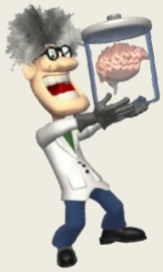


EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Psychology Department

Student Posters



Spring 2026

from

Conference Presentations,
Course Projects, and
Independent Research

Sponsored by PSY Faculty





1 Exploring the Relationship Between Creative and Imaginative Fantasy and Attentional Control

Kaylee Fellers, Eva Kramer, Haile Marcos, & Hayle Schultz

Sponsored by Dr. Bernas, 2026 Spring

The study examined the relationship between Creative and Imaginative Fantasy and Attentional Control. Ninety-seven individuals completed two psychological scales measuring Fantasy and Attentional Control. Results showed that, overall, engaging in fantasy was correlated with lower levels of attentional control. In particular, while creative fantasy was associated with decreased capacity for attentional control, imaginative fantasy was not.

2 The Relationship Between Physical Exercise and Self-Efficacy

Aniyah Landing & Eliza Raja

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2026 Spring

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among obligatory exercise impulses, physical activity levels, and self-efficacy. Participants ($N = 66$) completed a modified Obligatory Exercise Questionnaire (OEQ), the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), and the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ). Pearson correlations revealed moderate positive associations between obligatory exercise and both self-efficacy ($r = .489$) and vigorous physical activity ($r = .562$). Independent-samples t tests showed a significant gender difference only in vigorous activity, with males reporting more days of vigorous exercise in the previous week. Overall, these findings suggest that obligatory-exercise tendencies, rather than self-efficacy alone, are more informative for identifying individuals most likely to engage in vigorous physical activity.

3 Prevalence and Predictors of Disordered Eating Behavior in NCAA Athletes and Non-Athlete College Students

Brooklynn Greene

Sponsored by Dr. Stowell, 2026 Spring

This study investigated the potential link between NCAA Division I athletic participation and disordered eating behaviors. Participants were 194 college students (78 athletes, 116 non-athletes) aged 18–24 from Eastern Illinois University. There were no significant differences in disordered eating measured by the EAT-26 between non-athletes, team-athletes, and individual. However, female athletes reported significantly higher disordered eating behavior prevalence than males. Additionally, family attitudes were moderately, positively correlated with increased disordered eating behaviors, $r(192) = .37, p < .001$. These findings suggest that while athletic participation may not directly impact disordered eating behaviors, family history can.

4 The Relationship Between Perceived ADHD Symptom Severity and Self-Efficacy

Elizabeth Garlisch, Alyssa Garcia, & Kamryn Prebster

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2026 Spring

The purpose of this study was to examine how self-efficacy relates to perceived ADHD symptom severity and to explore whether these relationships vary across age. Participants ($N = 124$) completed modified measures of ADHD symptom severity and self-efficacy and reported the degree to which they believed they might have ADHD. A mild negative correlation emerged between self-efficacy and perceived ADHD symptoms ($r = -.366$), indicating that individuals with lower self-efficacy reported greater symptom severity. Independent-samples t tests showed that participants who perceived themselves as probably not or definitely not having ADHD were significantly older and reported both lower ADHD symptom severity and higher self-efficacy compared to those who believed they probably or definitely had ADHD. These findings suggest that while lower self-efficacy is linked to higher perceived ADHD symptoms, age and self-perceived likelihood of having ADHD play a substantial role in how individuals interpret and report their symptoms.

5 Relationship Between Perceived Anxiety and Self-Efficacy in Different Anxiety Inducing Situations

Ellen Kaper

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2025 Spring

Anticipatory anxiety (AA) and Self-Efficacy (S-E) have been examined in multiple contexts and have been found to be negatively correlated. This study examined how perceived AA and S-E might be related and differ across four different types of anxiety inducing situations. A survey containing four anxiety events was completed by 29 participants. Negative correlations, varying from mild to moderate, were found between AA and S-E in each of the situations examined. One-way repeated measures ANOVAs were significant, showing that perceived AA was highest for a student preparing for an exam at the same time as S-E was lowest for that person; the opposite pattern was found for someone preparing to go on a blind date. It is concluded that strengthening self-efficacy may help individuals become more adaptive to different situations and deal with anticipatory anxiety.

