

ABSTRACT BOOK

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CONTENT

1.0 Keynote Speaker

2.0 Parallel Sessions 4

2.1 Presenters, Topic review and Presentation number 5-7

2.2 Abstracts 8-53

3.0 Posters 54

3.1 Presenters, Topic review and Poster number 55-58

3.2 Abstracts 59-102

Keynote Speaker

Dr Luke McGuire

Many philosophies, religions, and lay people's theories about how we should treat others focus on principles like harm reduction and equality - "treat others as you would wish to be treated". Yet, there are many real examples where individuals are given very poor treatment, often based on grounds like the gender, race/ethnicity, or even species they belong to. Where does this differential treatment come from and how does it develop? In this talk I will explore some of the research I have conducted with my colleagues and students exploring how children, adolescents, and adults think about the moral status of different beings, with a particular focus on how we should treat (and whether we should eat) non-human animals.

Parallel Sessions

| Session | Presenter(s) | Topic | Presentation number # |
|---|---|--|-----------------------|
| Parallel 1A - Clinical Psychology (eating disorder) | Elsa Voak | Understanding caregiver attachment in successful anorexia nervosa recovery: young, recovered adults' qualitative perspectives | 1 |
| | Emelia Steel | The Lived Experience of Transitioning to University with Type 1 Diabetes | 2 |
| | Wing Lum Fok | Social Media Content Consumption and Body Dysmorphia Association on Urges and Action to Change Eating Behaviours | 3 |
| | Evgeniya Anisimova | Individuals with orthorexia eating behaviour traits show a gastric disgust response to processed foods | 4 |
| | Naomi Sinclair | Exploring the Impact of Nutrient-Based Dietary Tracking on Eating Disorder Symptoms and Fibre Intake | 5 |
| | Belle Clayden | Get Ready with Me: The effect of different types of TikTok GRWM videos on women's body satisfaction. | 6 |
| Parallel 1B - Cognitive Psychology (Morals, Perception, Expectation, Impulsivity and Attentional Biases) | Madie Ades | Moral conflict and deception: investigating early BP amplitudes and individual differences underlying spontaneous deception in a competitive social game | 7 |
| | Anya Knight, Zahra Nabeel, Katie Law, Charlotte Chang, Andy Wan, Zahra Bahreinwala, Wendy Hsiao | Undermining Utilitarian Bias in VR Moral Dilemmas with a Driving Simulator | 8 |
| | Meghan Whitehouse | Individual differences in sensory perception: Mental Imagery and Pain Processing | 9 |
| | Zahra Chafi | Investigating the role of Expectations in Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS) | 10 |
| | Will Lawson, Emie Scott | Investigating the Role of Frontoparietal Network Connectivity in Impulsivity and Compulsivity: A Resting-State EEG and Generative Computational Modelling Approach | 11 |
| | Amelie Brooks | The Role of Positive Attentional Biases in Anhedonia | 12 |
| Parallel 1C - Social Psychology | Anna Lim | The Mediating Role of Coping Styles on Personality Traits and Academic Burnout | 13 |
| | Zara Curtis | Social Influences on Risky Driving: Passenger and Driver Effects on Speed and Risk-Taking | 14 |
| | Nell Drew, Amelia Shaw, Holly Gajewiak | Significant New Findings on Financial Literacy Gender Gap & Social Media | 15 |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|----|
| | Jasmine Anderton | The Role of Culture in Shaping Pro-Environmental Behaviour and Attitudes: A Cross-Cultural Examination | 16 |
| | Siobhan Rimmer | Exploring the relationships between fans and celebrities on social media. | 17 |
| | Jackson O'Carroll | How the sunk cost effect can influence commitment to dates arranged online | 18 |

| Session | Presenter(s) | Topic | # |
|---|---------------------------------|---|----|
| Parallel 2A - Clinical Psychology (Neurodivergence: theories, lived experiences and interventions) | Fae Burrell | Monotropic and Perceptual Capacity: Investigating Two Theories of Autistic Attention | 19 |
| | Finlay McLaughlin | The role of Deadlines in motivation and procrastination among individuals with ADHD | 20 |
| | Aleksandra Kowalczyk | Behavioural measure of autistic burnout | 21 |
| | Jake Williams | The Effect of Nature Exposure and Sheltering Conditions on Attention | 22 |
| | Pablo Galbraith | Co-adapting a Mobile App-Based Problem-Solving Intervention for Teenagers with Autism and Learning Difficulties | 23 |
| Parallel 2B - Life influences on behaviours: from childhood to adulthood | Elena Chamberlain | "I can show my imagination": Exploring Children's Understanding of Writing Poetry for Wellbeing through Thematic Analysis | 24 |
| | Tara Boessenkool | The Effect of Acute Pain on Driving Performance | 25 |
| | Neila Choomchuay | Reintegration Strategies in PTSD Treatment: An exploratory study on goal-based group therapy | 26 |
| | Faith Kingsland and Katie Price | An investigation into the relationship between alexithymia, addiction, and cannabis use for sleep | 27 |
| | Abigail Criddle | Exploring the sunk cost effect in relationships: Why we stay despite the cost | 28 |
| Parallel 2C - What influences students' well-being? | Rachel Peal | "A 7 Year Long Memory Test": Students' Perceptions of their Education Journey through the lens of Freirean Banking Theory, SAILL and Wider Contextual Influences. | 29 |
| | Lois Wilkinson | Open water swimming as a route to LGBTQ+ wellbeing: A qualitative study | 30 |
| | Yulan Li | Assessing the Impact of Nature Video Viewing | 31 |
| | Mayur Wiesinger | The Wellbeing of International student volunteers | 32 |

| Session | Presenter(s) | Topic | # |
|---|------------------------|--|----|
| Parallel 3A - On evaluating current and preventative intervention strategies | Saud AlRashidi | Specific Messaging Components in E-Cigarette Educational Videos on Eliciting “Spill-Over Effects”: An Online Randomised Control Trial on North Americans and Britons Who Smoke | 33 |
| | Ruichen Yin | Nature-based meditation and wellbeing, does context matter? A randomised experiment comparing virtual green space, blue space and urban environments. | 34 |
| | Ali Bader | Investigating the differences in trauma types on PTSD treatment: Are some traumas easier to treat? | 35 |
| | Dean-Luke Kearle | Cognitive Reserve Across Age Groups: Effects on Vocabulary, Processing Speed, Perceptual Reasoning, and Executive Function | 36 |
| Parallel 3B - Cognitive Psychology (Visual Search) | Olivia Nicole Pulinska | Neural mechanisms underlying enhanced visual search performance in action video game players: Contralateral delay activity (CDA) amplitude as an index of cognitive load | 37 |
| | Georgia Williams | The Impact of Expertise on Visual Search Accuracy: Subsequent Search Miss Errors in Radiologists and Non-Professionals in Multiple-Target Visual Search | 38 |
| | Mario Janez-Martin | Enhanced Visual Search Performance in Action Video Gamers: Attentional Allocation and the N2pc | 39 |
| | Isaac Henderson | The optimal searcher: Oculomotor behaviours associated with efficient multiple-target visual search | 40 |
| Parallel 3C - Clinical Psychology (Women's health) | Lika Gvasalia | Exploring the impact of mental health: A qualitative study of emotional and psychological experiences during the menstrual cycle. | 41 |
| | Aruvika Chandran | Dysfunctional Posttraumatic Cognitions Explaining Gender Differences in Child and Adolescent PTSD: a Mediation and Meta-analysis | 42 |
| | Grace Phippard | The role of severity of menstrual symptoms on mood and willingness to socialise | 43 |
| | Claudia Bishop | Does the Menstrual cycle phase affect perceived emotional relationship closeness and is this moderated by relationship type and length? | 44 |

Understanding caregiver attachment in successful anorexia nervosa recovery: young, recovered adults' qualitative perspectives

Anorexia nervosa is a serious eating disorder with high mortality and low remission rates. There is an urgent need to improve treatment outcomes for children – the likeliest age group to achieve lasting recovery (NICE, 2019). Child-parent attachment insecurity is associated with worse outcomes (Rossi et al., 2022). However, there is little research investigating attachment where recovery is successful. This understanding could inform treatments and potentially improve outcomes. This study therefore sought to answer the question: ‘How can we understand caregiver attachment in successful anorexia nervosa recovery from the qualitative perspectives of young, recovered adults?’ Eight young adults (18–25 years) who had recovered from anorexia as children participated in semi-structured interviews informed by George et al.’s (1985) Adult Attachment Interview, focusing on their attachment to their parents in recovery. The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2013) thematic analysis. Four themes were created: (1) Initially troubled attachment, (2) Journey to attachment security, (3) Attachment and the inpatient experience, and (4) Attachment and individuality/self-motivation in recovery. These findings suggest that the anorexia recovery journey could be partly considered a journey to greater attachment security. This suggests investigation is warranted into incorporating attachment-focused practice within anorexia treatment for children and families.

The Lived Experience of Transitioning to University with Type 1 Diabetes

Transitioning from secondary school to university is a high-risk period for effective diabetes management among UK students with type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM). Research in the US has shown that institutional support is often lacking. However, no research has qualitatively examined the lived experiences of UK students navigating this transition. This study aimed to explore these experiences through semi-structured interviews, to understand why transition is high-risk and what support could be implemented. A purposive sample of seven participants aged 19-29 were recruited from four UK universities. Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase framework, identified three superordinate themes: Management, Lifestyle, and Support – with nine sub-themes. Participants reported difficulties managing diabetes independently. Factors such as alcohol consumption, disrupted routines, and dietary changes impacted diabetes management and self-care. A notable reduction in support from social networks, institutions, and healthcare providers was highlighted, with participants expressing the need for accessible campus spaces and specialist advisors for diabetes management. These findings suggest tailored support packages from healthcare providers and education institutions are essential to addressing challenges during this high-risk transition. Future research should explore and trial interventions to alleviate barriers and improve health and well-being outcomes for at-risk students with T1DM.

Social Media Content Consumption and Body Dysmorphia Association on Urges and Action to Change Eating Behaviours

Social media (SM) has gained popularity among young adults in recent years, marked by significant increase in time spent on SM and SM accounts owned from 2015 to 2022 (Sanzari et al., 2023). Previous research implied strong direct effects of social media content consumption (SMCC) and body dysmorphia (BD) on internalisation of idealised body image. Holding idealised body image was then suggested to influence diet choices, with a desire of ‘thinness’ and ‘masculinity’. Moreover, previous research consistently suggested that subjective social status (SSS) independently influenced young adults’ urges and actions of changing diet, focusing on caloric intake per kilogram and costs over health benefits. However, less is known about direct effect of SMCC and BD on urges and actions of eating behaviours, especially when moderated by SSS. In a reality construct, all three factors might interact with each other to influence eating behaviours. Thus, this study was designed to investigate and compare the main effects of SMCC and BD on changes in eating behaviours, with SSS as a moderator to both. Given the significant effect of SSS, I hypothesised that SSS would limit the direct effect of SMCC and BD on both urges and action of eating behaviours.

Individuals with orthorexia eating behaviour traits show a gastric disgust response to processed foods

Many individuals focus on healthy eating, without tipping over into obsessive behaviour around foods. This focus is sometimes called “orthorexia”, although it is qualitatively distinct from Orthorexia nervosa, a subclinical condition, characterised by an excessive avoidance of processed foods that are commonly perceived as ‘unhealthy’. Healthy orthorexia is another separate construct, characterised by healthy eating as a protective behaviour, associated with positive affect. Here, we measured individuals’ healthy and pathological orthorexia trait scores. We also recorded gastric activity using electrogastrography while participants viewed unprocessed, highly processed, and foods that are typically labelled “disgusting”. Higher healthy orthorexia scores were associated with an increased gastric disgust response to processed foods. Incidentally, we found relationships between healthy orthorexia and heart rate and heart rate variability, suggesting those who scored higher on this trait had better cardiac health. No such relationship was found for pathological orthorexia, but our sample scored low on this trait in general. In sum, we show that proto-nausea of the stomach (i.e., the decreased gastric amplitude indicative of disgust) in response to different food categories characterises individual differences in orthorexia.

