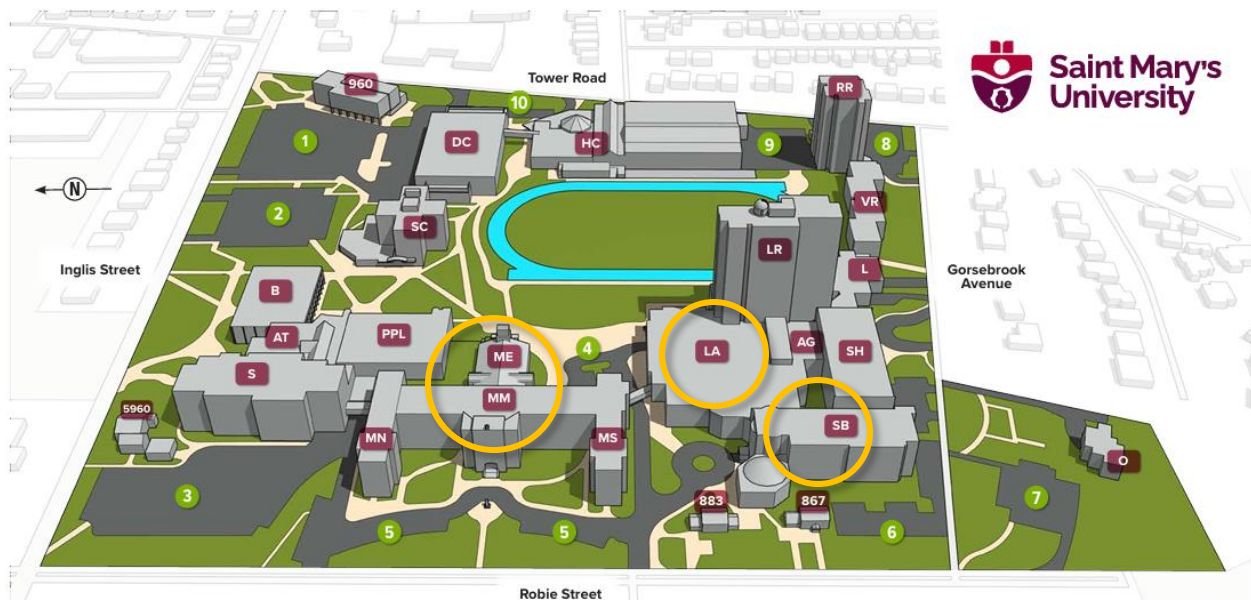
All conference sessions can be viewed on Zoom



- Event Name: 40th Annual Psychology Student Conference
- Stream available Apr 9, 2026, from 08:45 am – 4:30 pm Atlantic Time
- Click the Zoom link below to join:
 - <https://smu-ca.zoom.us/j/83428275773?pwd=BwkHCQXHLR3qSyOv3HRzW6aSe1o1db.1>
 - Meeting ID: 834 2827 5773
 - Passcode: 556563
- By following this Zoom link you will be taken to a lobby. Each session (e.g., 1A, 2C, 2D) will have a “breakout room” dedicated to it. From the lobby, please select the breakout room for the session you wish to join.

IN PERSON

The conference is taking place in the McNally Main Auditorium (MM on the exterior map below), Loyola Academic (LA) 171 and 173, and Sobey Building (SB) rooms 160 and 255. Volunteers from the SMU Psychology Society will be present to provide directions and answer questions.



Buildings

AG	Art Gallery	O	The Oaks
AT	Atrium	PPL	Patrick Power Library
B	Burke Building	RR	Rice Residence
DC	The Dauphinee Centre	S	Science Building
HC	Homburg Centre for Health & Wellness	SB	Sobey Building
L	Link Building	SC	O'Donnell Hennessey Student Centre
LA	Loyola Academic Complex	SH	Sobeys Inspiration Hub
LR	Loyola Residence	VR	Vanier Residence
ME	McNally East	867	867 Robie Street
MM	McNally Main	883	883 Robie Street
MN	McNally North	960	960 Tower Road
MS	McNally South	5960	5960 Inglis Street

Parking

1. Arena: General, Meters, Accessible
2. Inglis Street: General, Pay & Display
3. Science: General, Meters, Faculty, Accessible
4. McNally East: Meters, Accessible
5. McNally Main: Faculty, Accessible
6. Sobey/Gorsebrook: General, Faculty, Accessible
7. Oaks: General
8. Rice: General, Meters, Accessible
9. Homburg Members Parking Only
10. Tower Road: Meters, Accessible

CONFERENCE EVENTS IN DETAIL

Opening Address

9:00 am – 9:15 am

McNally Main Auditorium

Drs. Patrick Carolan and Eden-Ray Lukacik, Conference Co-Chairs
Dr. Nicole Conrad, Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean of Science

Oral Presentations – 1A

Social I

Vaping, Student Success, Awe, Social Media, Neurodivergence

9:30 am – 10:45 am

Loyola 171

(Zoom Breakout Room A)

Faculty MC: Dr. Steven Smith

Investigating the Relationship Between Social Vaping Behaviours and Nicotine Dependency: an Analysis of Youth Ex-Vapers Experiences

Presented by Carter Blaikie

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Steven Smith

Youth vaping rates have surged in the past decade. Peer influence, defined as the impact of others' behaviors on an individual's own decision making, has been identified as a major contributor to the integration of vaping into the social lives of youth. As vaping becomes increasingly integrated with socializing, the prognosis for vaping dependence and related health outcomes worsens. This analysis uses self report data from ex-vapers to assess the correlation between the social integration of vaping and nicotine dependence. Participants complete survey questions relating to demographic characteristics, vaping history, relapse triggers, as well as supports and barriers to vaping cessation. Data analysis using descriptive and bivariate statistical tests is expected to show a strong correlation between Social Vaping Score and Vaping Dependence Score. Additionally, Social Vaping Score is expected to be correlated with the use of other tobacco products and the number of quit attempts before significant cessation.

The Effectiveness of Student Success Programs at Saint Mary's University

Presented by Laverna Hutchins

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Steven Smith

The transition from high school to university has proven difficult for many students entering higher education. Many first-year university students struggle academically and find it hard to gain their footing in subsequent years. Numerous universities throughout Canada, including Saint Mary's

University, offer student success programs to combat this issue; examples include peer mentoring and academic advising. However, previous research indicates that many students do not utilize these services, with stigma and lack of awareness often cited as barriers. The purpose of this study is to better understand the benefits of student success programs and the barriers to their underutilization among university students. Students who have used and those who have not used peer mentoring, along with program staff and administrators, will be surveyed. It is hypothesized that students who use these programs will report academic improvement and a high sense of belonging, while accessibility, stigma, and awareness will influence participation.

Awe, Beauty, and Meaning in Life

Presented by Dylan Martin

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Marc Patry

Awe has been theorized as a "meaning-making emotion," yet its relationship with meaning in life remains empirically unclear. In this study, participants (N = 75) were randomly assigned to view a beautiful awe (positive condition), threatening awe (negative condition), or neutral stimulus video condition and completed the AWE-S, a beauty rating scale, and the Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale. Both awe-inducing conditions produced significantly more awe than the neutral condition, yet both awe conditions were dissociable at the subscale level: The positive condition differed in beauty ratings while the negative condition differed in levels of need for accommodation. Meaning in life was unaffected by condition. These findings provide empirical support for Keltner and Haidt's (2003) theoretical distinction between aesthetic and threat-based awe via the presence of beauty while providing doubt about a relationship between awe and meaning in life.

An Exploration of the Impact of Social Media Use for Communication on Friendship Quality and Social Connectedness

Presented by Peyton Clark

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. David Bourgeois

Social media use has become widespread, and research by Bonsaksen et al. (2016) suggests many individuals use these platforms to communicate with others. The present study examines how social media communication impacts friendship quality and social connectedness, extending previous research by including a broader age range within a Canadian sample. Participants completed an online survey reporting their social media use, interaction frequency, and discussion topics, and rating perceived friendship quality and social connectedness. We hypothesize that individuals who communicate primarily through social media will report lower friendship quality and social connectedness than those who communicate mainly in-person. We also expect individuals who grew up without social media will report higher friendship quality than those who grew up with it, and that social media conversations will involve less serious topics than in-person interactions. If supported, these findings would add to evidence that social media communication may negatively affect young adults' relationships.