6 Exploring the Impact of Light and Temperature on Perceived Safety in College Campus Settings

Ashley Garrity, Cade Hausman, and Ellie Hill

Sponsored by Dr. Zhu, 2023 Spring

It remains unknown how light level (Dark vs. Bright) and temperature (Cold vs. Warm) combine to affect perceived safety in college campus settings. Participants ($N = 115$) were randomly presented with one of the four series of stimuli (pictures on a college campus depicted in warm and cold temperatures paired with dark and bright lighting). Within each series, they first viewed a picture and then reported the perceived safety level of the pictured location. Results from a two-way (temperature x light) between-subjects ANOVA showed that bright locations overall were perceived as safer than dark locations, whereas temperature showed no significant influence on perception of safety. Critically, light and temperature did not combine to significantly affect the perception of safety. The higher perception of safety in bright locations is consistent with previous research.

7 Relationship Between Social Media and Stress

Gavin Blisset

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2025 Spring

The purpose of this study was to measure the use of different social media (SM) platforms and how participants' self-reported stress levels as a function of using SM might be related to how much time they spend on SM. Participants ($N = 38$) completed a questionnaire indicating how much time they spend on different SM platforms and their SM-induced stress levels. The stress items were averaged together to obtain a composite stress score (CSS) and an average social media (ASM) use value was calculated. Data were analyzed with one-way repeated measures ANOVA and Pearson Correlations. Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok were reported as the most used SM platforms (about 3 to 4 hours per day); Facebook, Reddit, and X were used significantly less (1 hour or less per day). CSS was mildly positively related to ASM use ($r = .37$); CSS was also mildly positively related to both the Most ($r = .32$) and Least ($r = .25$) used SM platforms. The SM platform most related to CSS was TikTok ($r = .54$): As time spent on TikTok increased, reported CSS also increased. It is concluded that limiting and/or self-regulating social media use, especially TikTok, may have a positive impact on someone's mental health, especially if mental health is being affected by spending too much time on social media.

8 Perception of a Compliment as a Function of the Effort Made on One's Appearance and the Familiarity Between the Receiver and Giver of the Compliment

Mersadeez Barrett, Phoebe Croston, Lindy Milkowski, and Olivia Omundson

Sponsored by Dr. Bernas, 2023 Spring

This study examined an individual's perception of a compliment based on how much effort was put into the receiver's appearance and how familiar the complimenter was to the receiver. Three hundred and thirteen participants read a scenario in which they were the central character who either put effort or did not into their appearance, and a close friend, acquaintance, or stranger complimented them. The participants were then asked eight questions regarding their perception of the compliment. Results showed a significant interaction between effort and familiarity between the complimenter and receiver. A close friend's compliment was rated most positively when an effort was put into one's appearance but was perceived negatively when no effort was expended.

9 The Effects of Gender and Laughter Type on Perceived Likeability

Bill Matwij, Grayce Hightshoe, Lexszi Spiegel, and Marissa Urso

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2023 Spring

This study was designed to examine how the of type of laughter (i.e., strong, awkward) might combine with the gender of the person laughing (i.e., male, female) to affect perceived likability. Fifty-four participants were tested using convenience sampling. Twenty YouTube videos were selected and divided into four sets, each with 5 clips all of either an identified man or woman engaging in either a strong or awkward laugh. After each clip, participants were instructed to rate the perceived likability of the person laughing. Seven two-way factorial ANOVAs were performed on the data. Gender and the type of laughter did not combine to significantly affect perceived likability; nor did gender, overall, affect perceived likability. However, individuals with strong, rather than awkward, laughter were perceived significantly more friendly and approachable. We conclude that the way we laugh may affect the way we are perceived by others.