Exploring the Impact of Nutrient-Based Dietary Tracking on Eating Disorder Symptoms and Fibre Intake

Eating disorders (ED) are a growing public health concern, with severe physical and psychological consequences. Changes in the food-industry, such as the increased availability of hyperpalatable foods low in nutrients, have contributed to health concerns. Despite the importance of diet for overall health, many individuals struggle to maintain a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and over 90% of UK adults fail to meet the recommended daily fibre intake of 30g/day. To address this, food-tracking apps have gained popularity for monitoring eating habits and supporting weight-loss. However, calorie-centered tracking has been criticised for exacerbating disordered eating behaviours. This study investigates whether nutrient-based dietary tracking, without calorie counting, increases fibre-intake without exacerbating eating disorder symptomatology. Participants (N=53) were assigned to either Nutrient-Based Tracking using the AI-supported Fuelled app or Recall-Based Tracking without feedback. Participants attended two buffet lunches, logged food intake over the seven-day study period and completed pre- and post-study surveys assessing ED symptoms and dietary intake. Findings partially supported our hypothesis. There was some evidence of increased fibre intake in the Fuelled group and no increase in ED symptoms in either group. Findings aim to inform future interventions promoting balanced dietary habits while safeguarding mental health.

Get Ready with Me: The effect of different types of TikTok GRWM videos on women's body satisfaction.

Body dissatisfaction is highly prevalent among young women and researchers have argued that social media sites, such as TikTok, contribute to the development of body image concerns. Get Ready with Me (GRWM) videos are a very popular trend on TikTok, yet their effect on body satisfaction has not been explored. This study aimed to investigate the effect of watching different types of TikTok GRWM videos on women's body satisfaction. It also examined whether state and direction of appearance comparison mediated the effect. Participants were 178 women aged 18 to 25 years, they were randomly assigned to watch eight TikTok videos containing either thin individual GRWM's, large individual GRWM's or animal videos. Body satisfaction was measured pre- and post-exposure and state appearance comparison and direction of appearance comparison were measured as mediators. Participants in the thin condition demonstrated a significant decrease in body satisfaction after watching the TikTok videos whereas those in the large condition showed a significant increase in body satisfaction. Direction of appearance comparison partially mediated the effect of video type on body satisfaction; state appearance comparison did not. This study highlights the impact of a very popular yet under researched TikTok trend, GRWM videos. The results of this study can be used to inform practical media literacy interventions and social media guidelines to mitigate the negative effects of social media on body satisfaction.

Moral conflict and deception: investigating early BP amplitudes and individual differences underlying spontaneous deception in a competitive social game

Amplitudes of the early Bereitschaftspotential have been theorised to be modulated by moral conflict when making deceptive decisions, as the decision to lie can depend upon our moral perceptions of what is right and wrong (Panasiti et al., 2014). However, evidence for the specific effect is limited and conflicting. Most EEG deception paradigms lack ecological validity by utilising instructed lying and failing to incorporate genuine social interaction (Ganis and Keenan, 2009) and therefore may fail to elicit genuine moral conflict. The present study combines EEG hyperscanning with a competitive two-player social game where participants can freely decide whether to deceive each other to gain points. The task includes conditions of social risk, where participants can check each other's responses, allowing for comparisons of moral conflict and deceptive behaviour between conditions. The BIDR is used to measure impression management (IM; Paulhus, 1988) to investigate effects on moral conflict and deceptive behaviour. Behaviourally, IM scores and the condition type are expected to predict participant's lie rate. At the neural level, IM scores and the condition type are expected to predict mean early BP amplitudes. As well as this, smaller mean early BP amplitudes are expected for lie trials, compared to truth trials.

8. Anya Knight, Zahra Nabeel, Katie Law, Charlotte Chang, Andy Wan, Zahra Bahreinwala, Wendy Hsiao, University of Exeter

Undermining Utilitarian Bias in VR Moral Dilemmas with a Driving Simulator

As autonomous vehicles (AVs) become more prevalent, they must be programmed to navigate unavoidable moral dilemmas. Research often employed the trolley problem, a moral thought experiment that chooses between active harm (utilitarian) and passive harm (deontological), to inform this programming. We have identified three key issues with the current literature: time allowed to make judgements is not controlled, passive moral judgments as opposed to active decision-making, thus avoiding moral responsibility; and unrealistic situations that do not reflect real life. We addressed these issues by embedding the trolley problem into a driving simulation. Emerging research utilizing VR has found a utilitarian bias, which we aim to undermine by priming (respective) moral principles. Additionally, we measured whether individual differences - such as impulsivity, religiosity, social desirability, politeness, and mood - influenced the decision made in the critical trial where utilitarian benefit is reduced. Although our preliminary findings were not significant, we resolve key issues of moral judgment research when applied to decision-making contexts. The limitations we have identified in our novel design provide further insights into refining this paradigm for future research.

Individual differences in sensory perception: Mental Imagery and Pain Processing

Pain perception consists of various sensory, emotional, and cognitive factors which can be manipulated, altering how we perceive painful stimuli. Using mental imagery as a cognitive tool, we investigated the possible modulatory effects on descending pain pathways. Students and community participants with no pain conditions/ use of pain medications participated in this study (N = 71), with a cuff algometry Conditioned Pain Modulation (CPM) protocol used to assess baseline pain measures. Participants then engaged in a memory-based mental imagery activity with one condition imagining that the pressure cuff was made of bubble wrap and the other imagining that it was made of wire. The CPM protocol was then repeated but with participants engaging in this either dull (n = 35) or sharp (n = 36) mental imagery. We found that the content of mental imagery did have a significant effect on Pain Detection Threshold (PDT) but did not on Pain Tolerance Threshold (PTT). The CPM effect was reduced in the Sharp Imagery relative to No Imagery block compared to Dull Imagery relative to No Imagery. More investigation is needed to assess and clarify the extent of this modulatory effect of mental imagery and the possible practical applications of these findings.

Investigating the role of Expectations in Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS)

Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) is a non-invasive neuromodulatory technique that applies a weak electrical current to the brain through scalp electrodes. While tDCS has gained popularity in recent decades for its potential in cognitive enhancement, findings remain inconsistent, perpetuating debates about its efficacy and reliability. These inconsistencies may be due to individual differences, sensitivity to tDCS parameters, or expectations before or during stimulation. The present study investigates the interaction between participants' expectations and tDCS effects on response inhibition. Using a double-blind, between-subjects design, participants were asked to complete a stop-signal task (SST) while undergoing active or sham tDCS for 10 minutes. Before stimulation, they were primed with one of three conditions (active, sham/fake, or nothing) regarding the stimulation type they would receive and the potential effect of tDCS on their performance. SST score and participants self-report of tDCS efficacy were measured. We hypothesise that participants who received active priming and active stimulation will show higher task performance, and that the priming conditions will influence perceived efficacy. By investigating whether belief in stimulation can enhance response inhibition and how this interacts with actual stimulation, we can optimise tDCS protocols and improve our understanding of expectation effects in neuromodulation techniques.

Investigating the Role of Frontoparietal Network Connectivity in Impulsivity and Compulsivity: A Resting-State EEG and Generative Computational Modelling Approach

Impairments in cognitive flexibility (compulsivity) and response inhibition (impulsivity) represent latent cognitive traits of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), which persist independent of symptom severity and remission status (1). These traits, implicated in frontoparietal network (FPN) dysfunction, may serve as transdiagnostic markers of psychopathology (2). However, the causal mechanisms underlying these deficits remain unclear. This study employs resting-state EEG (rs-EEG) and dynamic causal modelling (DCM) to investigate the effective connectivity of the FPN in relation to impulsivity and compulsivity within a population exhibiting sub-clinical obsessive-compulsive tendencies. EEG data will be source-localised using a Linearly Constrained Minimum Variance (LCMV) beamformer, with spectral analysis conducted in source space to examine functional connectivity. Amplitude-envelope correlation (AEC) will assess large-scale network dynamics, while generative modelling will explore the role of mesoscale mechanisms (e.g., GABAergic and NMDA receptors) in shaping cognitive inflexibility and impaired response inhibition. By elucidating the neural mechanisms of impulsivity and compulsivity, this study aims to identify potential neurobiological markers of OCD vulnerability. Findings may inform targeted interventions for this treatment-resistant population and contribute to a mechanistic understanding of FPN dysfunction in compulsivity-related disorders.

Keywords: OCD, frontoparietal network, impulsivity, compulsivity, EEG, computational modelling

The Role of Positive Attentional Biases in Anhedonia

Attentional biases have been linked to many mental health conditions in past research. However, researchers typically use unreliable dot probe measures when assessing attentional biases, have used a categorical rather than transdiagnostic approach, and have mainly looked at heightened attention to negative stimuli rather than lowered attention to positive stimuli. This study took a transdiagnostic approach, assessing positive attentional biases in relation to anhedonia, a symptom of many common mental health conditions. Positive attentional bias was measured using a modified dot probe task which is reported to have elevated reliability, as well as a previously validated self-report measure – the Attention to Positive and Negative Information Scale - in a sample of unselected participants (N=93). While the self-report measure of positive attentional bias correlated with anhedonia, the dot probe measure did not. Also, the dot probe task fell short of acceptable split half reliability for cognitive tasks, with a split half reliability score of .54. Explanations for this are discussed. Post-hoc analyses revealed that the measures of anhedonia, developed initially with different mental health conditions in mind, all correlated highly with one another. With replication, this supports the idea that anhedonia is a transdiagnostic construct of relevance across mental health conditions.

The Mediating Role of Coping Styles on Personality Traits and Academic Burnout

Academic burnout is a highly prevalent issue among university students, with almost 60% of students reported feeling burnt out by their studies. Previous research has reported that coping styles and personality traits are predictors of academic burnout. However, to date there has been no research that has investigated the interaction between these two variables on burnout. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to determine if coping styles mediates the relationship between personality traits and academic burnout. The study recruited a sample of 294 undergraduate psychology students (26 males and 254 females). All participants completed questionnaire measures for academic burnout, personality traits, and coping styles. Mediation analyses revealed that task-oriented coping and emotion-oriented coping mediated the relationship between personality traits and academic burnout. In particular, emotion-oriented coping completely mediated the emotional exhaustion–emotionality, and professional efficacy–emotionality relationships. Whilst task-oriented coping completely mediated the professional efficacy–emotionality relationship. Therefore, this study found that coping styles mediate the relationship between personality traits and academic burnout. Highlighting the importance of interventions that develop university students coping styles to minimise the risk of developing academic burnout.

Social Influences on Risky Driving: Passenger and Driver Effects on Speed and Risk-Taking

This study used a telematics smartphone app to explore how social factors (presence and type of passengers) influence driving behaviour in a diverse sample. Eleven male and 22 female drivers (n=33) aged 19–69 years participated in the study for approximately 10 days each, submitting their driving data and some basic information about the passengers on each trip. Our findings indicated that risky driving events (hard braking, harsh acceleration, harsh cornering, phone distraction, speeding) were significantly more common for older drivers, which was contrary to our hypotheses. An increase in the number of passengers was associated with faster speeds for male drivers but slower speeds for female drivers. Finally, an increase in the number of male passengers predicted an increase in the number of risky events for older drivers, whereas an increase in the number of female passengers predicted fewer risky events for average-aged and older drivers. There was no significant effect of passenger number on younger drivers. Our study reveals some of the complex and interacting social influences on an everyday form of risk-taking behaviour.