The Impact of Culture, Knowledge, and Contact on Attitudes Towards Neurodivergence

Presented by Ella Ramsay

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. David Bourgeois

Attitudes toward neurodivergence play an important role in shaping the inclusion, support, and treatment of neurodivergent individuals. Despite this, there are significant gaps in the literature

regarding the factors that influence these attitudes. Existing research has largely focused on the perspectives of teachers and clinicians and tends to center on specific neurodevelopmental conditions, such as autism spectrum disorder, leaving attitudes toward neurodiversity more broadly underexplored. The present study aims to address this gap by examining how cultural orientation, knowledge of neurodivergence, and contact with neurodivergent individuals relate to attitudes toward neurodivergence. Using quantitative self-report questionnaires, data are collected from participants across the Maritime provinces of Canada—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Findings from this research may help inform practices and policies that promote the inclusion of neurodivergent individuals.

Oral Presentations – 1B Developmental and Cognitive I

Childhood Reading Difficulties, Orthographic Knowledge, and Placebo Effects

9:30 am – 10:45 am

Sobey 160

(Zoom Breakout Room B)

Faculty MC: Dr. Nicole Conrad

Exploring Emotion Regulation as a Protective Factor for Childhood Reading Difficulties

Presented by Lauren Freeman

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

Growing resiliency research in the field of reading seeks to identify factors influencing the developmental trajectory of positive future outcomes for children with reading difficulties. The present study proposes emotion regulation as a protective factor for childhood reading difficulties. Emotion regulation is examined as a moderator in the relation between histories of reading difficulties in childhood and mental health and reading outcomes in adulthood. Data was collected from a sample of university students with various reading backgrounds using an online self-report survey, and an optional in-person reading assessment. Analyses included measures of reading background, emotion regulation, internalizing behavior, and wellbeing. Data analysis is ongoing.

Beyond "Just Reading": The Influence of Childhood Reading Difficulties on Mental Health

Presented by Zoë MacDonald

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

Contemporary research has underlined the relationship between reading difficulties (RD) and the potential for poorer mental health (e.g., anxiety, low self-esteem). However, this relationship does not present universally, suggesting some individuals have a higher capacity to cope and are therefore more resilient. From a dynamic systems theoretical orientation, exogenous protective factors are those that are external to the person and are thought to offset risks. Several of these factors proposed to offset mental health risks associated with RD were selected, namely social support and socioeconomic status. Data was collected using an online self-report survey composed of multiple-choice and short-answer questions, and analyzed using moderation analyses. We hypothesize individuals who self-identify as having struggled with reading during childhood will report overall poorer mental health, but the presence of more protective factors in childhood will moderate this relationship. Data analysis in progress.

Sublexical Orthographic Knowledge's Predictive Power for Spelling Accuracy in Skilled Adult Readers

Presented by Alicia MacDonald

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

Literacy skills such as reading and spelling are not only crucial for participating in today's society, but they are also a human right. Efficient spelling occurs through the coordination of many subskills, including sublexical orthographic knowledge. Sublexical orthographic knowledge is the understanding of the letter regularities of a given language. This study addresses the gap found with adult spellers by evaluating whether sublexical orthographic knowledge is related to spelling accuracy in adults. We

hypothesize that sublexical orthographic knowledge will contribute unique variance to spelling accuracy in adult readers. Further, we predict a greater relation between sublexical orthographic knowledge and accuracy spelling regular words vs. irregular words. Participants took a spelling test of regular words that followed the typical English sound-letter mappings and irregular words that do not follow these patterns. A novel letter detection task was created to measure sublexical orthographic knowledge. Data collection and analysis are in progress.

The Role of Orthographic Regularities in Vocabulary Learning During Story Reading in Skilled Adult Readers

Presented by Mikayla Hanlon

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

There is substantial evidence that seeing a written word can have beneficial effects for learning the word's spelling and pronunciation, referred to as the orthographic facilitation effect. However, results of studies examining the orthographic facilitation effect for vocabulary learning are mixed, potentially due to over-simplified assessment tasks. This study addresses these gaps by exploring potential mechanisms underlying the orthographic facilitation effect for vocabulary learning. We hypothesize that it will be easier to learn meanings of words with high-frequency vs. low-frequency orthographic regularities. To test this prediction, participants will read stories containing nonwords with high (e.g., ss) or low frequency (e.g., kk) doublets in initial or medial positions, and to write definitions that clearly demonstrate the nonwords' meanings (e.g., "a haffem is..."). This design tests whether awareness of orthographic regularities underlies the orthographic facilitation effect when learning new vocabulary during story reading. Data collection is currently underway.

A Bitter Pill to Swallow: Placebos and Drug-Based Expectations

Presented by Kyra Nichols

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

The placebo effect is heavily influenced by expectations of future outcomes. Ingesting a pill (knowing it may either be a psychoactive agent or placebo) may influence effort and thereby alter performance. In this investigation, we compare memory performance from a double-blind placebo-controlled group (DBP) where they unknowingly ingested a placebo (knowing they ingested either L-tyrosine or placebo) to memory performance from a group who knowingly ingested a placebo (open-label placebo; OLP). Those in the DBP group, potentially believing they ingested a cognitive enhancer, may exert less effort and perform worse on a directed-forgetting task than those in the OLP group. Alternatively, participants in the DBP group may outperform those in the OLP group because they adjust their effort to match the expected benefits of L-tyrosine. Our results may help elucidate how drug-related expectations influence performance in double-blind placebo-controlled studies.

Oral Presentations – 1C Forensic I

Victim Impact Statements, Sexual Violence Institutional Response, and Co-offending

9:30 am – 10:45 am

Sobey 255

(Zoom Breakout Room C)

Faculty MC: Dr. Meg Ternes

Acknowledging Victims' Voices: What Judges Say in Response to Victim Impact Statements During Sentencing for First- and Second-Degree Murder

Presented by Autumn Pilgrim

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Veronica Stinson

This study examines Canadian judges' sentencing rulings and comments regarding victim impact statements (VISs). VISs allow victims to voice how a crime has affected their psychological, physical, and economic wellbeing. Victims submit VISs for many reasons, often to have their suffering acknowledged and to feel heard. Using a qualitative thematic analysis guided by a therapeutic jurisprudence approach, this study analyzed 19 first and second-degree murder sentencings in Atlantic Canada. The focus of this research was on judges' responses to VISs delivered during sentencing. Four main themes emerged: engagement with VISs, recognition of the impact of murder, humanization of the victim, and framing and sentencing, each supported by subthemes. The length of judicial responses ranged from 83 to 451 words, with an average of 207 words. These findings provide insight into how judicial responses acknowledge victims' experiences and contribute to an increased understanding of victim recognition within the sentencing process.

Public Perceptions of Sentencing Outcomes: The Role of Victim Impact Statements and Offender Character Evidence

Presented by Amy Gouthro

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Veronica Stinson

Public perceptions of judicial sentencing play a critical role in shaping trust and legitimacy within the justice system. This study examined whether victim impact statements and offender character evidence influenced these perceptions. Using a 2x2 factorial design, participants (N=41) were randomly assigned to conditions in which victim impact statements and offender character evidence were either present or absent. Participants evaluated sentencing fairness, severity, and confidence in the justice system. Results from factorial ANOVAs revealed no significant main or interaction effect across all dependent variables. This data collection is still on going. Implications for understanding public attitudes towards sentencing will be discussed.

Student-Athletes' Perceptions of Institutional Responses To Sexual Violence

Presented by Ashley Brady

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Veronica Stinson

Sexual violence (SV) remains a pervasive issue on university campuses, and student-athletes are at heightened risk. Research has begun to examine the relationship between SV and institutional betrayal

(IB), when a person's trust in an institution is violated by institutional actions or inactions related to their sexual violence complaint, thereby exacerbating victim suffering.

The impact on observers of institutional betrayal through others, known as secondary institutional betrayal (SIB), is less clear. This study, the first of its kind, investigated the prevalence of both IB and SIB among Canadian student-athletes who have been exposed to SV. A survey of Nova Scotia varsity student-athletes (N= 32) revealed that 26% experienced SV, and of these, 43% experienced institutional betrayal. Among participants who knew a student-athlete who had experienced SV, 56% experienced SIB. These findings underscore the prevalence of SV within student-athlete populations and the broader institutional harms that extend beyond survivors.

Centring Victim's Voices: A Proposed Examination of Victim Impact Statement Use and Accessibility in Canada

Presented by Katelyn Young

Masters thesis research supervised by Dr. Meg Ternes

Within the Canadian justice system, concerns have been raised about the neglect of victims' voices in legal proceedings. In response, Victim Impact Statements (VIS) were introduced to facilitate victim participation. Despite these intentions, limited research has examined how VIS are used in practice and by whom they are used. This two-part thesis proposal investigates both the characteristics of victims who complete VIS and the barriers to participation. Study 1 will employ an observational methodology, analyzing sentencing proceedings at federal and provincial courts in Halifax Regional Municipality, systematically coding for VIS delivery characteristics. Study 2 will involve semi-structured interviews with self-identified crime victims who have reported their victimization to legal authorities. This study explores victims' perspectives on their engagement with legal resources and identifies barriers that may inhibit VIS completion. Together, these studies aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of VIS use and accessibility within Canada.