10 The Effects of Wearing a Hood Up or Down and Race on Perceptions of Approachability and Feelings of Safety

Ambria Ford, Russell Dandy, Toyosi Osemobor, Jaxson Isaac, and Serena Voss

Sponsored by Dr. Bernas, 2023 Spring

This study investigated the effect of wearing the hood of a hoodie (up or down) and race on other people's perceptions of safety and approachability. One hundred and fifty-seven were randomly assigned to view a photo of a college student who was either white, black, or mixed-race and who wore the hood of their hoodie either up or down. The participants' feelings of safety and willingness to approach the college student were measured. The study's results showed a significant interaction between an individual's race and the position of their hood.

11 Investigating the Impact of Environmental Settings and Music Type on Stress Perception

Shyama Owen, D'Ajanaè Jackson, and Mercedes Kirby

Sponsored by Dr. Zhu, 2023 Spring

The goal of this experiment was to examine how environment (urban vs. rural) and music (cheerful vs. peaceful) combined to affect perceived stress levels. Participants ($N = 88$) viewed urban and rural environmental pictures paired with listening to either cheerful or peaceful music. Participants reported their stress levels by answering five related questions following each image/music pair. Results from a two-way (environment x music) between subjects ANOVA showed that neither overall nor combined effects of environment and music on the participants' perceived stress levels. It is possible that our stimuli were not drastically different to invoke enough stress.

12 (empty)

13 Perceived Trustworthiness of Men and Women: Comparison of Neutral and Smiling Facial Expressions

Kierstin Clark, Gabriell Weber and Emily Wellman

Sponsored by Dr. Zhu, 2023 Spring

It remains unclear how gender (female vs. male) and facial expression (smile vs. neutral) combine to affect perceived trustworthiness. Participants ($N = 93$) were randomly presented with one of four different conditions of stimuli (pictures of men or women with either smiling or neutral facial expressions). Within each condition, they viewed a picture and then reported their perceived trustworthiness of the pictured person, for a total of five pictures. Results from a two-way (gender x expression) between-subjects ANOVA showed that women were perceived as more trustworthy than men, and smiling expressions were perceived as more trustworthy than neutral expressions. However, gender and facial expression did not combine to significantly affect the perception of trustworthiness. The higher degrees of trustworthiness for women and smiling expressions are consistent with previous research.

14 The Effect Gender and Attire on Perceptions of Workplace Performance

Alyssa Lazzaro, Marea Buhs, Carly Page, and Anna Alli

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2022 Fall

This study was designed to measure perceptions of gender and attire in the workplace. 51 individuals (6 male, 44 female, 1 unidentified) were shown 5 out of 20 images total of either men or women who were either professionally or casually dressed, and then asked to rate the individual in each photo. Participants were asked yes/no questions regarding whether they would hire each individual shown in the picture based on: their attire, their hairstyle, and their facial expression. Participants were then asked to rate each individual on a continuous scale ranging from 0 (very unlikely) to 100 (very likely) on the likelihood that the individual would: be approachable, be responsible, be productive, be prepared for work, have a strong work ethic, and be confident. Overall, men and women were perceived similarly on approachability and there were no significant effects on attire. Responsibility and productiveness had the most significance with men and women. We conclude that attire has little effect on how people perceive individuals, but that overall women tend to be perceived more favorably than men.