Significant New Findings on Financial Literacy Gender Gap & Social Media

Understanding financial literacy is vital in an increasingly digital economy. Traditional models of financial knowledge assessment often fail to capture the influence of modern financial content, particularly on social media. This study introduces a new 20-item scale assessing both traditional financial literacy (e.g., interest rates, mortgages, investments) and emerging financial literacy (e.g., digital finance, modern investment strategies, cryptocurrency). In Phase 1, we surveyed 452 university students and confirmed a substantial gender gap in financial literacy, with men scoring 16.8% higher in both traditional and modern financial knowledge. Using Item Response Theory (IRT) and Principal Component Analysis (PCA), we refined the scale to an 8-item measure with strong psychometric properties. In Phase 2, we explored whether social media consumption of financial content explains this gender gap. Our analysis reveals that differences in social media engagement significantly mediate gender disparities in financial literacy, with men exposed to and engaging with financial content at much higher rates than women. Our findings provide crucial insights into how digital financial socialisation shapes financial literacy development, offering a groundbreaking perspective on financial education in the digital age. This research has strong implications for financial education policy and intervention strategies for gender equality.

16. Jasmine Anderton, University of Exeter

The Role of Culture in Shaping Pro-Environmental Behavior and Attitudes: A Cross-Cultural Examination

Increasing environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion, pose threats to both human and ecological well-being. Understanding how individuals from different cultural backgrounds approach these issues is crucial for designing effective sustainability interventions. This study explores how cross-cultural differences, particularly the values of collectivism versus individualism, influence pro-environmental behaviours (PEB) and attitudes in the UK and Thailand. A comparative approach was used to examine the motivations and behaviours of 12 participants (6 from each country). Semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely, and thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns in the data.

Exploring the relationships between fans and celebrities on social media.

This study explores the correlation between the strength of parasocial relationships and feelings of entitlement among fans of social media celebrities. Parasocial relationships, first coined by Horton and Wohl (1956) characterised by when a person develops a one-sided emotional bond with someone they don't know, mainly celebrities. These relationships have gained prominence with the rise of influencers and digital personalities. This study investigates how the intensity of such relationships influences fans' sense of ownership or entitlement toward the celebrity's actions, content, and personal life. Drawing on theories of social media engagement, psychological ownership, and fan behaviour, the research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey to measure parasocial attachment and entitlement, measured on the 'Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire' (EAQ), along with the 'Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction Scale', and qualitative open-ended questions to explore personal experiences of fans. The hypothesis may suggest that stronger parasocial relationships are positively correlated with higher levels of perceived entitlement, where fans may feel more deserving of attention or involvement in the celebrity's personal sphere. This study contributes to understanding the psychological dynamics of contemporary fandoms and offers insights into the potential implications for both celebrities and social media platforms in managing fan interactions.

How the sunk cost effect can influence commitment to dates arranged online

Online dating has changed significantly since it first became known of in the 1990s. while it was once seen as taboo and shameful, it is widespread and for many young people is their primary form of dating. Despite this there are relatively few studies which look at factors which affect decision making in online dating. This study is a partial replication of research which looked at how the sunk cost effect can influence commitment to dates arranged through online dating apps. Participants completed a text based simulation which put them through the experience of finding a suitable dating app, downloading and then using the app to find dates. Participants were equally distributed across three conditions which represented a low, medium and high level of commitment. Once the participant has found a date they are offered an alternative date with someone else who is more suited to their ideal characteristics for a partner. The study being replicated found a significant effect of prior investment on commitment to the already arranged date, current early results have indicated the same effect was present. This research offers an insight into what factors affect decisions made by young people in the modern dating culture.

Monotropism and Perceptual Capacity: Investigating Two Theories of Autistic Attention

Autistic people describe their attentional experiences in ways that align with two leading theories: Monotropism and the Theory of Superior Perceptual Capacity. Monotropism suggests that autistic attention is deeply focused but narrow, with individuals intensely absorbed in a limited number of interests or tasks, sometimes at the expense of peripheral awareness. In contrast, the Theory of Superior Perceptual Capacity proposes that autistic people process more sensory and cognitive information, excelling in high-load tasks but also experiencing sensory overload. While both theories are widely supported within autistic communities, they offer seemingly opposing perspectives on autistic attention. This study explored whether monotropism and perceptual capacity are related, using 164 participants across four neurotypes: Autistic, ADHD, AuADHD, and PNT. Monotropism was measured using the Monotropism Questionnaire, and perceptual capacity was assessed using reaction time differences in a Flashing Wheel Task. Findings revealed no significant relationship between monotropism and perceptual capacity, suggesting these constructs operate independently. These results reinforce that autistic cognition cannot be explained by a single framework and that multiple coexisting models may be necessary to capture the autistic experience. This study underscores the importance of ethical autism research, advocating for participatory approaches that centre autistic voices.

The role of Deadlines in motivation and procrastination among individuals with ADHD

This study seeks to explore the relationship between the effect of deadlines pressure and effort between individuals with and without ADHD. Individuals with ADHD often encounter difficulty managing effort and motivation, this difficulty is exacerbated by the pressure of deadlines such as those found in academic work. The study consists of an experiment probing effects of goal pressure on motivation to exert effort, and a set of questionnaires to assess participants ADHD symptomology. A total of 75 participants were recruited between both an offline and an online task. Participants completed 30 blocks with each block containing eight trials. Each trial consisted of a choice between two options with different levels of effort which contribute to the block goal, and reward which was granted as points on completion of a successful block. Once selecting an option, participants performed an exertion task using a grip-strength dynamometer. After eight trials, if the participant had exerted sufficient effort to surpass the block goal, they would successfully complete the block and be awarded the points they earned from their choices.

Behavioural measure of autistic burnout

Autistic Burnout (AB) is a term coined by the autistic community to describe their collective experience of severe exhaustion. One factor contributing to the onset of AB is camouflaging, which refers to behaviours performed to mask one's autistic traits (e.g., forced eye contact). However, the role camouflaging plays in inducing AB has only been demonstrated using qualitative evidence (e.g., interviews) or self-report measures of camouflaging and fatigue. Therefore, this study developed and used a behavioural measure of AB to assess whether engaging in socialising was related to greater camouflaging and fatigue in an autistic sample. Thirty dyads of autistic and non-autistic adults were invited to engage in a 20-minute socialisation task. Scores from a cognitive attention task and fatigue levels were obtained from participants before and after the socialisation task. Items checking whether autistic participants engaged in camouflaging during the task were included. Comparison analyses will be conducted to test whether attention was decreased, and fatigue levels were increased after the socialisation task compared to prior, and whether these changes were greater in the autistic group compared to the non-autistic group. This study's findings might provide the first evidence of camouflaging being observably related to fatigue in AB.

The Effect of Nature Exposure and Sheltering Conditions on Attention

Attention Restoration Theory posits that exposure to nature restores depleted attention partly due to soft fascination with attention being engaged in a bottom-up fashion by natural environment features allowing top-down voluntary attention a chance to restore. Alternatively, Prospect-refuge theory adopts an evolutionary perspective to explain attention restoration focusing on shelter and survival. This study uses a between-subjects design to investigate the interaction effect between nature exposure and shelter conditions. There are two factors, type of environment (nature vs urban) and type of view (sheltered vs exposed). The dependent variable is the amount of attention restoration as measured by the Attention Network task. A 2x2 fully independent factorial ANOVA will be used to investigate main and interaction effects. It is hypothesised that there will be an interaction effect between type of environment and type of view on attention restoration. It is expected that attention restoration will be highest in the natural/sheltered condition and lowest in the urban/exposed condition.

Co-adapting a Mobile App-Based Problem-Solving Intervention for Teenagers with Autism and Learning Difficulties

Executive function (EF) deficits affect attention, planning, and problem-solving, influencing adolescents' learning, behaviour, and well-being. The Teen Online Problem-Solving (TOPS) program is an evidence-based intervention that supports adolescents with acquired brain injuries (ABI) and their families. Recent adaptations have extended its use to autistic adolescents and those with learning difficulties. However, its web-based format does not align with how young people engage with technology, limiting accessibility and real-world application. This study explores the development and acceptability of a mobile adaptation of TOPS to enhance engagement, usability, and the generalisation of problem-solving skills in everyday life. A co-design approach will be used to develop and refine a mobile version of TOPS. The study will recruit 6–8 autistic adolescents and/or adolescents with learning difficulties (aged 13–18 years) and their parent-carers. In the Beta phase, participants will be provided access to the app via Apple TestFlight. Individual online interviews will assess their initial reactions, usability concerns, and engagement levels. Two weeks after using the app, participants will complete a follow-up usability questionnaire, incorporating the eHealth Usability Benchmarking Instrument (HUBBI). Interviews will be transcribed and analysed using framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), identifying key themes related to user experience, accessibility, and engagement. The HUBBI usability data will be described. Findings will guide app refinement, ensuring an intuitive and effective tool that supports neurodivergent adolescents in developing problem-solving skills, promoting independence, and improving well-being.

“I can show my imagination”: Exploring Children’s Understanding of Writing Poetry for Wellbeing through Thematic Analysis

Mental health and wellbeing concerns are increasing in children. As a result, encouraging self-directed interventions, such as writing poetry, to support positive wellbeing is important. However, little research has explored children’s own understanding of how writing poetry can help them feel better. To address this, this study used 458 open comment survey responses from National Literacy Trust’s ‘Children and Young People’s Engagement with Poetry in 2024’ survey with the aim of exploring children’s understanding of writing poetry’s use as a wellbeing tool. An inductive reflexive thematic analysis, driven by a realist approach, identified four key themes. First, writing poetry supported wellbeing as it was an enjoyable hobby; second, it allowed for self-expression; and third, writing poetry was seen as an interactive and validating process, even when kept private. Finally, some children were unsure why writing poetry helped themselves or their peers feel better, conveying a lack of understanding or a lack of confidence in results. Implications are discussed, including encouraging writing poetry as a creative outlet and self-directed intervention when children find it difficult to share with others how they may be feeling. It is unclear whether these effects are restricted only to poetry or to wider creative mediums, which future research should explore.

The Effect of Acute Pain on Driving Performance

Previous research shows that pain has a significant influence on attention and attentional processing (Eccleston & Crombez, 1999; Jones & Walsh, 2021; Moore et al., 2012). Similarly, evidence shows that pain can disrupt driving performance (Vaezipour et al., 2021), although this has largely focused on the influence of chronic pain rather than acute pain, indicating the need for more research into acute pain. This dissertation examines the effect of acute pain on driving performance. Using repeated measures design, participants were asked to complete a driving task (approx. 30 minutes) twice, once normally and once in pain. Pain was induced using the Medoc TSA2Air, in a methodology combining the approaches of Moore et al (2012) and Takasaki et al (2013). Overall, we expect the results to show that when participants are experiencing acute pain their driving ability decreases, leading to more mistakes during the drive.

Reintegration Strategies in PTSD Treatment: An exploratory study on goal-based group therapy

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a debilitating condition that affects millions, impairing emotional well-being and daily functioning. While unimodular trauma-focused therapies are effective, phase-based treatment offers a structured recovery framework: stabilization, trauma processing, and reintegration. The reintegration phase aims to support transition into life after therapy and focuses on the development of life skills, meaningful engagement in society, and building interpersonal relationships. Despite clinician support for phase-based treatment, research on the reintegration phase remains limited, and no standardized clinical guidelines exist.