Co-Offending, Substance Use and Intimate Partner Violence: The Rates of Substance Use and Intimate Partner Violence in Co-offending Cases Involving Women Offenders

Presented by Grace Kirk

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Meg Ternes and co-authored with Emma Summersby

Research suggests that substance use, trauma, and intimate partner violence (IPV) play an interconnected role when it comes to female offenders co-offending. Co-offending relationships are commonly abusive and obtaining substances is often the motivation for commission of the offence. The majority of the literature has examined these three variables separately, but there are no studies looking at them simultaneously. This study seeks to find the rates of Canadian co-offending cases where IPV and/or substance use were present. This goal was carried out by coding thirty-three Ontarian court records on the online archive CANLII. The rates of IPV and/or substance use in our sample were much lower than expected. Although this study is high in ecological validity due to its archival nature, court records often don't contain all of the details of the case. Future studies should use other ways of collecting data to bypass this limitation.

Oral Presentations – 1D

Victim Impact Statements; 3-Minute Thesis Session I

Lots of data, really fast

9:30 am – 10:45 am

Loyola 173

(Zoom Breakout Room D)

Faculty MC: Dr. Patrick Carolan

Legal Professional's Views and Utilization of Victim Impact Statements and Victim Management During Sentencing Proceedings

Presented by Maryann Pitre

Masters thesis research supervised by Dr. Veronica Stinson

A victim impact statement (VIS) is a statement by a victim expressing to the court, offender, and wider community the physical or emotional harm, property damage, or economic loss they experienced from the crime (Booth, 2014; Booth et al., 2018; Government of Canada, 2024). VISs may allow victims to be heard, to receive recognition of harm, and to participate in court proceedings (Booth, 2014; De Mesmaecker, 2012). Legal professionals and victim service workers may play an important role in assisting victims through the submission and delivery of a VIS (Erez et al., 2014; Wemmers, 2008). I am currently employing qualitative research methods to gather in-depth insights from Crown and defense lawyers and victim service workers regarding their views and utilizing of VISs in the criminal justice system. This research may help to address gaps and demystify aspects the justice system; it may further enable legal professionals to incorporate victims' voices in alignment with both victim participation and therapeutic outcomes while balancing their roles within the system without compromising institutional priorities (Mont, 2008; Erez et al, 2014; Wemmers, 2008).

3-Minute Thesis Presenters

Kaitlyn Steeves

Attention Shoppers! The Cost of Attention in Consumer Decision-Making

Stuti Sandhu

Being There: Closing the Care Gap and Preventing Functional Decline in Older Adults

Elizabeth McDiarmid

Hybrid Learning in Relation to Mental Health and Personality Traits

Elizabeth Ganton

Night Skies and Meaning in Life: Awe, Mattering, and Wellbeing in the Astronomy Community

Oral Presentations – 2A

Social II, or, Love in a time of robots

Hookup Culture, The Manosphere, MAiD, Chatbots, Hybrid Learning

11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Loyola 171

(Zoom Breakout Room A)

Faculty MC: Dr. Jim Cameron

Hookup Culture: Implications for Identity and Affection

Presented by Danae Conrad

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jim Cameron

Hookup culture, a social environment that normalizes and encourages casual sexual encounters, is a societal phenomenon that is taking over the world of intimacy. "Hooking up" is thought to influence one's view of self and relationships due to it serving as a placeholder for true romantic affection. Such encounters have increased in younger communities, particularly college/university students. Furthermore, these encounters differ in impact between sexes. This study aims to investigate whether participation in hookup culture is associated with the strength of a person's identity as well as their perceived capacity to give true affection. An online survey was completed by a sample of undergraduate students to gain information about their experiences. The questionnaire measured hookup culture engagement, identity strength, and ability to give affection to evaluate the correlations between these variables.

Involvement in the Manosphere: How Online Communities Shape Young Men's Identities and the Adoption of Harmful Ideologies

Presented by Lily Hussey-Murphy

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jim Cameron

The manosphere is an online community consisting of ideas surrounding masculinity and gender rhetoric distributed through male influencers and online communities. Some of the most prominent online communities within the manosphere is the r/TheRedPill and r/MensRights subreddits where men openly discuss anti-feminist and toxic masculine ideologies. This study examines how online Reddit communities related to the manosphere can influence men's social identity, as well as the adoption and spread of sexist ideologies. A qualitative study was conducted, using thematic analysis to analyze Reddit comments from the r/TheRedPill and r/MensRights subreddits. Eight popular threads in 2025 and 2026 were reviewed, and over 350 comments were analyzed. Results involve exploring themes related to power, status, and gender hierarchy in connection with social identity factors such as identity formation, sense of belonging, and endorsement of ideologies. These themes are discussed to provide insight into the appeal and impact of the online manosphere community.

The Influence of Media Framing on Student Attitudes, Perceptions, and Emotional Responses to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

Presented by Michael Hogue

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Lucie Kocum

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) is a sensitive, polarizing topic, but we need to build the Canadian public's capacity for engagement in upcoming 2027 legislative debate on allowing access to MAiD for mental illness. Given the current popularity of short videos as a medium for knowledge mobilization, we designed and tested four short (3-minute) videos grounded in Narrative Transportation theory, adjusting both style (cinematic vs public service announcement style) and content (First Voice narrative versus informational). In this 2 (style) x 2 (content) x 2 (pre-post) mixed (between-within) online experiment, we hypothesized that the cinematic, First Voice narrative style video would evoke mixed (i.e., both increased positive and increased negative) emotions and, in turn, boost participants' intentions to discuss MAiD with family and friends. Data collection is ongoing. Findings could influence the way the Canadian public is prepared for dialogue—not through influencing opinions but, rather, motivation for critical dialogue.

How Do People Experience Emotional Closeness When Engaging with AI Chatbots

Presented by Yameng He

In-class research project supervised by Dr. Eden-Raye Lukacik

Recent developments and integration of AI into everyday life have led to increasing use of chatbots not only as productivity-enhancing tools, but also in emotional meaningful ways. This qualitative study, guided by attachment theory, explores how people experience emotional closeness when interacting with AI. Analysis is ongoing.

Hybrid Learning in Relation to Mental Health and Personality Traits

Presented by Elizabeth McDiarmid

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Steven Smith

Hybrid learning is a relatively new concept, becoming increasingly more popular. Due to its novelty, there is limited knowledge on its impact on mental health. Additionally, there is little known about factors that impact the effects of mental health when using hybrid models. This study uses a self-report method to examine personal experiences in different work models. Participants answer survey questions relating to their style of work (remote, hybrid, or in person), their preferences of styles, their mental health, and personality traits, specifically introversion and extraversion. The expected outcome is that participants that use hybrid models will have higher mental health scores than participants that use remote and in-person models. Participants who are able to choose their style of learning will also have better mental health scores. In terms of personality traits, participants who are higher in introversion are expected to prefer remote and hybrid models over in-person models. Similarly, participants that are high in introversion will have better mental health scores when using hybrid and remote models than participants who are high in extraversion using hybrid and remote models.

Oral Presentations – 2B

Cognitive II, or, Better Learning Through Chemistry

Attention, Executive Control, Tyrosine, Brand Logos, EEG

11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Sobey 160

(Zoom Breakout Room B)

Faculty MC: Dr. Jason Ivanoff

Attention Shoppers! The Cost of Attention in Consumer Decision-Making

Presented by Kaitlyn Steeves

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

Attention is biased toward stimuli that are personally relevant, valuable, or rewarding. Brand and price are two salient features that likely influence attentional control and capture during consumer decision-making. The goal of the present study will be to determine whether low prices influence attentional capture to visually salient brand logos. The posterior-contralateral (N2pc) is an event-related potential (ERP) component well-known to be sensitive to the lateral capture of attention. Participants will complete a visual search task in which coffee brand logos will be presented with reduced and elevated prices. If reduced prices capture attention, then we expect a greater N2pc for salient items with a reduced price than salient items with an elevated price. This work will inform how choice-relevant information (i.e., price) influences saliency-based attentional capture.