15 The Effects of Facial Decorations and Gender on Perceived Work Ethic

Jordan Gomez, Carter Mohesky, Claire Perez-Korinko, and Samantha Perry

Sponsored by Dr. Bernas, 2022 Spring

The study examined the perception people had of the work ethic of men and women with different facial decorations. One hundred twenty-eight Eastern Illinois University students participated in the study. Each participant was randomly assigned to a description and an image of a person's face: a clear face, a tattooed face, and a pierced face. The description gave a brief overview of the attitude and type of work the person in the image had. The participants were then asked to answer eight questions regarding their perception of the person's work ethic. Results showed no significant interaction between facial decoration and gender. There was also no significant main effect of gender, but there was a significant main effect of facial decorations. No matter the gender of the person, those with a tattooed or pierced face were perceived to possess a less positive work ethic than those who had no facial tattoos or piercings.

16 The Effects of Music and Facial Expression on Mood

Bethany Huhman, Marama Makea, Willow Mercado, and Chaney Trout

Sponsored by Dr. Zhu, 2022 Fall

It remains unclear how music (happy vs. sad) and facial expression (positive vs. negative) combine to affect mood. Participants ($N = 65$) were randomly presented with one of the four series of stimuli (happy or sad music paired with a positive or negative facial expression). Within each series, participants first watched a video clip consisting of a still facial picture and a background music, and then were asked to rate their mood on a scale. Results from a two-way (type of music x type of facial expression) between-subjects ANOVA showed that the type of music and the type of facial expression did not affect the viewer's mood, both overall and combined. We conclude that there may have been confounding factors that led to these results, such as lack of everyday context cues and a need for longer exposure to the stimuli.

17 Willingness to Form Relationships Based on Face Symmetry and Smiling

Susan Gruszka, Janaya Pinnick, Jarren Hamilton, and Russell Dandy

Sponsored by Dr. Towers, 2022 Fall

The focus of the study was to determine if facial symmetry influences willingness to form a relationship with an unknown individual. In addition to this, a second variable whether it is more likely that one would consider forming a relationship with someone who is smiling rather than someone with a neutral face. To test this, we used Qualtrics to create a survey and randomly assign participants ($N = 127$) to one of four conditions. In each condition, participants would see a photoshopped photo depicting which condition they were in and given a Likert scale to rate ten statements in order to measure the participants willingness to do certain tasks with/for the stranger pictured. In the end, this experiment revealed that neither facial symmetry nor someone smiling has a statistically significant difference in participants willingness to form a relationship with the unknown individual.

18 The Effects of Weight and Age on Perceived Barriers to Promotion in the Workplace

Sova Green, Sarah Ruiz, and Samantha Spayer

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2022 Fall

This study was designed to measure the effects of body weight (i.e., average weight, overweight) and age (i.e., young, old) on perceived barriers to promotion in the workplace. 240 participants were presented with one of four randomized series of stimuli, each containing 5 pictures of either young or old women in professional attire who were either average weight or overweight. Participants responded to 6 statements for each photo on a continuous scale ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely", scored from 0 to 100. A two-way (weight, age) between-subjects factorial ANOVA was performed on each question. Little difference was found between the perceived workplace barriers of those who were old or young; however, overweight women were perceived more positively than those who were average weight. Overall, age and weight did not combine to significantly affect the perception of workplace barriers. This is not consistent with other research. We conclude that factors such as clothing and styling may have made the task difficult to keep focus on only age and body size regarding perceptions of professionalism or success.

19 The Effects of Gender and Combat Veteran Status on Perceived Dangerousness of PTSD

Lydia Henson, Kyla Wiseman, and Sam Hester

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2023 Spring

This study was designed to measure the effects of gender (i.e., male, female) and combat veteran status on perceived dangerousness of individuals with PTSD. Two hundred and seven participants were each randomly presented with one of four sets of short stories (five stories per set) describing either a man or a woman with PTSD who either was or was not a combat veteran. Following each of the stories, the participants were asked questions regarding the perceived dangerousness of the person in the story. Two-way between subjects factorial ANOVAs were performed on the data. Overall, men with PTSD were perceived to be scarier and more threatening than women, regardless of whether the individual was or was not a combat veteran. However, the combination of PTSD and gender did not have a significant effect on how dangerous the individuals were perceived to be, except for unpredictableness: the combat status of men with PTSD did not lead to large differences; however, women with PTSD who were combat veterans were perceived less unpredictable than those with no combat experience. We conclude that the inferred cause of PTSD, such as combat experiences, may play a role in how reliable men and women with PTSD are perceived to be.