This study explores goal-based group therapy as a reintegration intervention for PTSD treatment. Conducted as part of an NHS service evaluation, 11 participants engaged in a 10-week virtual program incorporating psychoeducation, goal setting, and group discussions. Semi-structured post-intervention interviews were thematically analyzed to explore participants' experiences and perceived impact on recovery.

Findings will contribute to understanding how goal-based group therapy supports reintegration, identifying benefits, challenges, and areas for improvement. Insights from this study will inform the NHS trauma service's approach to reintegration and the potential for continued group therapy offerings. Future research in this area could contribute to the development of standardized clinical guidelines, ensuring more consistent and effective reintegration strategies across PTSD treatment services.

An investigation into the relationship between alexithymia, addiction, and cannabis use for sleep

Cannabis remains one of the most commonly used substances worldwide, with heavy use contributing to serious risks to both physical and psychological health. Alexithymia, a trait characterised by difficulties in identifying and describing emotions, as well as using cannabis for sleep are known risk factors for addiction. Emerging evidence suggests a potential link between these, as stress-related sleep difficulties may drive individuals with alexithymia to rely on cannabis' sedative effects for relief. Therefore, we aimed to investigate whether cannabis use for sleep mediates the relationship between alexithymia and addiction. If the sample size permits, we will explore gender differences, expecting the relationship to be stronger in men due to higher levels of alexithymia and their tendency to use avoidance-based coping. Participants completed online questionnaires, assessing level of alexithymia, cannabis consumption, craving, sleep expectancy and symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression.

28. Abigail Criddle, University of the West of England

Exploring the sunk cost effect in relationships: Why we stay despite the cost

This paper examined how the sunk cost effect influenced individuals to remain in unhealthy relationships. While extensive research on sunk costs had primarily focused on monetary aspects, the impact on relationships had been largely overlooked, particularly from a qualitative perspective. This research aimed to bridge that gap by utilizing previous literature that suggested how negative affect theory, indicating that emotions influenced decision-making, affected sunk costs.

The study analyzed four decision-making scenarios involving different types of sunk costs: short-term time, long-term time, effort, and money. Participants were asked to choose a decision and explain their choice in 150 words or more. Initial findings indicated that the sunk cost effect was more prevalent in the long-term time condition. This was further analyzed using qualitative methods to understand the complex decision-making processes underpinning the sunk cost effect.

29. Rachel Peal, University of the West of England

“A 7 Year Long Memory Test”: Students’ Perceptions of their Education Journey through the lens of Freirian Banking Theory, SAILL and Wider Contextual Influences.

Concern for student well-being is rising across primary, secondary, further and higher education. Such increases have been attributed to structural issues within education itself. This study explores undergraduate students’ experiences of their education journey, considering both longstanding Freirean critiques and more recent UK studies. Freire’s banking model of education describes teachers as the depositors of knowledge into passive students. Thompson et al. (2021a) conceptualised SAILL “Struggles Around Independent Learning and Living”; and also explored contextual factors which, over time, contribute to student distress upstream in education, summarised as: cuts, competition and comparison (Thompson et al., 2021b). A mixed methods survey was distributed to 210 undergraduates exploring these issues. Preliminary results indicate that students agree that their secondary education mirrored Freire’s banking model, while their university education does not. When transitioning to university, students seem to struggle with independent learning more than independent living. In terms of contextual influences, students agree that their pre-university education tended to focus on assessment performance, with a strong emphasis on Ofsted and staff putting pressure on students to do well. In contrast, at university, students feel less of an emphasis on league table performance, but note that more students are impacted by poverty and austerity.

Open water swimming as a route to LGBTQ+ wellbeing: A qualitative study

LGBTQ+ people suffer from mental health inequality: over the past 11 years this gap has widened. Researchers have called for interventions that support Queer wellbeing at an individual, community and structural level. Open water swimming is a unique engagement with the environment that has been found to promote community and individual wellbeing and reduce psychological distress. Despite numerous calls for diversity in environmental psychology, no research to date has attempted to understand open water swimming as a possible route to wellbeing for LGBTQ+ people. We conducted 8 semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ open water swimmers to gain insights into how they use swimming to negotiate their wellbeing. We intend to analyse the data using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Whilst our research is not yet complete, initial findings indicate that swimming in open water allows queer swimmers to negotiate a space for their wellbeing free from labels or judgement, and to claim a space for queer community connection. We hope that this study can help develop an inclusive environmental psychology and spark learnings for the field of LGBTQ+ wellbeing.

Assessing the Impact of Nature Video Viewing

Many studies have proven that natural exposure benefits individuals' well-being. Mental imagery of nature scenes can evoke positive emotions like calm and joy. The soundscapes can be a tool for triggering comfort and relaxation, especially imagining natural sounds. The research aims to examine the potential effects of natural imagery on emotional and cognitive processes and whether mental imagery can enhance the beneficial impacts of nature scene viewing. We recruited 105 participants who were in low mood and provided them with several questionnaires such as VVIQ and PANAS, and then guided them to imagine themselves in nature when viewing natural videos. We focus on analysing the emotion changes by natural imagery under three different video conditions, as well as the impact of participants' cognition and mental imagery abilities on their emotions. We find that natural imagery could enhance well-being, which gets similar results in three experimental conditions. Participants with higher mental imagery ability obtained higher results in mood enhancement. These findings strongly support that natural imagery can be used in the fields of mental health and meditation.

The Wellbeing of International student volunteers

In a time of global student mobility, international students face challenges related to wellbeing and cultural adaptation and volunteering could offer a powerful, yet overlooked opportunity to connect with others and enhance well-being. However, little attention has been given to the intersection of these identities. This qualitative study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the lived experience of international student volunteers, exploring the challenges international students face, their motivations for volunteering and crucially, how volunteering influences their wellbeing. 9 semi structured interviews were conducted with international students from the University of Exeter who identified they took part in volunteering. A reflexive thematic analysis identified 3 key themes: international students experiences, international students motivations for volunteering, and volunteer experiences. The international student experience captured emotional support, academic stress, adjustment challenges and language barriers. The motivations for volunteering identified career and skill development, societal impact and connections, whilst the international students' experiences of volunteering showed societies as social spaces, sense of fulfilment and belonging, quality of volunteer support and well-being influence. The findings contribute to both international student and volunteering literature, emphasising the need for a more integrated perspective on how cross-cultural engagement through volunteering influences well-being and personal development.

Specific Messaging Components in E-Cigarette Educational Videos on Eliciting “Spill-Over Effects”: An Online Randomised Control Trial on North Americans and Britons Who Smoke

Educational interventions to reduce e-cigarette misconceptions appear to potentially correct unaddressed beliefs in what is known as “spill-over effects”. However, the components influencing these effects are unclear. This paper aims to develop three original videos targeting addictiveness, uncertainty, and discomfort misconceptions respectively and assess their efficacy in influencing future intentions to vape, direct belief changes, and spill-over effects. A one-way, between-subjects design was used, where American and British smokers (N=250) were randomised to view one of the three developed videos or no video. Participants were then assessed on individual e-cigarette beliefs and future intentions to switch. Strong evidence for an effect of condition on uncertainty misconceptions was observed ($F(4.246)=3$, $p=0.006$, $\eta^2=0.049$) with follow-up tests revealing greater positive corrections for the uncertainty condition compared to the control ($p=0.006$). Additionally, moderate-to-weak evidence was found for the uncertainty video to elicit spill-over effects onto discomfort misconceptions ($p=.067$). In contrast, the addictiveness and discomfort videos showed limited direct belief corrections and spill-over effects. Furthermore, no video was found to increase participants' future intentions to use e-cigarettes. Overall, these findings suggest that addressing uncertainty may create the greatest direct and indirect belief corrections. Further implications on intervention development and future research are discussed.

Nature-based meditation and wellbeing, does context matter? A randomised experiment comparing virtual green space, blue space and urban environments.

Common mental health conditions are leading contributors to the global health-related burden. To counter this, there is increasing emphasis on prevention strategies, one of which is using nature-based interventions (NBIs). This study investigated the effects of virtual exposure to green and blue spaces on stress and rumination compared to an urban space. These outcome measures were selected because they are considered predictors of common mental health disorders. We hypothesised that virtual NBIs would significantly reduce stress and rumination compared to the urban condition, with no differences between green and blue spaces. Participants were randomly assigned to watch a video of walking through a woodland, on a beach, or in a London underground passage, all accompanied by an auditory guided meditation. Participants reported outcome measures before and after the intervention, and at a two-week follow-up to assess for sustained effects. A mixed model ANOVA revealed significant main effects of time, where stress and rumination were reduced in all 3 groups. The group \times time interactions were not significant, meaning that reductions did not differ in nature and urban conditions. One potential explanation is that the meditation alone had a robust effect regardless of the virtual context.

Investigating the differences in trauma types on PTSD treatment: Are some traumas easier to treat?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a debilitating condition following an individual's exposure to a "Criterion A" trauma, such as sexual violence or life-threatening events (APA, 2013). While trauma-focused therapies like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) are effective, limited research examines how trauma type influences treatment duration and outcomes. Variations in PTSD presentations, comorbidities, and treatment length across different trauma experiences may suggest that trauma type plays a role in recovery trajectories. This study investigates whether PTSD treatment duration and outcomes differ by trauma type and whether factors like comorbid mental health and treatment type mediate these effects. Secondary data analysis was conducted on 156 clients from a specialist traumatic stress service. Primary trauma types were categorised based on Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS-5) data at assessment, with PTSD (PCL-5) and depression (BDI-II) scores collected pre-and post-treatment. Trauma types were coded into six categories following research conducted by Kessler et al. (2017). Welch's analysis of variances (ANOVA) and one-way analysis of covariances (ANCOVA) were used to explore trauma-related differences in treatment outcomes and duration. Findings from this study would inform clinicians on how trauma type may influence PTSD treatment, contributing to more tailored therapeutic approaches.

Cognitive Reserve Across Age Groups: Effects on Vocabulary, Processing Speed, Perceptual Reasoning, and Executive Function

The UK's population aged 65+ is projected to increase from 19% to 27% by 2072. This demographic shift represents a critical public health challenge, as dementia has become the leading causes of death in the UK. With prevalence projected to increase by 166.2% by 2050, developing effective preventative intervention strategies is a priority. Despite research on cognitive reserve (CR) and cognitive aging, limited investigation exists on how this relationship develops across age groups. This study examines CR's predictive validity across age groups in 77 participants (47 female, 30 males) aged 18-75 (M=44.99). CR was operationalized via a questionnaire assessing CR proxies. Cognitive scores were measured through a neuropsychological battery consisting of WAIS-IV subtests, Trail Making Test A and B, with Montreal Cognitive Assessment as a screen for MCI. Data will be analyzed to establish the age-dependent relationship between CR and cognitive performance. Findings are expected to demonstrate increased CR predictive power with advancing age, suggesting CR functions primarily as a buffer against cognitive decline rather than an enhancer. This understanding could inform early interventions to establish protective mechanisms before decline begins and help identify individuals whose CR mask underlying cognitive deficits, improving screening efficiency and detection of age-related cognitive conditions.

Neural mechanisms underlying enhanced visual search performance in action video game players: Contralateral delay activity (CDA) amplitude as an index of cognitive load

Research has indicated visual attention can be trained and that playing action video games can enhance visual attention. Specifically, gamers tend to demonstrate faster response times during visual search, but the mechanisms responsible for enhanced performance are not fully established. Visual search is aided when there is less cognitive load on the visual working memory (VWM), and a reduced cognitive load may be responsible for the improved performance seen in gamers. We aimed to explore the neural mechanisms behind enhanced visual search performance in gamers to determine how cognitive load may differ between the groups. We covertly recruited gamers ($N = 21$) and non-gamers ($N = 19$) to complete a visual-search pop-out task while we recorded electroencephalography (EEG). In line with previous research, gamers demonstrated faster response times relative to non-gamers. As contralateral delay activity (CDA) is an index of cognitive load in VWM, we predicted that CDA amplitudes would be lower in gamers. Such a results would suggest that action video gaming can alter VWM and that cognitive load may play a vital role in enhancing performance on visual attention tasks.