Chemistry of Control: Tyrosine and Expectancy in Memory Suppression

Presented by Cameron Morse

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

As the precursor to dopamine, epinephrine, and norepinephrine, tyrosine supplements support neurotransmitter systems that modulate executive control under stressful conditions. Supplements, like tyrosine, are taken with an expectation for cognitive improvement. This open-label study extends prior work by examining the effects of an expectancy on intentional forgetting following tyrosine supplementation. Volunteers ingested tyrosine before they were presented with words that were to-be-remembered (TBR) or to-be-forgotten (TBF). Recognition was assessed in a mouse kinematic task. If an induced expectancy combined with tyrosine selectively improves forgetting, we anticipate less frequent recall of TBF words than following tyrosine ingestion in a placebo-controlled, double-blind condition. We discuss how expectations about cognitive enhancement from dietary supplements can influence cognitive performance. Some benefits typically attributed to dietary supplements may instead arise from an individuals' beliefs about what the supplement should do, rather than from the supplement's neuropharmacological effects.

Expecting it to Stick: Nutraceutical Expectation Effects on Memory

Presented by Chloe Delano

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

L-tyrosine is a precursor to the catecholamine neurotransmitters which are thought to support cognition under stress. This study examines whether informing participants about tyrosine's mnemonic benefits affects memory performance. Participants in an open-label condition (OLC) will knowingly

ingest tyrosine supplements and will be informed that the supplement ought to help them remember more items than normal. The control group will ingest tyrosine in a double-blind, placebo controlled, condition. Expectations in the OLC might influence behaviour in one of two ways. First, they might encourage volunteers to align their behaviour with the expected effects of tyrosine. These participants ought to have better recognition of to-be-remembered items than the control group. Second, expectations may deter efforts to remember, resulting in poorer recognition than the control group. This work is expected to advance our understanding of how cognitive expectations shape the objective benefits of nutraceuticals.

Not Now! Does Negation Influence Computer Mouse Trajectories?

Presented by Sara Zivaljevic

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

Past research has shown that when individuals are instructed to suppress an action, the action follows a biphasic pattern of early activation and late inhibition. Here, we explore this activation-suppression pattern in the context of a three-alternative free-choice task where there can be more than one alternative action following a suppression instruction. Participants will complete a three-response-option task based on shape and colour information. Affirmative ("now") and negation ("not") cues will guide participants' responses regarding whether to choose a shape or colour. Mouse kinematics will be used to examine the impact of negated stimuli and alternative actions on response trajectories. If negation is accomplished by initially activating and then suppressing stimulus-directed action, mouse trajectories should initially deviate toward the to-be-suppressed target before being corrected toward the correct target. In contrast, if negation operates by inhibiting the negated representation before action preparation, mouse trajectories should not deviate toward the negated option.

Keywords: cognitive inhibition, negation, conflict, suppression, mouse tracking

Good to the Last Drop: Do Our Favourite Coffee Brand Logos Capture Attention?

Presented by Elizabeth Giddings

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

Brand advertising costs hundreds of billions dollars annually, rising as companies attempt to expand their share of the market. Thus, brand familiarity can be one of the most valuable commodities a business might possess. Yet consumers have their own brand preferences, shaped by their past experiences, that may have top-down effects on how brand familiarity impacts attention. How well do favoured brands capture attention? The present study examined the initial allocation of attention to most- versus least-preferred coffee brands during a search task. An array of brand logos were presented, and the N2pc (from electroencephalography) indexed attentional capture. If favourite coffee brands capture attention more strongly than least-preferred brands, then a larger N2pc is expected when searching for logos of most-preferred brand versus the least-preferred brand. Our findings ought to have implications for our understanding of how brand preferences guide visual attention and bias everyday purchasing decisions.

Oral Presentations – 2C Industrial-Organizational

Leadership, Disabilities and Hiring, Workplace Well-being

11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Sobey 255

(Zoom Breakout Room C)

Faculty MC: Dr. Nicolas Roulin

Even the Boss Has Limits: Can Leader Character Prevent Employee Retaliation In the Face of Mistreatment?

Presented by Molly Palmer

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Sarah Carver

Leader character is an emerging construct in organizational psychology that has yet to be explored in the context of workplace mistreatment and counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs). This study tests whether leader character moderates the mistreatment-CWB relationship, anticipating that individuals that perceive their leaders as high in leader character will exhibit fewer CWBs when experiencing mistreatment at work than those who perceive their leaders as low in leader character. Participants completed an online survey regarding ethical workplace behaviours (N = 403). Results showed that leader character moderates the mistreatment-CWB relationship at low-to-moderate levels of mistreatment, but not at high levels. This indicates that the benefits of leader character, while evident in a healthy work environment, do not exceed the stress of experiencing mistreatment at work. While the development of leaders is fundamental in reducing CWBs, employers should maximize these effects by reducing mistreatment in the workplace.

Disabled Applicants in the Hiring Process: Impression Management Strategies in Job Interviews

Presented by Jordan Marshall

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Eden-Raye Lukacik

Individuals with disabilities often face unfair treatment and barriers in the hiring process (Gewurtz et al., 2016). This study examines how individuals with disabilities engage in impression management (IM) during workplace interviews to manage potential perceptions. Using a mixed methods design, a sample (N = 109) from Prolific that experience disabilities completed mock asynchronous video interviews and self-reported questionnaires looking at disability visibility and severity, interview performance (Latu & Schmid Mast, 2016), interview self-efficacy (Tay et al., 2006) and impression management (Bourdage et al., 2018). Quantitative results indicated a positive correlation between perceived performance and IM plus interview self-efficacy with assertive IM. There was no significant difference regarding visibility and severity on IM. Qualitative findings highlighted how participants engage in IM suggesting interview self-efficacy and perceived performance have a more significant role in IM than disability characteristics. Implications include understanding the antecedents of interview self-presentation behaviour for individuals with disabilities.

From the Clinic to the Cubicle: Developing Contextualized Measures of Workplace Well-Being

Presented by Xavier Red Javier

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Kevin Kelloway and Isaiah Hippel

Clinical mental health scales like the General anxiety disorder (GAD), Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ), and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) have been developed to assess the general population, although they fail to capture the occupational context that influences psychological problems in workplace environments. This study developed a contextualized version of the GAD, PHQ, and GHQ and assessed their evaluative properties on N = 194 working adults, who were asked to answer both contextualized and original scales along with validated workplace scales. The exploratory factor analysis showed that each contextualized scale produced a unidimensional factor with moderate to strong loadings. Convergent validity was also strong for all scales (e.g., GHQ-C with GHQ $r = .87$, $p < .001$), and each correlated stronger with their respective counterpart, supporting divergent validity. These findings confirm that occupationally contextualized scales can maintain their quantitative integrity and offer more valid measurement for I/O psychology research.

Retired at 22: Surviving Inequity, Imbalance, and Identity Loss in Varsity Athletics

Presented by Marisa McClocklin

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Arla Day

Varsity athletes face unique demands and experiences during their university career, and retirement from their sport can be a vulnerable period, associated with increased mental health risks (Brockett et al., 2024). However, their overall wellbeing and perceptions about retirement remain largely unexplored. Therefore, I conducted focus groups with 25 Canadian USPORTS athletes (9 men, 16 women) as Phase 1 of a national study. These athletes identified demands, supports, retirement challenges, and inequities in sport. Although all reported engagement/pride in their sport, they also reported navigating intense and conflicting academic, athletic, and work demands, often feeling unsupported within university systems, especially in navigating retirement. They also reported inequities in sport, based on gender and 'prestige' of the sport. These findings serve both as a guide for universities, as well as a critical foundation for the development of a national survey of Canadian varsity athletes (Phase 2).

The Cost of Perfection? Gender Differences in Leadership Evaluations

Presented by Tayli Carpio

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Arla Day

Perfectionism may be seen as a valued leadership trait because of its hypothesized relationship with effective leadership (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). However, perfectionism may be socially costly for female leaders because these behaviours may violate prescriptive communal gender norms, resulting in less favourable evaluations (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Limited research has directly examined the relationship of perfectionism with leadership, as well as whether male and female leaders are evaluated differently. Therefore, 39 undergraduate students (N=33 women; 7 men) with employment experience rated leader–employee vignettes. Interestingly, participants identified communal characteristics (i.e., supportive behaviour, communication, and fairness) as their top-rated characteristics of a 'great leader'. No significant differences were found in participants' ratings of male and female perfectionistic leaders, which may reflect a general preference for communal leadership behaviours. These findings will inform Study 2, which will examine leadership, perfectionism, and gender using working populations and social media data (e.g., Reddit).

Oral Presentations – 2D Forensic II; 3-Minute Thesis Session II

Lots of data, really fast

11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Loyola 173

(Zoom Breakout Room D)

Faculty MC: Dr. Veronica Stinson

Keeping It Blunt: Risk Perceptions as a Predictor of Denial in Problematic Cannabis Use

Presented by Emma Millward

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Meg Ternes

Problematic cannabis use (PCU) has become a growing concern with 1/10 individuals who have ever used it and 1/2 daily users developing Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD). Thus, researchers have investigated factors that may influence PCU including risk perceptions of cannabis and denial or acknowledgment of problematic use (DPU/APU). This study sought to 1) determine a relationship between risk perceptions and PCU, and 2) determine a relationship between DPU/APU and risk perceptions. Findings did not support the first hypothesis however, a significant relationship was found between risk perceptions and DPU/APU for the second hypothesis.