20 The Effects of Valence of Language and Word Quantity on Perceived Motivation of Seeking Physical Fitness

Sharifeh Ghannam, Cheyenne Jones, and Chantel Welker

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2023 Spring

This study was designed to measure the effects of the valence of language (i.e., positive words, negative words) and word quantity (a lot of words, few words) on perceived motivation to seek physical fitness. One hundred and twelve participants were presented with randomized series of stimuli of five, twenty-second, animated clips. Each clip presented either positive or negative internal thinking with either a lot or a few words. After each video participants were asked ten continuous scale questions about the person in the video's perceived motivation to seek physical fitness. Ten two-way between-subjects factorial ANOVAs were performed on the data. The valence of language did not combine with the word quantity to significantly affect responses. Overall positive valence of language of individuals was perceived as much more likely to attend other physical fitness classes in the future, record details about their physical activity (such as minutes and level of activity), commit to other types of physical activities, not give up on their physical fitness quest, be comfortable in a workout setting, and inspire others to work out. We conclude that thinking or saying positive words to oneself can lead to the perception of being more motivated to seek physical fitness, but it remains unclear as to whether using positive words does increase the person's actual motivation to seek physical fitness.

21 Gender and Dress and How it Effects Perceived Ability to Perform in a Job

Brandon Downen, Jessica Voyles, and Natalie Weaver

Sponsored by Dr. Towers, 2022 Fall

This study examined how dress and gender affected study participants perceived ability of fictional job candidates. Participants ($N = 95$) were gathered using convenience sampling and were asked to respond to stimuli. They were presented with a basic resume that was the same regardless of picture presented and randomly shown one photo of an applicant, either male or female in business casual or a full suit. After viewing the resume and the photograph participants were presented with statements intended to measure how well the applicant would perform their job. No significant differences were found in candidate gender or dress.

22 How People Are Perceived as a Function of How They Consume Nicotine and the Generation of the Perceiver

Sera Lange, Logan Casey, and Jake Arnold

Sponsored by Dr. Bernas, 2023 Spring

The study examined how different generations would assess people depending on how they consumed nicotine. One hundred seventy-one people aged 18 to 73 were randomly assigned to read about a person who smoked cigarettes, vaped, or did not consume nicotine. They then assessed the person along 15 traits, with higher scores indicating that they perceived the person more positively. The participants were then classified according to the generation they belonged to. There was a significant interaction between how nicotine was consumed and the participants' generation. Both Baby Boomer and Generation Z participants viewed people who smoked less favorably and those who did not more favorably. However, they differed in their perception of vaping, with Baby Boomers opposing it and Generation Z participants favoring vaping.

23 Perceived Access and Opportunities for Persons with Physical and Mental/ Intellectual Disabilities

Katherine Macias

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2025 Spring

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions to the access and opportunities (AO) individuals with physical disabilities (PD) and mental/intellectual disabilities (MID) are afforded in education, the workplace, and in healthcare. Participants ($N = 31$) completed a survey on Qualtrics responding to statements about perceived AO for individuals, first with PD and then with MID. Repeated measures t-tests were conducted. Results showed that perceived composite AO did not differ significantly between individuals described as having a PD and MID. However, participants without a reported disability ($N = 14$) did perceive that individuals with PD do have significantly more AO overall in Education and Healthcare than those with MID, compared to participants reporting disabilities ($N = 12$). These findings suggest that perceived AO for people with disabilities depends not only on whether the individuals themselves have a disability, but also on the type of disability and the context; these findings are consistent with in-group/out-group bias seen across other social groups.