The Impact of Expertise on Visual Search Accuracy: Subsequent Search Miss Errors in Radiologists and Non-Professionals in Multiple-Target Visual Search

Radiological searches often contain multiple targets (e.g. more than one tumour). The presence of additional targets leads to a high proportion of missed targets, a phenomenon known as the subsequent search miss (SSM) effect. SSM errors can be caused by a range of faulty scanning behaviours, specifically scanning, recognition and decision-making errors. These errors can be categorised according to eye movement behaviours, for example, whether an item is fixated and for how long. Most searchers commit a combination of different error types, but it is not known, how search expertise influences the types of errors committed. We measured eye movements while professional radiologists (N = 20) and non-professionals (undergraduates; N = 178) searched simplified arrays with multiple targets. We predicted that both populations would commit SSM errors, and we explored how the types of SSM errors committed by both populations differed. A higher proportion of scanning errors indicates a less thorough survey of the visual array, while a higher proportion of decision-making errors suggests that an incorrect decision was made after deliberation. By enhancing our understanding of the nature of SSM errors, we can improve training protocols for radiological searches and optimize decision-making accuracy.

Enhanced Visual Search Performance in Action Video Gamers: Attentional Allocation and the N2pc

Video game players demonstrate superior visual attention across a range of domains. Prior research has identified that gamers respond more quickly when performing a visual search. Visual search requires a cascade of cognitive processes, and it remains unclear which processes are improved within gamers. Existing eye-tracking studies provide some insights, but few have employed electroencephalography (EEG) to investigate the role of event-related potentials linked with processes such as attentional allocation. Experience with action video game playing may facilitate better and/or faster attentional allocation, leading to an ultimate speeding of response time. We compared gamers ($N = 21$) and non-gamers ($N = 19$) during a "popout" visual search task while recording EEG. As expected, gamers responded more quickly than non-gamers. To explore potential differences in attention allocation, we also examined the amplitude and latency of the N2pc component in gamers and nongamers and how such differences contributed to the enhanced response times. Our findings contribute to the understanding of how learning-induced neural adaptations enhance visual search performance, particularly in action video game players. These results extend theoretical frameworks on attentional allocation and plasticity by illustrating how repeated engagement in visually demanding tasks can refine cognitive processing.

The optimal searcher: Oculomotor behaviours associated with efficient multiple-target visual search

Multiple target visual search (MTS) is particularly prone to error following the detection of a first target, and previous research shows individual differences in oculomotor behaviour and search performance. Efficient search requires an optimal trade-off between fixation duration and saccade rate to collect high-fidelity information from multiple areas of search displays. However, research is limited on the specific parameters of the optimal trade-off, and it is unknown how oculomotor behaviour differs following initial target detection. We aimed to determine oculomotor behaviours associated with efficient search and to assess how they change after initial target detection. We recorded search accuracy, response time, and eye movements from a sample of non-professional searchers ($n = 174$), using a MTS task to explore the relationship between search efficiency and oculomotor behaviour in MTS, before and after initial target detection. We hypothesised that efficient searching would be associated with characteristic oculomotor behaviours: fewer, higher amplitude saccades and longer fixations. We also hypothesised that, following initial target detection, saccade rate would increase, and fixation duration and saccade amplitude would decrease. Insight into these mechanisms is fundamental in the development of interventions for improving search efficiency in life-saving professions such as radiology.

Exploring the impact of mental health: A qualitative study of emotional and psychological experiences during the menstrual cycle.

Menstruation has long been stigmatized, historically linked to impurity and inferiority, leading to systemic disadvantages for people who menstruate (Gottlieb, 2020; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2020). This stigma contributes to healthcare disparities, limited research, and misdiagnoses of menstrual-related conditions (Critchley et al., 2020; Vipul, 2024). Disorders such as Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) remain misunderstood, further reinforcing societal biases (Reilly et al., 2024; Eccles & Sharma, 2023). Additionally, menstrual stigma influences self-management behaviors, with individuals often relying on home remedies instead of seeking medical care, normalizing menstrual pain and discomfort (Armour, Hyman, & Al-Dabbas, 2020; Getahun et al., 2023).

This study examines the impact of menstruation on mental health and well-being, focusing on societal attitudes and healthcare experiences. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews will explore the emotional, psychological, and social effects of menstruation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Thematic analysis will identify recurring patterns within participants' narratives.

By amplifying lived experiences, this research aims to challenge menstrual stigma, improve menstrual education, and promote inclusive healthcare (Kamat & Tharakan, 2021; UNFPA, 2022). Findings may inform policy and healthcare practices to better address menstrual-related issues (Hartlage, Breaux, & Yonkers, 2013; Schmalenberger et al., 2021).

Dysfunctional Posttraumatic Cognitions Explaining Gender Differences in Child and Adolescent PTSD: a Mediation and Meta-analysis

Previous studies have found females to experience higher levels of posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) than males, with dysfunctional posttraumatic cognitions (dPTCs) possibly mediating this relationship. However, the mediatory role of dPTCs has been primarily examined in adults, remaining less explored in child and adolescent Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) studies. To address this gap, the present study aimed to investigate the possible mediatory role of dPTCs in gender differences in PTSD among children and adolescents. A secondary analysis of the Child Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory International Dataset was conducted, pooling data from sixteen studies. Totally, data was collected from 2304 participants aged between six and eighteen years-old. Multiple linear regressions and mediation analyses were initially conducted on individual studies to account for study-level variability. Mediation results were then meta-analysed. Results of the meta-analysis revealed that when controlling for age and category of index traumatic event experienced, there were no gender differences in PTSS. However, dPTCs appeared to mediate the effect that gender had on PTSS levels. Thus, the present study suggests that while gender may not directly lead to different levels of PTSS among children and adolescent, cognitive mechanisms underlying PTSD do appear to function differently among boys and girls.

The role of severity of menstrual symptoms on mood and willingness to socialise

Endometriosis, a chronic menstrual disorder, affects 10% of women. Despite the prevalence of dysfunctional menstrual disorders, their impact on quality of life remains underexplored. This study examines the role of menstrual symptom-severity on participants' mood and willingness to socialise. Symptom-severity is used as a proxy for menstrual conditions to maintain statistical power. It is predicted that during menstruation and in the presence of severe pain and/or heavy bleeding, mood and willingness to socialise will decline, and participants will report greater mood-fluctuation compared to non-menstruation.

This study employs a quantitative longitudinal design, collecting data through a daily EMA questionnaire over two months. Data was gathered from 87 participants aged 18–49, with 49% under 25 years old. The questionnaires incorporated elements of the Multidimensional Mood Assessment (Van Rijbergen, 2014) to measure mood. A baseline questionnaire collected demographic and menstrual-health information. 20% of participants reported at least one diagnosed menstrual disorder, over one-third experienced severe menstrual pain, and 29% reported heavy bleeding, highlighting the prevalence of menstrual-health concerns within the sample. The findings will underscore the need for further research on the impact of menstrual health on mental well-being, paving the way for improved support systems for those affected by menstrual disorders.

Does the Menstrual cycle phase affect perceived emotional relationship closeness and is this moderated by relationship type and length?

Menstruation affects millions worldwide, yet its impact on social and emotional relationships remains underexplored. Existing research often frames menstrual cycle effects within an evolutionary and reproductive context, overlooking psychosocial influences. This study investigates whether menstrual cycle phase affects perceived emotional relationship closeness and examines the moderating roles of relationship type and duration.

Prior literature suggests closeness fluctuates across the cycle, with increased connection during the follicular phase and decreased closeness in the luteal phase. However, these findings are frequently interpreted through a reproductive lens, reinforcing biases. To address this, the present study employs Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA), collecting daily data over two months on menstrual phase and perceived closeness in both romantic and platonic relationships.

Longitudinal analyses will assess the impact of cycle phase on relationship closeness and explore whether these effects vary based on relationship type and length. It is hypothesised that closeness will be lower during the premenstrual and menstrual phases, with stronger effects in romantic and long-term relationships. Findings could provide insight into the broader social implications of menstrual health, challenging existing narratives and informing more inclusive perspectives on emotional well-being.

Posters

Cognitive psychology

| Quick guide | Presenter(s) | University | Title | Poster number# |
|--|---|---|--|----------------|
| Accessibility: Reading formats to comprehension | Ellen Webber | Plymouth Marjon University | Investigating the Impact of Content Presentation Format on Adult Reading Comprehension: A Comparative Analysis of Print Vs Onscreen Text using a Mixed Design ANOVA | 1 |
| Brain Scans memory research | Callum Godwin | University of Plymouth | Ignoring vs Updating working memory inside of a 3D spatial environment, investigated with FNIRS. | 2 |
| Depression outcomes | Molly Osmondlo | University of Exeter | The Cost of Caution: Exploring the Impact of Depression on Risk Aversion in Response to Runs of Good and Bad Luck | 3 |
| Brain Stimulation on creativity | Grace Goddard | University of Plymouth | Igniting Creativity Through Neuroenhancement | 4 |
| Perceptions of attractiveness and sex differences in makeup | Tegan Crossman | University of Plymouth | Facial Perception and Eyeliner: An Exploratory Study of Attractiveness and Sex Differences | 5 |
| | Cerys Parkinson- Johns and Rose Wilmshurst | University of Plymouth | Detecting concealed autobiographical information using feedback and recognition P300 ERPs. Exploring impacts of changed feedback proportions and social pressure in the fCIT. | 6 |
| Dopamine to decision making via memory biases | Lily Dalley-Clark, Ella Mansfield, Tallulah Sumsion | University of Bristol | Dopamine 2: Investigating Dopamine's Role in Ownership- Driven Memory Biases | 7 |
| | Hannah Fowles | University of Bristol | Does Analytic Flexibility Moderate the Effect of Non-Deceptive Placebos on a Neural Measure of Emotional Distress? A Multiverse Analysis | 8 |
| Brain stimulation on expectations | Finn Richardson | University of the West of England | Exploring the Influence of Expectation in Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation | 9 |
| | Megan Wakefield | University of | Does The Inclusion of Brain | 10 |

| | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|----|
| | | the West of England | Imagery, Other Visual Aids or The Inclusion of AI In Neuroscience Research Affect Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Research Credibility? | |
| | Amelia Pearce | University of Plymouth | Handedness and Interhemispheric Transfer Speed | 11 |
| | Luca Courtney | University of Bristol | Dazzle Patterns, Dynamic Backgrounds, and the Confusion Effect in Target Tracking. | 12 |
| Brain stimulation to visual perceptual learning | bailey ajayi | University of the West of England | Exploring how tDCS to the posterior parietal cortex influences perceptual learning | 13 |
| | Trinity Love | University of Plymouth | Cognitive and Emotional Processing in traumatic brain injury (TBI): Binding in emotional working memory following TBI | 14 |
| | Jasmin Woodhouse | University of Plymouth | Assessing Cognitive Performance and Comfort Under Simulated MRI Noise and its Association with Autistic like Traits | 15 |
| | Amelia Moore | Plymouth Marjon University | Ride it Perfect or Quit: An Investigation into Perfectionism and Self-Efficacy among Equestrian Riders | 16 |
| | Ryan Jones | University of Plymouth | fNIRS frontal cortex supports cognitive flexibility and its relation to attention-related deficits | 17 |
| Decision making | Lucy Walker | University of Plymouth | Examining the influence of placement force on decision making: a study on handedness and eye movement. | 18 |
| Visual search | Charlotte Waxman | University of Bristol | How Varying Visual Search Difficulty affects Performance in a Counting Span Working Memory task: Relations to Autistic Traits | 19 |
| Cognitive bridging to IO / Social psychology | Aye Mya San | University of the West of England | The Role of Critical Thinking and Its Impact on Mitigating Cognitive Biases in Hiring Decisions | 20 |
| | Onawale | University of | Examining the associations | 21 |