Most treatment models for PCU focus on motivation to change. The first step to these strategies is acknowledging one has a problem. Knowing this, the lack of research on denial is concerning and must be addressed. Establishing a predictive relationship would inform treatment models and promote discussion of denial as a risk factor among researchers and clinicians.

Suspect Vulnerabilities and False Confessions: Evaluating Potential Jurors' Sensitivity to Risk in Mr. Big Cases.

Presented by Gabrielle Russell

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Steven Smith

A Mr. Big operation is a Canadian undercover policing technique where a suspect is drawn into a fictitious criminal organization to elicit a confession. Officers build trust and dependence through incentives, pressuring suspects to admit guilt. Mr. Big confessions are persuasive, yet remain controversial, particularly with vulnerable suspects. This study examined whether suspects' vulnerabilities shape mock jurors' perceptions of confession evidence. Ninety-six participants evaluated three case vignettes adapted from cases (R. v. Hart, 2014; R. v. Rose, 1992; R. v. Bates, 2009) in a 3 (vulnerability type) × 3 (Case) × 2 (vulnerability level) design. Vulnerability type had little effect. High versus low influenced perceived confession accuracy, susceptibility to coercion, situational attributions, and false confession beliefs. Case affected judgments such that Bates was rated higher on confession accuracy, guilt, and moral culpability, whereas Rose elicited greater moral/procedural shock and situational attributions. Findings illuminate juror decision-making in Mr. Big operations.

3-Minute Thesis Presenters

Kyra Nichols

A Bitter Pill to Swallow: Placebos and Drug-Based Expectations

Dylan Martin

Awe, Beauty, and Meaning in Life

Laverna Hutchins

The Effectiveness of Student Success Programs at Saint Mary's University

Ella Ramsay

The Impact of Culture, Knowledge, and Contact on Attitudes Towards Neurodivergence

Zoë MacDonald

Beyond "Just Reading": The Influence of Childhood Reading Difficulties on Mental Health

Poster Presentations

12:25 – 1:35 pm

McNally Main Auditorium

Opening Notes by Dr. Shannon Dea, Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research (PVPAR)

#1 Echoes of Childhood: Examining the Link Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mental Health Among Young Newcomer Gender-Based Violence Survivors

Presented by Véronique Cormier, Kawthar Benjelloun Dakhama, Jacqueline Moore, and Melissa Maria Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Margherita Cameranesi

Research examining adults who have faced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has consistently found associations with negative mental health outcomes. However, limited research has focused on equity-deserving populations, particularly newcomer survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). This cross-sectional study addressed this gap by examining early family and community adversity and adult mental health among newcomer GBV survivors who resettled in Nova Scotia. Correlations between ACEs and adult mental health outcomes were also explored. Using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, a sample of 13 emerging adults was recruited from the community. Participants completed a cross-sectional survey including sociodemographic questions and standardized measures of ACEs and mental health outcomes. The statistical software SPSS was used to conduct descriptive and exploratory analyses to address the study objectives. Results will be presented with special emphasis on the ACEs that newcomer GBV survivors reported experiencing and their mental health.

#2 Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Effect of Visual Feedback on Attention in Computer Mouse Kinematics

Presented by Abigail Hildebrand
Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jason Ivanoff

Attention guides direct actions (e.g., reach-to-grasp) by prioritizing the goal of the action (e.g., a cup). Yet attentional allocation during indirect, transformed actions (e.g., moving a computer mouse cursor to click on a link) remains unclear. Participants performed computer mouse movements under visible and invisible cursor conditions. Attention was assessed using infrequent spatial probes at locations close to the action goal, the cursor, or the starting position of the cursor. Under normal viewing conditions, attention is expected to be broadly distributed across the movement path to minimize error and facilitate correction as movement approaches the goal. Under invisible conditions, however, attention might be focused on the expected location of the cursor to minimize prediction error (between the imagined and actual cursor location). Our findings are expected to have implications for transformed actions (e.g., video gaming, remote control devices) where one's actions and the consequences of one's actions are physically separated.

#3 Building Comprehension From the Word Up

Presented by Olivia Negrinotti, Alicia MacDonald, and Rachel Crawford

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

Learning to read in early elementary years sets the foundation for future success. However, the influence of factors that contribute to efficient reading comprehension remains misunderstood. The Reading Systems Framework Theory (RSF) (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014) proposes that comprehension begins with individual word representations, which, once efficiently encoded, free working memory for constructing meaning from text. Conrad et al. (2019) provide evidence that spelling, more than reading, can increase the quality of these word representations. However, to thoroughly test the RSF, we must demonstrate that orthographic representations enhance overall reading comprehension. The present study examines the effects of reading and spelling practice on reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. In a within-subjects repeated-measures design, 36 grade 4 students completed both practice conditions. Data analysis is currently underway. These findings will contribute to the validity of the RSF and may support the inclusion of orthographic-based instruction in curricula to facilitate reading comprehension.

#4 Cheated With a Conscience? Exploring Moral Emotions, Psychopathy and AI Use in Academic Misconduct

Presented by Ella Gillett

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Meg Ternes and Lily Turnbull

While extensive research has studied psychopathy, guilt, and shame in forensic populations (e.g., Dandawate et al., 2019), little is known about their role in academic offending. Recently, academic integrity has been threatened by the growing presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The present study examined levels of guilt and shame in undergraduate students who reported committing at least one academic offence. Participants ($n=31$) completed a questionnaire analyzing academic behaviors, AI attitudes, moral emotions, and psychopathic traits. The findings provided partial support for the study's hypotheses. Results showed no association between moral emotions (guilt, shame) and perceived severity of academic misconduct or getting caught cheating. Participants who had a positive attitude towards AI were more likely to use AI to academically offend ($r=.51$, $p=.001$). These results have important implications for academic integrity policies and efforts to prevent cheating.

#5 Interpersonal Relationships and Information Disclosure: Witness-offender and Victim-offender Relationships and The Willingness to Disclose Information During Investigative Interviews.

Presented by Neila Murphy

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Steven Smith

Interpersonal relationships are at the core of society and posit a great influence on how individuals operate. With this, it can be assumed that interpersonal relationships have influence in the forensic context. The current study examined whether relationship type (i.e., friend, family, partner), crime type, and crime severity predict willingness to disclose information during investigative interviews. Participants 18 years and older were presented mock crime scenarios with the independent variables varying. Willingness to disclose information was measured using 5 item Likert-style responses. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the effects of relationship type, crime type, and crime severity on willingness to disclose. This research aims to contribute to the pre-existing literature examining the influence of interpersonal relationships in the forensic context, and hopefully offer insight toward appropriate investigative practices.

#6 Parental Occupational Stress and Its Effects: Substance Use Patterns in Adult Children of First Responders

Presented by Emma Brauer

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Meg Ternes

Substance and alcohol use are significant public health concerns, making it important to identify risk factors. First responders experience higher rates of substance and alcohol use than the general population (Gryschuk et al., 2022). Although parental mental health and alcohol use influences alcohol use of children (Haugland et al., 2013), no studies observe first responder parents and their children's substance and alcohol use. This study addressed this gap through an online questionnaire, collecting responses from emerging adults with both first-responder and non first-responder parents (N = 72). We hypothesized that adult children of first responder parents would report riskier substance and alcohol use patterns, and that the severity of parental mental health issues during childhood would predict more severe substance and alcohol use. Results showed no significant relationship between having a first responder parent and having riskier substance or alcohol use. However, this research may help refine future risk factor research.

#7 Customer Mistreatment and Employee Burnout: Exploring the Moderating Role of Leader Character

Presented by Taylor Russell

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Camilla Holmvall and Dr. Sarah Carver

Exposure to customer mistreatment in customer-facing roles affects overall service quality, employee well-being, and workplace attitudes (Yu & Groth, 2023). This study examines the relationship between customer mistreatment (i.e., incivility and verbal aggression) and well-being (i.e., burnout) and explores the possible moderating effect of leader character (i.e., having morals or virtues motivated toward social improvement, as reflected in behaviours and emotions; Crossan et al., 2017). We hypothesize a significant relationship between customer mistreatment and well-being. We also hypothesize that in the presence of "good" leader character, employees will perceive customer mistreatment as less stressful and thus experience better well-being outcomes. Participants will be recruited through Prolific for an online study of employees' experiences with customers at work. Eligible participants are asked to complete a survey assessing their experiences of customer mistreatment, stress and well-being outcomes, as well as demographic and job variables. If available, results will be presented.