24 Type of Substance Use and its Effects on Perceived Comfort with the Users

Diya Deb

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2025 Spring

How the use of different substances affects the social perceptions of others has generally been examined. In this study, a person's comfort with individuals using marijuana, legal, and illegal drugs was investigated. Participants ($N = 45$) reported their comfort with a new friend described as using one of three different types of substances: legal, marijuana, and illegal; three exemplars were created for each of the substance types, and perceived comfort was measured with four continuous scales. One-way repeated measure ANOVAs were used to examine differences in reported comfort for each of the four measures of comfortability. It was found that participants showed significantly lower comfort with users of illegal substances compared to users of both legal and marijuana substances. It is concluded that the type of substances people use can affect how others perceive them; and using illegal substances will have a strong negative impact on those perceptions.

25 The Effect of Degree Modality on Perceived Job Competence in Customer-Facing Occupations

Kierstyn Pals, Tasha Dzieszinski, Taylor Quandt, & Hayden Trier

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2026 Spring

The purpose of this study was to examine how perceptions of job competence vary based on degree modality and whether the occupation is customer-facing. Participants ($N = 132$) read brief descriptions of five workers, one at a time, and rated each worker on six competence-related traits. Six two-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted. No significant interactions emerged for any of the six traits, and degree modality alone did not significantly influence perceived competence; workers with online degrees were not viewed significantly different to those with in-person degrees. However, job type showed a consistent main effect: workers in non-customer-facing occupations were rated as significantly more competent on five of the six traits. One possible explanation is that people have more frequent, and often more negative, experiences with employees in customer-facing roles, which may lead to more negative stereotypes and lower perceived competence for workers in those occupations.

26 Exploring the Relationship Between Impulsivity and Craving for Spicy Food

SaraKay Ferguson, Abigail Freeman, Harley Gordon, & Eric Stafford

Sponsored by Dr. Bernas, 2026 Spring

The study examined the relationship between trait impulsivity and craving for spicy food. Ninety-five individuals completed two psychological scales measuring impulsivity and craving for spicy food. Results showed a significant positive relationship between overall impulsivity and overall craving for spicy food. Specifically, two of the five dimensions of impulsivity (sensation-seeking and positive urgency) positively correlated with craving for spicy foods.

27 Predictors of Distractible Smartphone Behaviors

Abby McCann, Kaylynn Moeller, Alex Seymour, & Holly Toliver

Sponsored by Dr. Brito, 2026 Spring

The purpose of this study was to examine whether Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Perceived Multitasking Ability (PMA), and age uniquely predict Distractible Smartphone Behaviors (DSB) when assessed simultaneously in the same model. A total of 175 adults (ages 18–78) completed a Qualtrics questionnaire measuring FoMO, PMA, and DSB. A standard multiple linear regression was conducted to determine the unique contribution of each predictor. The overall model significantly predicted DSB. FoMO emerged as a significant positive predictor ($p < .001$), indicating that individuals higher in FoMO tend to engage in more distractible smartphone behaviors. Age was also a significant negative predictor ($p = .01$), suggesting that younger adults report higher levels of DSB. In contrast, PMA was not a significant predictor after accounting for FoMO and age ($p = .23$). Taken together, these findings suggest that distractible smartphone behaviors are driven more strongly by FoMO and age than by individuals' perceived ability to multitask.

28 Does Physical Activity Predict Higher Levels of Cognitive Ability?

Josiah Barker

Sponsored by Dr. Stowell, 2026 Spring

High levels of exercise are thought to be a strong predictor of increased capacity and efficiency of cognitive ability. I measured physical activity levels through a general physical activity questionnaire that inquired about average weekly hours spent on different physical activity tasks. I used a reverse digit-span task to measure working memory, a key facet of cognitive ability. In a sample of 162 college-aged adults, the correlation between physical activity and working memory was $r = .12$, which was not significant but in the expected direction.