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|--|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| | Oluwaseyitokun | the West of England | between emotion regulation, inhibitory processes and levels of social anxiety | |
|--|----------------|---------------------|---|--|

Children Development and Educational Psychology

| Quick guide | Presenter(s) | University | Title | # |
|--|--------------------|----------------------------|---|----|
| ND | Francesca Sarkar | Plymouth Marjon University | Perceptions of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum among Key Stage 2 (KS2) Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the United Kingdom: A Study of Experiences between 2014-2017 | 22 |
| ND- developmental language disorder | Amy Bennett | University of Bath | Validation of a Screening Tool for Adults with Non Diagnosed Developmental Language Disorder. | 23 |
| Parent-child relationships on depression | Louise Mason | University of Exeter | Are the quality of young adults' relationships with their parents associated with their depressive symptoms? | 24 |
| Educator's perceptions of play-based learning in Children (qual) | Hamida Ahmed | University of Bristol | Exploration of Primary School educators' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of play-based learning within their classrooms | 25 |
| | Charlotte Williams | University of Plymouth | How does media experience in childhood affect ideological belief in adulthood? - an exploration into media type's mediation on religiopolitical belief | 26 |

Clinical Psychology

| Quick Guide | Presenter(s) | University | Title | # |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|----|
| | Joshua Deacon | University of Plymouth | The multifaceted impact of brain injury | 27 |
| NHS issues from parents' perspective | Talis Spirit | University of Plymouth | Graves' Disease: an Exploration into Patients' Experiences with the NHS | 28 |
| Parental impact on wellbeing | Savanah Navazesh-Verze | University of Bristol | The bonds that break us: an exploration into the potential impacts of parental separation on university students' experiences of academic life and emotional wellbeing in early adolescence and young adulthood. | 29 |
| Well-being to outcomes after child | Lucy Reza | University of Bath | Examining Career Aspirations among Final-Year Students: The Impact of Anxiety, | 30 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------|--|----|
| ADHD parental inf | | | Depression, Social Support, and Parental Occupations | |
| | Eleanor Roberts | University of Bath | To what extent does neuroticism and extraversion predict depression after adjusting for self-esteem? | 31 |
| Eating predictive and protective factors | Molly Dunn, Imogen Tattersall, Lara Miller, Victoria Vidaurre | University of Exeter | Risk and Protective Factors of Eating Pathology Symptoms in Young Adult Athletes | 32 |
| | Katherine Parking | University of Plymouth | Dementia Friendly Communities in Rural Settings in England | 33 |

Social Psychology

| Quick Guide | Presenter(s) | University | Title | # |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|---|----|
| Intergroup relationships - perhaps link to clinical | Kylie Chan | University of Bath | Bridging the Generational Divide: The Role of Shared Values and Behaviours in Encouraging Positive Intergroup Attitudes | 34 |
| Educational /IO Psychology | Chelsea Keight | University of Bristol | Understanding Teacher Burnout: The Role of Traditional Classroom Structures in Education | 35 |
| | Georgia Grogan | University of Bristol | Empowering the electorate: evaluating a targeted intervention to mobilise young voters. | 36 |
| | Natalie Plummer | Plymouth Marjon University | Exploring Perspectives of Female Safety, From the View of Physically Active Women. | 37 |
| Females' safety concerns | Rachel Scott | University of Bath | Unpacking Toxic Masculinity: Perceptions Within the #NotAllMen Discourse | 38 |
| Community and Environmental Psychology | Katherine Parking | University of Plymouth | Dementia Friendly Communities in Rural Settings in England | 39 |
| Cultural influences on wellbeing (between | Kaya Kemp | Bath Spa University | Cultural Influences on the Relationship Between Materialism and Well-Being: A | 40 |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|-------------------|--|
| clinical and social) | | | Qualitative Study | |
|----------------------|--|--|-------------------|--|

Animal Psychology

| Presenter(s) | University | Title | # |
|--------------|----------------------|---|----|
| Nigella Marx | University of Exeter | Discounting Behaviour in the Wild: Measuring Discounting Behaviour in Wild Squirrels and the Factors that Influence it. | 41 |

Legal Psychology

| Presenter(s) | University | Title | # |
|--------------|-----------------------|---|----|
| Qinxuan Li | University of Bristol | Analysing the influence of humanism on sentencing for murder and assault: A multiverse analysis | 42 |

Research Methods

| Presenter(s) | University | Title | # |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|----|
| Shivanya Ashley Anand | University of Bristol | Is the desirability bias in personality-relevant syllogistic reasoning robust? A multiverse analysis | 43 |

1. Ellen Webber, Plymouth Marjon University

**Investigating the Impact of Content Presentation Format on Adult Reading Comprehension:
A Comparative Analysis of Print Vs Onscreen Text using a Mixed Design ANOVA**

Selecting the appropriate reading format is crucial for students to read effectively and efficiently. This experimental study, using a repeated measures design, investigates the impact of reading format (printed vs onscreen texts) on reading comprehension. A secondary focus is whether individuals in higher education, who may have greater exposure to onscreen texts, perform better in the onscreen condition. Participants completed both conditions, reading two fictional stories in a counterbalanced order to control for order effects. Reading comprehension was assessed through ten questions per story, with each individual response scored out of two to allow for partial comprehension, resulting in a total score out of twenty per condition. As data collection is ongoing, no definitive results can be reported. However, preliminary observations suggest that the findings may support the hypotheses. Initial trends also indicate that participants in higher education demonstrate higher overall comprehension. Once data collection is complete a mixed-design ANOVA will be conducted. This research may provide insights into the influence of reading format medium and educational background on reading comprehension, with implications for optimising reading strategies and evaluating the effectiveness of digital reading in higher education.

2. Callum Godwin, University of Plymouth

Ignoring vs Updating working memory inside of a 3D spatial environment, investigated with FNIRS.

Ignoring distracting information and updating previous information are necessary components in working memory (Fallon et al., 2014). fMRI research has shown that ignoring and updating working memory can modulate Blood Oxygen Level Dependent (BOLD) signal in the dorsomedial prefrontal cortex; behaviourally, ignoring irrelevant information results in a decrease in accuracy in comparison to updating current information (Fallon et al., 2018). However, Ignoring and updating research has primarily assessed memory for two dimensional (2D) environments. It remains to be established whether a similar cost for ignoring compared to updating would be found in a rich 3D spatial environment. Here we have recreated Fallon et al, (2014) delayed reproduction task as a 3D spatial environment. We have also utilised Functional Near Infra-Red Spectroscopy (FNIRS) to record changes in Oxygenated and Deoxygenated haemoglobin during ignoring and updating trials. The implications of our findings would suggest an alternative method of testing for cognitive changes in ignoring and updating information.

3. Molly Osmondlo. University of Exeter

The Cost of Caution: Exploring the Impact of Depression on Risk Aversion in Response to Runs of Good and Bad Luck

Depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide, influencing decision-making through cognitive biases such as rumination and pessimism. This study examines how depressive symptoms impact risk-taking behavior in dynamic financial contexts. Using an online investment paradigm, participants engage in decision-making under bull and bear market conditions, alternating between social (start-up) and non-social (blue-chip) investments. Depression severity, measured via the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II), is analyzed as a predictor of risk aversion. We hypothesize that higher depression scores will correlate with lower investment amounts, longer decision times, and a preference for non-social investments, offering insights for targeted interventions.

Igniting Creativity Through Neuroenhancement

Creativity plays an important role in most things we do, such as writing policy documents, contracts, marketing strategies, and medical research. Finding ways of improving creativity has important implications for wide aspects of our lives. We developed a novel way of enhancing creativity by combining magic illusionism with neuroenhancement. In this experiment, we investigate the role neuroenhancement plays in stimulating creativity within these thinking patterns.

Previous research has used medical or odour-based placebos to enhance creativity. We used a magic trick to create the illusion that a novel neurostimulation device could effectively manipulate thinking processes and enhance people's creativity. Participants (n=50) completed a divergent (Alternative Uses Task (AUT)) and convergent (Remote Association Test (RAT)) creativity task whilst either being informed that the illusory device was simply measuring neural activation (baseline) or when they were told that it is enhancing creative thought processes (sham stimulation). Further, subjective data concerning participants subjective creativity and believability was collected using open and closed questions.

Participants reported significantly more physiological sensations during the sham stimulation than the baseline condition, and they also reported being more creative. Participants also scored significantly higher on the AUT task for fluency, but not originality. We found a modest but non-significant improvement in terms of RAT performance.

Facial Perception and Eyeliner: An Exploratory Study of Attractiveness and Sex Differences

Many previous studies have identified that make-up has positive effects on not only perceived attractiveness, but also upon the self-esteem of those who wear it. While makeup as a broader group of cosmetic products has been extensively researched, eyeliner has been overlooked. This study aims to explore the sex differences of the perception of eyeliner by photoshopping 3 different eyeliner lengths (Lengths 0, 1, and 2) and 2 colours (black and blue) onto the faces of 10 men and women. Data was collected from 124 UK-based participants (M age = 36.5, SD = 13) and key findings were that in general, women were rated as more attractive than men, black eyeliner was rated as more attractive than blue, and although there didn't seem to be any major differences between lengths 0 and 1, length 2 was the least attractive eyeliner length. So far, this suggests that bigger isn't necessarily better, and perhaps guyliner shouldn't make a comeback; although, this study only just scratches the surface it begins to fill the research gap on eyeliner that closely resembles an empty void.

Detecting concealed autobiographical information using feedback and recognition P300 ERPs. Exploring impacts of changed feedback proportions and social pressure in the fCIT.

The feedback concealed information test (fCIT) incorporates feedback on memory concealment performance within the classical CIT. Providing feedback facilitates the analysis of feedback related ERPs in addition to initial recognition related ERPs within each trial. Combining multiple ERPs aims to improve the reliability and efficiency of the test. The present study investigated the efficiency of combining recognition and feedback related P300 ERPs in detecting concealed birthdates in a personal item fCIT. Feedback proportions were altered to improve believability in feedback. Detection efficiencies using combined P300 amplitudes within this altered paradigm and the impacts of social pressures on feedback P300s were explored. Results indicated that with altered feedback proportions, both P300s could be used to categorise innocent and guilty participants with AUCs = 0.79-0.91. Across both measures, trials in which information had been concealed evoked the largest P300 potentials. Social pressure introduced via witness observation during the test impacted feedback P300 amplitudes differently for different stimulus types and warrant further investigation into social motivational factors in the fCIT. The study has theoretical implications, with feedback P300s being manipulated by increased social pressure during the test, independently of recognition P300s, providing support for theories that they may reflect separate mechanisms.

Dopamine 2: Investigating Dopamine's Role in Ownership-Driven Memory Biases

It has been well established that information encoded in relation to the self is better remembered than information encoded in relation to others, a phenomenon known as the self-reference effect (Symons & Johnson, 1997). This effect extends beyond trait adjectives to material possessions, even when ownership is transiently assigned (Cunningham et al., 2008). While neural correlates of ownership effects in memory have been identified (Turk et al., 2011), precise mechanisms underlying these biases remain unclear. Evidence suggests a link between self-processing and reward-related neural circuitry implicate dopamine as a key factor (Krigolson et al., 2013).