#8 Discovering Relationships Between Incel Ideological Characteristics and Workplace Psychopathy

Presented by Malcolm Rivest

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicolas Roulin

Many people misunderstand the ways psychopathy manifests in individuals. A common misconception is that it is limited to criminal behavior, though psychopathy exists on a continuum and affects multiple areas of society. Recent research has increasingly examined psychopathy in workplace settings, where individuals with subclinical psychopathic traits may exploit their environment to achieve personal goals. These behaviors can contribute to harmful work environments characterized by deviant, unethical, and counterproductive actions. Research on Involuntary Celibate (Incel) individuals, heterosexual males experiencing persistent sexlessness, has also identified psychopathic traits similar to those observed in workplace psychopaths, often reflected in hostile beliefs toward women. This study examines relationships between responses on the Conditional Reasoning Test for Workplace Psychopathy, measures of masculinity perceptions, the Incel Trait Scale, the Gender Role Belief Scale, and a

Candidate Ranking Task assessing bias in hiring decisions based on participant responses to profiles differing in attractiveness and masculinity/femininity.

#9 Do Words Matter? Examining the impact of Ableist vs. Non-Ableist Language in Asynchronous Video Interviews

Presented by Katya Harris

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Eden-Raye Lukacik and Dr. Deborah Powell

Ableist language refers to expressions that marginalize individuals with disabilities by reinforcing harmful stereotypes and perpetuating inequality and can occur both consciously and unconsciously across various forms of communication (Pike et al., 2026). As asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) become increasingly common, their impersonal nature highlights the importance of communication within these platforms (İlhan et al., 2025). This study examined how AVI explanation language (ableist, non-ableist, or no explanation) affects interview self-efficacy (Tay et al., 2006), interview anxiety (Powell et al., 2024), interview performance, and anticipated organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1997) among applicants with and without disabilities, specifically how the effects of ableist language impact applicants who experience disability. Participants (N = 98) were recruited via Prolific, with disability and non-disability groups equally represented (n = 49 in each group). Results revealed those who experience disability reported greater interview anxiety, with no other significant effects observed. Overall, results indicated that the use of ableist language in AVI explanations did not have a significant impact on the assessed outcomes.

#10 Head First into Academics: Exploring Predictors of Student-Athletes' Knowledge and Perceptions of Return-to-Learn Protocols After Concussions

Presented by Kara MacLean

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. David Bourgeois

Sport-related concussions pose significant risks to the cognitive and academic well-being of student-athletes, yet Return-to-Learn (RTL) protocols remain inconsistent and underdeveloped across institutions. In contrast, Return-to-Play (RTP) protocols are more standardized and widely implemented. Previous research has highlighted factors such as concussion knowledge, perceived severity, sex characteristics, and trust in medical professionals as influencing reporting behaviours. This study explores the predictors of student-athletes' knowledge and perceptions of RTL protocols following a concussion among individuals participating in varsity, club, and intramural sports. Data was collected from student-athletes at Saint Mary's University (n = 88) using a Qualtrics-based survey consisting of demographic items, true/false questions, and items measuring concussion knowledge, attitudes, reporting behaviours, trust in medical professionals, and RTL awareness. Data analysis is ongoing, and results are forthcoming. This research aims to inform the development of more effective RTL strategies.

#11 Influences of Acculturation and Acculturative Stress on Attachment Styles: The Moderating Role of Resilience

Presented by Antonia Monteiro de Albuquerque

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. David Bourgeois

Research on the relationship between acculturation and attachment styles has mostly focused on how attachment styles can be moderators of immigrants' experiences during their process of adaptation. However, evidence demonstrates that although attachment patterns are generally stable, they remain

capable of change (Fraleigh et al., 2021). This study explores the dynamic between attachment and acculturation through correlational analyses, highlighting the possibility of this relationship being reciprocal. The mediating role of resilience is also investigated as a possible protective factor on the influence of acculturative stress on attachment styles. Data was collected through an online survey completed by participants from a variety of foreign countries who have moved to Canada. The data analysis for the study is ongoing, and results are forthcoming.

#12 Personality-Colour Associations: The Personalities We Associate with Colours and How Environmental Colours Shape Perception

Presented by Vanessa Safatli

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. David Bourgeois

Humans are primed to rely on salient features in their environment to form lasting associations that support rapid judgments. Prior research shows that specific colours are consistently associated with specific objects, emotions, concepts, and events, with these associations being shaped by evolutionary, cultural, and societal experiences with colour. The present study aims to investigate personality-colour associations and test whether environmental colours influence perceptions of others. Participants (n=73) first selected colours they believe best describe personality traits. After, they were randomly assigned to seven groups and viewed an image of a person in a specific coloured room. They were asked to ascribe personality traits and intention to that individual. Data analysis is currently underway, and results are forthcoming.

#13 Voting Decisions: Assessing the Influence of Candidate Traits, Political Heuristics, and Candidate Profiles

Presented by Alex Comeau

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. David Bourgeois

Political heuristics are psychological mechanisms voters use to simplify decision-making during elections, particularly when faced with complex and overwhelming political information. While a substantial body of research supports their prevalence and utility (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Walder & Strijbis, 2023; Colombo & Steenbergen, 2020), less attention has been given to how these heuristics interact with voters' perceptual formation of political candidates. The present study examines how heuristic use and perception of candidates jointly influence voting decisions. Using a combination of experimental (random assignment) and quasi-experimental approaches, the study draws on a convenience sample of participants aged 18 and older. Participants completed surveys assessing reliance on political heuristics while evaluating AI-generated political candidates and profiles. These evaluations were analyzed using traits from the Stereotype Content Model, focusing on perceived warmth and competence. Results are pending and are expected to provide insight into how heuristics and perceptions of candidates shape voting decisions.

#14 From Likes to Fights: Social Media Jealousy and Openness to Couples Counselling in Romantic Relationships

Presented by Rebecca Bartley

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jim Cameron

Social media plays a central role in modern romantic relationships, introducing new opportunities for connection as well as potential sources of conflict. One emerging issue is social media jealousy, characterized by insecurity and mistrust triggered by a romantic partner's online interactions. While

prior research links social media jealousy to lower relationship satisfaction, less is known about how these experiences relate to openness to seeking professional help. This study examines whether social media jealousy predicts openness to couples counselling among undergraduate students in romantic relationships. In the study, participants completed an anonymous online survey through Qualtrics assessing jealousy, attachment anxiety, relationship satisfaction, self-stigma, and attitudes toward counselling. It is expected that higher levels of social media jealousy will be associated with greater openness to couples counselling, with additional analyses exploring related psychological factors. Keywords: social media jealousy, couples counselling, help-seeking attitudes, relationship satisfaction.

#15 Presentation Title: “Sustaining Hope when Facing Disappointment: Psychological and Identity Factors in Die-Hard Toronto Maple Leafs Fans”

Presented by Dylan Main

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jim Cameron

The Toronto Maple Leafs have one of the most loyal fan bases in professional sports, despite decades without a championship. This study examined the psychological factors that help fans remain hopeful and maintain well-being in the face of repeated disappointment. Drawing on social identity theory, I investigated fan identification, perceptions of cognitive alternatives (i.e., the belief that team outcomes will improve), collective resilience, coping strategies, and public collective self-esteem as predictors of psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction), personal control, hope, and meaning in life. A cross-sectional sample of 156 Maple Leafs fans responded to an online survey with validated psychological scales. Results indicated that: (a) cognitive alternatives uniquely and positively predicted hope, (b) venting negatively predicted hope and life satisfaction (but positively predicted well-being), and (c) “die-hard” fans expressed lower meaning in life. Global fan identification did not uniquely predict the criterion variables, though specific facets of identification did.

#16 Mating Market Mayhem: From Meet-Cute to Melee

Presented by Kyle Barnett

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Maryanne Fisher

The present study examines how mating tactics may be shaped by perceived local sex ratio and a broader set of perceived inputs within competitive mating contexts. The project began with a narrower question about whether perceived local sex ratio influences intrasexual competition and aggression in mate-pursuit settings. As the literature review developed, it became clear that sex ratio is likely only one variable within a larger interactive system. The project therefore shifted toward a broader model of competitive calibration, in which individuals interpret a mating field through self-evaluation, mate evaluation, rival evaluation, reasoning-related capacity, and coalition context. The study will use a vignette-based design with male-biased, female-biased, and neutral perceived local sex ratio conditions, each completed under alone and coalition conditions. The project is intended as an initial model-building study rather than a definitive account of mating competition.