The current study investigates dopamine's role on self-memory biases in two ways:

1. Exploring the relationship between item value (purchase price) and ownership effects in memory
2. Assessing the extent to which baseline dopamine predicts memory advantage for self-owned items.

We pioneer use of Schirmer's test (Sharma et al., 2019) to extract baseline dopamine from tear fluid and employ a 2×2 factorial design (self-owned vs. other-owned; high vs. low value) to assess memory performance. By examining relationships between dopamine, ownership, and reward value, this research provides novel insights into the neurochemical basis of self-processing biases, with implications for understanding how value-driven attention and reward sensitivity shape memory.

Does Analytic Flexibility Moderate the Effect of Non-Deceptive Placebos on a Neural Measure of Emotional Distress? A Multiverse Analysis

The credibility of research practices and findings in the field of psychology has come under significant scrutiny, partially the result of a growing awareness of analytic flexibility, the idea that researchers face a plethora of possible justified choices during the research process, which are often arbitrary. Multiverse analysis aims to address this problem through conducting all reasonable possible analyses and processing choices on a given dataset to demonstrate the ‘robustness’ of the observed effect against analytic flexibility. This project employed multiverse analysis to assess how novel findings observed by Guevarra et al., (2020), that a non-deceptive placebo treatment reduced a neural marker of emotional distress, was influenced by a variety of alternative decision points, including employing a Bayesian approach, varying sample size and selection method, sub-sampling age, varying the hemisphere selection and multiple comparison corrections. Alternative sample selection methods and multiple comparison corrections were key moderators of the effect, as effects were weakest and typically non-significant under these decisions. Although multiverse represents an effective way of increasing transparency, several challenges, such as a lack of openly available and useable data in addition to poor guidance on interpretation, must be addressed to facilitate the wider adoption of this approach.

Exploring the Influence of Expectation in Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation

Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) has been proposed to enhance performance across various cognitive domains, including response inhibition. However, the tDCS literature remains inconsistent. One underexplored factor, which might account for inconsistency in the literature, is whether participants expect tDCS to improve or inhibit their performance on a given cognitive task. This study investigates the interaction between expectation and tDCS on response inhibition using a stop-signal task. In a double-blind design, 54 participants received either active or sham stimulation, paired with one of three priming conditions (active, sham, or no feedback) to prime their beliefs about the effect of stimulation on their performance. Task performance was measured using stop-signal reaction time (SSRT), while participant beliefs about tDCS efficacy and their subjective experiences of stimulation were measured through self-report questionnaires. It is expected that participants in both the active stimulation and active priming feedback conditions will show the highest task performance, with a combined effect of stimulation and expectation. Additionally, those in the active priming condition are expected to report higher-intensity sensations, which may moderate task performance. These findings will clarify the role of expectation in tDCS research, contributing to a better understanding of parameters that influence stimulation outcomes.

10. Megan Wakefield, University of the West of England

Does The Inclusion of Brain Imagery, Other Visual Aids or The Inclusion of AI In Neuroscience Research Affect Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Research Credibility?

As the integration of AI in neuroscience information grows, understanding how individuals form credibility judgements of scientific information is essential. This study investigated how perceptions of credibility in a neuroscience article are influenced by specific representations of information. The research examined three edited versions of a BBC article (including either an MRI image, a graph, or the mention of AI). The primary hypothesis was that neuroscience research incorporating MRI image or graphs would be perceived as more credible than research presented with AI-related descriptions, and further that an MRI image would be rated as more credible than a graph. The study asked 148 undergraduate psychology students questions based on five categories (trustworthiness, scientific credibility, objectivity, persuasiveness and overall credibility), alongside general questions regarding judgment predictors. It was found that the inclusion of an MRI image or a graph significantly increased participants' perceptions of the scientific credibility and validity within the article compared to the article including AI. It was also found that students reported text as the main influence in their judgements over other predictors such as the author. The results from this study can help future researchers communicate scientific information effectively and understand how visual aids and AI influence credibility judgements.

Handedness and Interhemispheric Transfer Speed

Non-right-handed people show a lesser degree of brain and behavioural lateralisation, possibly due to the absence of a genetic mechanism establishing cerebral asymmetry. Annett's (1998) Right Shift Theory proposes that non-right-handed individuals consequently display a greater degree of bilaterality of function and communication between the hemispheres when compared to right-handed individuals. This pattern predicts shorter interhemispheric transfer speed in non-right-handed individuals, although the method for determining handedness, by preference or by performance, may influence this relationship. This study measured Interhemispheric transfer time (IHTT) using the Poffenberger Paradigm (Marzi, 1999), in which manual reaction times to unilateral visual stimuli are compared across conditions in order to infer interhemispheric interaction, and handedness using both performance-based and preference-based measures. Following from Annett's Right Shift Theory, it was predicted that handedness would be associated with measures of interhemispheric transfer speed such that faster transfer would be seen in individuals who show a lesser degree of right-handedness. Furthermore, it was predicted that this association would be stronger for the performance-based measure of handedness, which probes motor-action asymmetry, than for the preference-based measure which probes handedness in a more general sense.

Dazzle Patterns, Dynamic Backgrounds, and the Confusion Effect in Target Tracking.

Dazzle' refers to an adaptive colouration, typically high-contrast repeating stripes, proposed to impede estimations of speed and direction. Experimental evidence suggests that dazzle colouration benefits prey objects in groups, interacting with the 'confusion effect': reduced predation success when a target is surrounded by conspecifics. The potential influence of backgrounds has received little attention, though previous evidence suggests dynamic noise may impair detection by masking prey movement. The present study presented human participants with a computerized task, requiring tracking of a single object among distractors for a set moving period. We hypothesised, consistent with the signal-to-noise framework, that dazzle colouration combined with dynamic backgrounds would increasingly impair tracking, compared to trials with background-matching prey and static backgrounds, as group sizes increased. We replicated the confusion effect but found no significant interaction of experimental condition and group size. Exploratory analyses revealed that tracking was significantly worse for dazzle prey with dynamic backgrounds at small group sizes only suggesting that the fitness benefits of noise-enhancing features are selective and context-dependent. Furthermore, aggregation appears to be the dominant factor impacting predation success, such that large group sizes provide the greatest fitness benefit to prey irrespective of noise-enhancing colourations or backgrounds.

Exploring how tDCS to the posterior parietal cortex influences perceptual learning

Stimulus experience generates better discrimination performance, a phenomenon termed perceptual learning. Past research has demonstrated that schedules of stimulus exposure modulate perceptual learning performance and subsequent discrimination accuracy significantly. Functional imaging studies have linked several cortical regions to perceptual learning functions; however, the causal effect of cortical activation and improvements in perceptual discrimination is not established. Clarifying this interaction is crucial to the comprehension of perceptual learning neural mechanisms and the planning of targeted interventions in cognitive rehabilitation and skill learning. This study bridges this gap by examining the effect of transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) applied directly to the posterior parietal cortex (PPC) on visual perceptual learning. With a double-blind, within-subjects design, discrimination performance was assessed for blocked and intermixed stimulus schedules under active (anodal) and sham stimulation conditions in a randomised, counterbalanced order. Participants were predominantly healthy adults recruited from a university student population. Performance measures were accuracy and reaction times over a same/different discrimination task, with additional subjective rating of stimulation-induced discomfort and subjective cognitive influence. Anodal tDCS applied to the PPC was predicted to enhance perceptual learning performance, particularly in trials involving more attentional resources required, i.e., intermixed stimulus schedules.

**Cognitive and Emotional Processing in traumatic brain injury (TBI):
Binding in emotional working memory following TBI**

Emotional recognition impairments are a common outcome of Traumatic brain injury (TBI). Despite record of the high prevalence and debilitating effects of TBI, insight into the deficit and functional ability, especially outside of clinical settings, is potentially obscured and often poorly understood. A growing evidence base indicates impairment in recognition of negative valences following TBI, termed the 'valence effect'. Such research can neglect to consider contextual information, limiting applicability to real life settings. Emotion perception and recognition is strongly dependent on context, notably spatial locations, hence the present study uses a novel 'What is where?' paradigm to assess the identification of emotions (happy, neutral and sad) situated in specific spatial contexts. Findings showed significant effects in increased localisation and misbinding errors (occurring when a cued emotion is swapped with another valence) in neutral and sad, but not happy faces in TBI participants (N=3) relative to the healthy student population (N=29). These novel insights enhance our understanding of emotional working memory following TBI, demonstrating an impairment in binding and localising facial identity for sad and neutral faces potentially underlining deficits in social cognition after TBI.

fCIT under social pressure

Deception detection remains a challenge in forensic and social contexts, with traditional methods often prone to inaccuracies and countermeasures. This study investigates the use of the Feedback Concealed Information Test (fCIT) combined with electroencephalography (EEG) to measure neural responses to concealed information under conditions of social pressure. Specifically, it examines how the presence of a witness influences P300 amplitude and response times, two key indicators of recognition and cognitive processing during deception. Sixty-five university students participated, completing both guilty and innocent conditions while EEG data and behavioral responses were recorded. Participants also completed the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) and Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) questionnaires to assess individual differences in personality traits. The fCIT incorporated real-time feedback after each trial to increase ecological validity. The probe stimulus was each participant's date of birth, while irrelevant stimuli were randomly generated dates. The study hypothesized that social pressure, as induced by the witness condition, would enhance P300 amplitudes and prolong response times, particularly in guilty trials. It also explored the moderating role of self-deception and behavioral inhibition traits. Findings aim to deepen understanding of how social evaluation influences neural recognition processes, offering insights for improving the reliability of EEG-based deception detection.

Assessing Cognitive Performance and Comfort Under Simulated MRI Noise and its Association with Autistic like Traits

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners produce noise levels between 65 to 130 decibels. Noise exposure has been shown to impair task performance, increase errors, and affect brain activity in regions such as the anterior cingulate cortex and Wernicke's area (Mazard et al., 2002). Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is associated with decreased sound tolerance, including hyperacusis, misophonia, and phonophobia (Williams et al., 2021). In ASD, noisy environments disrupt inferior frontal gyrus function, impairing task response and brain connectivity (Mamashli et al., 2016). Therefore, this study assesses cognitive performance and comfort under simulated MRI noise and its association with autistic-like-traits. Participants completed the AQ questionnaire before performing a computerized 3-back task under three noise conditions of MRI noise. Accuracy, hit rates, false alarm rates and comfort ratings were collected after each condition. A univariate ANOVA analysed task performance differences across noise levels, which were correlated with AQ scores. Results suggest individuals with more autistic traits may be less negatively affected by auditory distractions than expected. While the study did not confirm initial hypotheses, it highlights differences in those with high ASD like traits. These findings suggest cognitive adaptation mechanisms may influence noise tolerance, highlighting the need for individualised accommodations in MRI settings.

Ride it Perfect or Quit: An Investigation into Perfectionism and Self-Efficacy among Equestrian Riders

Perfectionism has been considered to have adaptive and maladaptive aspects towards sporting performance. It has been implied there is a positive relationship between perfectionistic characteristics and self-efficacy among sports like athletics and swimming. However, little is known on horse riders and this relationship in equestrian sport. Higher self-efficacy among competitively active riders have suggested to increase sporting performance among dressage, but not across other disciplines. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate if there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy among amateur level horse riders who regularly compete. A total of 139 responses were recorded whereby 89 participants (1 male, 88 females, aged 18-66) completed a survey posted on equestrian groups on Facebook. The survey included background questions like disciplines of the sport, as well as SMPS-2 and GSES for measuring perfectionism and self-efficacy. Currently, no results are finalised, but a correlational analysis will be completed. Preliminary investigations have revealed significant levels of perfectionism in areas like personal standards ($M=22.83$) and concern over mistakes ($M=22.01$). Participants also reported higher self-efficacy ($M=30.70$). This research hopes to add to current psychological knowledge within the equestrian field and enhance rider's performance through education of riders themselves and other stakeholders.

fNIRS frontal cortex supports cognitive flexibility and its relation to attention-related deficits

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by deficits in executive function, including working memory and cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility, the ability to shift between tasks and adapt to new information, is often impaired in individuals with ADHD. Traditional ADHD diagnosis relies on subjective measures, such as self-report questionnaires and clinical interviews, which lack objectivity. Functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) offers a non-invasive neuroimaging approach to assess prefrontal cortex activation during cognitive tasks, providing a potential objective marker for ADHD-related cognitive deficits.