#17 Complex Mismatch Negativity in Bipolar Disorder: Examining Auditory Hallucinations and Predictive Processing

Presented by Kaylee Connors

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Derek Fisher

Auditory hallucinations (AHs) are a clinically significant but understudied feature of bipolar disorder (BD). Predictive coding models suggest that hallucinations arise from disruptions in sensory prediction processes, which can be indexed using mismatch negativity (MMN), an event-related potential reflecting pre-attentive auditory change detection. The present study examined complex MMN (cMMN) using a dual-rule paradigm manipulating pitch and spatial location. Electroencephalography (EEG) data were collected from 60 participants, including individuals with BD with AHs, BD without AHs, and healthy controls. cMMN amplitudes were analyzed across fronto-central electrode sites using repeated-measures analyses of variance. Contrary to hypotheses, no significant group differences were observed. However, significant effects of region was found, consistent with typical MMN topography. These findings suggest that cMMN alterations may be less robust in BD, though limited statistical power and variability in EEG signal quality may have influenced results.

Keynote Speaker

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm

McNally Main Auditorium
(Zoom Breakout Room A)



Dr. Christopher Lively

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology,
St. Francis Xavier University

“And then you did what?”

A Tale of Happenstance, Research, and Advice for Students

In this talk, attendees of the 40th Annual Psychology Student Research Conference at Saint Mary’s University will hear Dr. Lively tell a tale about how a fox, (or perhaps a hedgehog?), decided to take a journey one day and somehow ended up in a very curious place known as the ivory tower. Dr. Lively will also share about some psychology research endeavours that he, his colleagues, and his students have been working on in effort to improve scientific literacy and the understanding of human behaviour. Finally, Dr. Lively will offer unsolicited advice to all “students” to consider and ponder upon as they prepare to continue with their own respective journeys, wherever that may take them.

Oral Presentations – 3A Forensic III

Global Sexual Violence & Exploitation, Passport Bros, Victim Impact Statements

3:15 pm – 4:30 pm

Loyola 171

(Zoom Breakout Room A)

Faculty MC: Dr. Skye Stephens

Association of Conflict and Community Violence with Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Perpetration in Colombian Youth

Presented by Stephanie Chen and Isaac Cormier

Independent research project supervised by Dr. Skye Stephens

Sexual violence perpetration remains understudied in population-based research, particularly in low- and middle-income countries affected by armed conflict and community violence. This study examines lifetime intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) perpetration among Colombian adolescents and young adults and its association with exposure to conflict and community violence. Data were drawn from the 2018 Colombia Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), a nationally representative household survey of individuals aged 13-24 years. Analyses were conducted separately for the national sample (n = 2,705) and a priority subsample (n = 2,513) oversampled from areas affected by armed conflict. IPSV perpetration was assessed using a lifetime item asking whether respondents had ever forced a romantic or marital partner to have sex against their will. Weighted prevalence was 0.79% (95% CI: 0.38–1.64) nationally and 0.57% (95% CI: 0.29–1.10) in the priority sample. Survey-weighted regression analyses examining associations with environmental violence exposures are ongoing.

Childhood Interrupted: Understanding the Hidden Crisis of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Zimbabwe

Presented by Sara Hunt

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Skye Stephens

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a serious human rights concern that involves the exploitation of a child for another's advantage or benefit through monetary or other forms of compensation. In underrepresented regions, children face higher risk of CSEC due to social and economic conditions. Sub Saharan Africa is one region where limited research restricts understanding of the prevalence and nature of CSEC. The present study focused on the prevalence of CSEC in Zimbabwe and its association with mental health correlates via a secondary analysis of the Violence against Children Survey (VACS). The population-based survey included data from 3,816 youth in Zimbabwe. The prevalence of CSEC was 0.4% in Zimbabwe. CSEC was associated with several negative mental health correlates (suicidality and substance use). The results highlight that CSEC is a significant issue related to the wellbeing of children and highlight the importance of prevention with vulnerable youth.

Why Date Local When You Can Go Global? Beliefs, Motivations, and Behaviours in the Passport Bros Phenomenon

Presented by Isabella Chacon

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Skye Stephens

This study examined the behaviours, motivations, and beliefs expressed in Reddit posts associated with the Passport Bros phenomenon. Using a quantitative content analysis approach, 260 posts from the subreddit r/ThePassportBros were systematically coded, which included sociodemographic characteristics, reported behaviours, beliefs and descriptions of women, and self-described motivations for engaging in international dating. Findings indicated that posts frequently emphasized seeking romantic relationships abroad, alongside dissatisfaction with dating in the authors' home countries. Descriptions of women differed across contexts, with women in the authors' home countries more often characterized negatively, while descriptions of foreign women were more varied and included both neutral and positive representations. Posts were commonly oriented toward seeking advice or sharing experiences related to dating abroad and frequently referenced specific regions such as Latin America and South and Southeast Asia. Motivations were most often related to long-term relationships, with other motivations such as preferences for traditional partners and lifestyle advantages appearing less frequently. Overall, the findings provide a descriptive account of how behaviours, motivations, and beliefs are expressed within online discussions of the Passport Bros phenomenon.

The Relationship Between Victim Impact Statements and Offender Character Evidence on Canadian Sentencing Decisions Between 2020-2025

Presented by Emma Isic

Masters thesis research supervised by Dr. Veronica Stinson

Archival data from CanLII will be examined to investigate the relationship between the presence of victim impact statements (VIS) and offender character evidence (OCE) on sentencing decisions in Canada from 2020-2025. It is hypothesized that VIS presence is related to longer sentences, while OCE presence is related to shorter sentences. Additionally, exploratory research questions will examine whether the proportions of victims and offenders that submit VIS and OCE has increased between 2020 and 2025. The findings of this research will help to inform understandings of Canadian sentencing decisions, and the role that victims and offenders play in the sentencing process.

Oral Presentations – 3B Mental Health and Wellbeing

Social Media Self-Diagnosis, Night Sky Awe, Newcomers and Gender-based Violence

3:15 pm – 4:30 pm

Sobey 160

(Zoom Breakout Room B)

Faculty MC: Dr. Jim Cameron

Is The Internet Your Diagnostician? Associations Between Social Media Engagement, Self-Diagnosis, and Wellbeing

Presented by Sage Rizcallah

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jim Cameron

As technology and cell phones have slowly become a heavily integrated part of everyday life, the rise of social media has followed. As a result, mental health professionals are seeing an increase of self-diagnosed mental health disorders driven by social media. This study examines the relationship between self-diagnosis and social media use. Participants were 86 undergraduate students between the ages of 18-28 who completed an online survey assessing identification with self-diagnosis, self-esteem, general mental well-being, social media engagement, and likelihood of seeking professional help. It is hypothesized that those who identify with having a self-diagnosis will be more likely to have high social media engagement, low self-esteem, and a lower likelihood of seeking professional help. Analysis for this study is ongoing, and results are forthcoming. Preliminary results show that there is a significant correlation ($r = .35$) between social media engagement and self-diagnosis.

Night Skies and Meaning in Life: Awe, Mattering, and Wellbeing in the Astronomy Community

Presented by Elizabeth Ganton

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Jim Cameron

Awe is an emotion we feel when we behold something too vast or complex to comprehend. How does someone who experiences awe regularly, like an astronomer, alongside an astronomy community, view life in the grand scheme of the universe? Through an online survey, we asked approximately 100 participants to describe a time they felt in awe of the night sky. Several scales assessed participants' feelings of awe in that moment, their connectedness to the night sky, identification with the astronomy community, sense of meaning, mattering, and overall wellbeing. We expect night sky connectedness and identification with the astronomy community to be correlated with meaning, mattering, and wellbeing. We will also analyze common phrases in participants' awe experience descriptions, and expect these to be correlated with feelings of awe scores, meaning, and mattering. This research aims to show potential psychological benefits of being in awe and connection to an awe-based community.

Rebuilding Belonging: Exploring Sense of Community and Mental Health Among Newcomer Gender-Based Violence Survivors

Presented by Jacqueline Moore

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Margherita Cameranesi

Newcomer women are at an increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) during their migration journey, a potentially traumatic experience that is associated with poor mental health. While

research suggests that sense of belonging is related to better mental health outcomes for newcomers, there is a lack of research exploring sense of belonging and its association with mental health in newcomer GBV survivors. Drawing on surveys from 13 emerging adult newcomer gender-based violence survivors, this cross-sectional study aimed to explore sense of belonging and mental health in young newcomer gender-based violence survivors ages 18-29 who resettled in Nova Scotia. Exploratory analyses were also conducted to investigate whether a stronger sense of belonging was associated with better mental health in the study cohort. The statistical software SPSS was used to conduct descriptive analyses and non-parametric analyses were conducted to examine associations and subgroup differences. Analyses are ongoing and results are forthcoming.

Finding Growth Through Faith: Religious Commitment and Post-Traumatic Growth in Young Newcomer Survivors of Gender-Based Violence

Presented by Melissa Alvarez, Del Angel, Véronique Cormier, Jacqueline Moore, and Kawthar Benjelloun Dakhama

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Margherita Cameranesi

Despite the potentially traumatic events faced by newcomers to Canada, not all experience mental health distress, and the factors responsible for this heterogeneity in outcomes are still not well understood. One promising protective factor that may buffer the negative effects of risk exposure in this equity-deserving population is religious commitment (RC). This cross-sectional exploratory study examined the association between RC and post-traumatic growth (PTG) among 13 newcomer survivors of GBV ages 18–29 years. Survey data were analysed using Spearman’s rank-order correlation and Mann–Whitney U tests to address the study objectives. Although the results suggest that RC may be related to PTG among newcomer survivors of GBV, they must be interpreted with caution given the small sample size and exploratory nature of this analysis. Overall, the results provide preliminary evidence warranting further investigation of culturally responsive and spiritually relevant resources in trauma-informed support frameworks for newcomer survivors of GBV.

Keywords: gender-based violence, newcomers, migrants, post-traumatic growth, religious commitment

Oral Presentations – 3C Evolutionary and Health

Attraction, Co-wife Dynamics, Decline in Older Adults, Accessibility

3:15 pm – 4:30 pm

Sobey 255

(Zoom Breakout Room C)

Faculty MC: TBD

Diet Personality and Attraction: What Vegan Diet Signals About Your Mate Potential

Presented by James Dyck

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Maryanne Fisher

Personality plays a key role in romantic attraction and relationship formation. Because personality can not be directly observed, individuals often rely on observable cues or heuristics to infer the personality traits of potential partners. One such way is through observing a potential mate's dietary choices. The present study investigates whether veganism functions as a heuristic that shapes personality perceptions during mate evaluation. Although research suggests vegans are associated with several desirable personality traits (e.g., agreeableness and honesty-humility), they are often perceived as less desirable romantic partners. This study examines whether dietary information influence perceived personality traits and attractiveness.

Undergraduate participants (ages 18-25) from Saint Mary's University completed an online survey in which they viewed photographs paired with vignettes describing individuals with different dietary patterns (high meat consumption, omnivore, vegan for health, and vegan for ethical reasons). Participants then rated targets personality using an observer adapted HEXACO-18 inventory. Data collection and analysis are ongoing. Findings will contribute to understanding how dietary cues influence personality perception in mate evaluation.

Exploring the Relationship Between Taste Preference and Human Quality Ratings

Presented by Mackenzie Keating

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Maryanne Fisher

Based on evolutionary concepts of attraction and perception of others, I investigated whether possessing a sweet taste preference leads to higher ratings of attractiveness, friendliness, and kindness. Further, personality traits were measured to determine if those higher in agreeableness and extraversion contributed to higher favourable ratings between taste preference and perceptions of human qualities. Participants consisted of Saint Mary's University undergraduate students participating in voluntary research. Participants answered demographic questions, self-perception ratings, and the Big Five Personality Inventory before rating images of men or women's faces on traits associated with attractiveness, kindness, and friendliness. Participants re-rated the same images paired with profiles eliciting either a sweet or salty preference on the same traits presented before. A pre-post difference study investigated if taste preferences influence the perception of other's qualities. Preliminary results will be presented.

Spokes in the Wheel: Exploring Tensions Between Co-Wives in The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

Presented by Georgia Marshall

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Maryanne Fisher

Here I examine the dynamics of co-wife aggression within Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) households that practice polygyny. The goal of this research is to explore the strategies of competition among co-wives, who represent multiple women engaged in intense mating competition for the limited resources of one man. This study explores the evolutionary benefits of engaging in plural marriage, the types of competition strategies utilized by FLDS women, and the ways that FLDS women justify their involvement in polygyny. I employ a mixed-methods approach, combining a quantitative analysis of co-wife dynamics in Sister Wives with a qualitative analysis of its themes. Through an evolutionary lens, the current study builds on the existing body of research into women's mate competition strategies to investigate the social dynamics between co-wives in the FLDS. This research hopes to develop a framework for exploring different mating systems with an emphasis on western plural marriage.

Being There: Closing the Care Gap and Preventing Functional Decline in Older Adults

Presented by Stuti Sandhu

Independent research project supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

As the aging population grows, a critical "care gap" has emerged for older adults who are experiencing the early stages of physical and psychosocial decline. This study evaluates the impact of Being There, a non-profit organization designed to bridge this gap through structured, person-centered wellness check-ins. Operating in residential and community settings in Halifax, NS, the organization utilizes a trained team of wellness observers to conduct 12-week intervention cycles. Using a longitudinal design, the study monitors functional and psychological shifts through the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) and the CASP-19 quality-of-life tool. By synthesizing narrative social data into actionable prevention plans, Being There aims to stabilize markers of physical frailty and enhance cognitive engagement. Preliminary analysis suggests that proactive social connectivity effectively mitigates functional decline, demonstrating that community-based non-profit models are essential for closing the care gap and maintaining independence in older adults.

From Accommodation to Inclusion: Exploring Assistive Technology as a Universal Pathway to Well-Being and Academic Success

Presented by Alexa Ikejiani

Honours thesis research supervised by Dr. Nicole Conrad

Within postsecondary institutions, assistive technology (AT) has traditionally been positioned as a support only for students with documented disabilities. Emerging research suggests that the effectiveness of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and inclusive design practices benefits students with and without disabilities. This study investigates the effects of AT on students' well-being and its function as a universal support in postsecondary institutions. The present study will use a multiple mediation analysis with AT use as the predictor (X), well-being (Y1) and academic outcome (Y2) as the outcome measures, and self-efficacy (M1) and stress management (M2) as the mediators. Students will be surveyed on their AT use as well as a range of related psychological and academic outcomes. We expect the findings to contribute not only to theory but also to the future framing of AT as a universal resource that supports all students.

Closing Reception and Best Presentation Awards

4:45 pm – 7:45 pm

The Anne J. & Albert T. Isaacs Commons

Please join our Closing Reception for light refreshments and pleasant conversation. An assortment of appetizers, including vegan and vegetarian options will be provided. A cash bar will be available featuring a selection of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks for purchase.

Closing remarks will be given by the conference committee, the Dean of Science Dr. Samuel Veres, and the Department of Psychology Chairperson Dr. David Bourgeois. These will be followed by our first ever Alumni Keynote Address.

Alumni Keynote Speaker



Jennaecia Lewis,
B.A. Psych (Hons), Alumni 2020
EDI Training & Education Consultant
People and Culture, SMU

Finally, all undergraduate student oral and poster presentations will be evaluated during the conference by graduate student judges. The winners will be announced at this closing awards ceremony.

Many thanks to the supporters of this event, including:

Department of Psychology, Saint Mary's University

The Office of the Dean of Science

Invited speakers

Dr. Christopher Lively, Research Keynote Speaker

Jennaecia Lewis, Alumni Keynote Speaker

Dr. Shannon Dea, Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research (PVPAR)

Dr. Sam Veres, Dean of Science

Dr. Nicole Conrad, Associate Dean of Science – Curriculum and Programs

Dr. David Bourgeois, Chairperson, Department of Psychology

April Scheller and Sarah Drew

**Graduate Student Hybrid Delivery Team
(In-room and Zoom Stream support)**

Chantal Corbeil

Harley Harwood

Connor MacKinnon

Graduate Student Judges

Keaira Cameron

Stephanie Chen

Jared Fiala

Megan Hurd

Lex Kash

Rina Lee

Julie MacQueen

Emma Summersby

Haley Wollner

Undergraduate Volunteers from the SMU Psychology Society

SMU Conference, Catering, Custodial, and Facilities Management Staff

Faculty MCs and Poster Judges

Graduate Student, Part-time Faculty, and Full-time Faculty Research Supervisors

And of course, our Student Researchers and Presenters!

Are you graduating with a degree in **Psychology** this semester?

The **SMU Psychology Department** would love to hear about your experience as a psychology student at SMU and how we can connect with you after graduation

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<https://tinyurl.com/7ck7xh3s>





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Want to take your research to the next level? Consider registering to present your project at **Science Atlantic** this **May 21-22, 2026** at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Abstract submission deadline is April 21, 2026.

For more information, go to <https://event.fourwaves.com/psych2026/pages>

SMU psychology students interested in attending should contact Drs. Meg Ternes (Meg.Ternes@smu.ca) and Margherita Cameranesi (Margherita.Cameranesi@smu.ca) for more information about conference travel and accommodations, and discuss next steps for their projects with their research supervisor.