This study employed a within-subject design to investigate cognitive flexibility and stability using a delayed match-to-sample working memory task while recording prefrontal cortex hemodynamic responses with fNIRS. Participants (N = 18) were undergraduate students recruited through the University of Plymouth SONA system. The fNIRS optode configuration covered the dorsolateral and dorsomedial prefrontal cortices. Behavioural measures included accuracy and response time, analysed using repeated-measures ANOVA. The Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS v1.1) was administered to assess attentional control deficits and to form a between-subjects factor. FNIRS data were pre-processed in SPM, with motion artefact correction and statistical modelling applied to analyse neural activation patterns across cognitive flexibility and stability conditions.

Examining the influence of placement force on decision making: a study on handedness and eye movement.

Decision-making is often influenced by external factors, yet individuals remain largely unaware of these biases. This study examined handedness and placement force on decision-making. Placement force suggests that an object's positioning increases its likelihood of being chosen. It relies on the reachability effect, edge aversion and human laziness, leading people to select the most accessible option. Research has found that when presented with four identical cards, individuals tend to choose the third card from the left (~60% of the time). Our study measures the impact of the hand used to make a physical decision. We hypothesised that participants in the right-handed condition would favour the third card, whereas participants in the left-handed condition would select the second.

Participants were presented with four identical playing cards and implicitly guided to use a specific hand, which was randomised and alternated. Their eye movements were recorded using eye-tracking glasses to measure fixation duration and first-gaze preferences. Following the selection task, participants completed the Edinburgh Handedness Inventory to assess dominant hand preference and self-reported freedom ratings to assess autonomy. This study aimed to explore the interaction between motor constraints and cognitive biases in decision-making, with potential applications in consumer psychology, marketing and education.

**How Varying Visual Search Difficulty affects Performance in a Counting Span Working
Memory task: Relations to Autistic Traits**

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder (hereafter ‘autistic’) have demonstrated working memory (WM) challenges and visual search superiority. These findings have been individually extended to individuals with autistic traits (AT) in the general population, although findings are mixed. The present study aimed to combine these visual search and WM findings and extend them to AT. A visual search speed task and a WM counting span task were created with two levels of difficulty. It was hypothesized that individuals with higher AT would display reduced disparity in performance between the two difficulty levels on the task, extending past findings that autistic individuals don’t significantly differ in performance on these different searches to AT. It was also hypothesized that higher AT participants would compensate for WM challenges through the reduced speed of counting on the counting span task that would result from their proposed visual search benefit. A MANCOVA, two ANCOVAs, and a Pearson correlation analysis were run. Results demonstrated a main effect of AT on the MANCOVA which did not remain significant for the ANCOVAs. These results did not confirm the present study hypotheses, demonstrating that more research is needed to extend WM and visual search findings in autism to AT.

The Role of Critical Thinking and Its Impact on Mitigating Cognitive Biases in Hiring Decisions

The halo effect is a cognitive bias where attractive individuals are perceived more favourably than less attractive individuals. This bias can result in unfair recruitment decisions, as attractive candidates are often deemed more competent and hardworking. Previous research highlights the prevalence of the halo effect during hiring, which can be further exacerbated by the bias blind spot—a phenomenon where individuals fail to recognize their own biases, leading to overconfidence in their decision-making.

This study aims to address a gap in existing literature by using a behavioural measure to assess susceptibility to the halo effect where prior work has relied on self-reported attitudes, which are prone to response biases. Number of undergraduate student participants completed an experimental task acting as hiring managers, rating the employability of hypothetical candidates low or high in attractiveness. Critical thinking ability was measured using the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT) and a critical thinking questionnaire, while bias blind spot was assessed using a dedicated scale.

In line with previous work, results demonstrated the predicted halo effect: a positive association between employability ratings and attractiveness of candidates. However, links between the halo effect, critical thinking ability, and bias blind spot were inconclusive, potentially due to two-system thinking, where System 1 (intuitive thinking) formed positive impressions based on candidates' attractiveness, while System 2 (analytical thinking) may not always override these automatic judgments, especially when the initial impression feels convincing or effortless. Alternatively, these results may reflect limitations in the measurement tools used.

Examining the associations between emotion regulation, inhibitory processes and levels of social anxiety

High levels of social anxiety in university students may be associated with decreases in emotion regulation and inhibition; however, there is limited research exploring these relationships. Therefore, this study examined the association between emotion regulation and inhibition in predicting the levels of social anxiety in university students. 150 Undergraduate psychology students completed standardized questionnaires: the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, and the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale before completing two inhibition tasks (Stroop task and Go/NoGo task). They were then given a survey to measure their emotional responses to a set of imagined socially awkward situations. The final sample size consisted of 105 participants. It was predicted that (1) higher emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, will be associated with lower levels of social anxiety and social awkwardness and (2) that poor inhibition control would correlate with higher levels of social anxiety. Analyses will be conducted to determine if inhibition moderates the relationship between emotion regulation and social anxiety. This would suggest that there might be an interaction between the use of emotion regulation strategies and inhibition control in predicting levels of social anxiety and awkwardness.

Perceptions of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum among Key Stage 2 (KS2) Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the United Kingdom: A Study of Experiences between 2014-2017

The research focuses on investigating Key Stage 2 (KS2) students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) perceptions of the primary mathematics curriculum in the UK. The research is significant because many people are leaving school without basic mathematical skills, affecting future opportunities such as employment or higher education. Based on the literature, some of the barriers that SEND students face when learning mathematics include difficulties with conceptual understanding, working memory, teacher knowledge, practice, and training on student engagement and attainment. The literature has also indicated that socioeconomic status influences the likelihood of a child identifying with SEND. The study aims to identify barriers to learning, assess how much teacher knowledge, practice, and training influence engagement and success, understand how curriculum changes have influenced the engagement and attainment of SEND students in maths and effectively identify strategies to improve KS2 mathematics teaching for SEND pupils. Using a qualitative approach, an online questionnaire was completed by individuals who were in KS2 between 2014-2017 (now aged 18-24 years old). Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to identify four themes, which are challenges of learning mathematics, impact of teacher support, attitudes towards maths, and accessibility of the curriculum. These insights can help identify solutions to make the mathematics curriculum accessible to all, improving long-term educational outcomes. It will remain important to include the perspective of SEND students and their neurotypical peers in evaluating these solutions in the future.

Validation of a Screening Tool for Adults with Non Diagnosed Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a lifelong disorder that affects expressive and receptive language ability. Despite its prevalence, awareness of individuals with DLD is lower than other neurodevelopmental disorders. Screening tools can improve self-understanding, support, wellbeing and research participation. While validated screening tools exist for identifying DLD in children, no validated tools for identifying DLD in adults exist. This study aimed to conduct the initial validation of a new self-report screening tool for adults with non-diagnosed DLD (STAND). Undergraduate students completed the STAND tool online before completing two pre-existing language ability measures: the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-5 (CELF-5) and the Communication Checklist Self-Report (CC-SR). Multiple regression analyses will assess the predictive validity of the STAND tool by examining its relationship with scores on these measures. Bilingual status was included as a covariate to account for potential variability in language ability, as cultural and linguistic differences put bilingual individuals at risk of DLD misclassification. Findings will support the validation of the STAND tool, improving self-understanding and DLD research. With further development the STAND tool could facilitate routine screening in higher education, workplace and forensic settings to ensure that adults with undiagnosed DLD are given appropriate support through suitable adjustments.

Are the quality of young adults' relationships with their parents associated with their depressive symptoms?

Research has shown that negative parent-child relationships are associated with depressive symptoms in their children. Much of the existing research on young adults' relationships with their parents has used structured interviews or survey data. These data collection techniques are limited in that they restrict participants to answering specific questions the researcher chooses to ask, limiting the findings. To address this limitation, the current study seeks to examine the quality of young adults' relationships with their parents through use of the Five Minute Speech Sample (FMSS) interview. Previous research using the FMSS has focused on parents speaking about their relationship with their children, so the current study is a novel approach to the FMSS. We conducted the FMSS and the PHQ-8 on 96 participants, and will code their responses to levels of expressed emotion and their depressive symptoms. Using hierarchical multiple regressions, we expect to find that expressed emotion is positively correlated with depressive symptoms in young adults. This finding could influence how depression is prevented and treated in young people, as well as providing support for the use of the FMSS on young adults.

Exploration of Primary School educators' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of play-based learning within their classrooms

Objectives:

The aim of the research was to explore Primary School educators' perceptions of the psychological benefits and pedagogical challenges of play-based learning (PBL) within their classrooms. Despite strong theoretical support for PBL's role in cognitive, social, and emotional development, many educators face barriers such as policy constraints, curriculum pressures, and training limitations that hinder its implementation. By analysing educators' lived experiences, this research sought to uncover how they navigate these challenges, balance academic demands with play, and what support they require to integrate PBL effectively.

Methods:

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with five Primary School educators, recruited via respondent-driven sampling. This qualitative, interpretivist research design was chosen to deeply understand how educators perceive, implement, and justify play-based learning within their early childhood education settings. A reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2021) framework is being employed to identify recurring patterns in participants' responses.

Conclusion:

The emerging findings may highlight tensions between institutional barriers and educators' commitment to PBL. Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap between research and practice, with a particular focus on educators' teaching experiences.

28. Charlotte Williams, University of Plymouth

How does media experience in childhood affect ideological belief in adulthood? - an exploration into media type's mediation on religiopolitical belief

With growing divide in an already tense political space, it is important to understand where these beliefs have developed from and what has influenced the formation of these ideologies. Media has been shown to affect religiopolitical belief (ref), therefore in a growingly media advanced space it's important to investigate this during the key developmental stages and how media specifically affects the development of opinion, judgement and beliefs. Using an online survey and opportunity sampling to rate participants on a 7-point Likert scale of media usage and find a religiopolitical score, we found a small correlation between media usage in childhood (i.e. educational and video games) and political views in adulthood, with minimal impact on religiosity in adulthood.'

The multifaceted impact of brain injury

From my time on placement, I have researched and learnt so much about the invisible effects of brain injury that go beyond the physical. Brain injury has a multitude of comorbid health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic pain and insomnia that complicate diagnosis and create barriers to receiving support. Alongside this, care pathways have been found ineffective for dealing with the individual nature of brain injury, causing patients to slip through the care system. Current rehabilitation takes a primarily physical approach, but research has shown the benefits of support groups for fostering positive identity. I have also been involved in rewriting papers to be published on the family experiences following brain injury, survivors' reasons for living and case managers' feedback for raising safeguarding concerns. Many devoted organisations are available for family members, but navigating and finding the appropriate care can be challenging. That is why I will use patient and public involvement in my final year project to find out what can be done professionally to help families affected by brain injury.

Graves' Disease: an Exploration into Patients' Experiences with the NHS

The experiences of people with Graves' Disease, an autoimmune condition, is an under-researched area within Psychology. Research has suggested that Graves' Disease negatively impacts quality of life and contact with health professionals is influential. A recent quantitative study within the UK highlighted issues for NHS patients, including treatment delays and patient satisfaction. Currently, there are no UK-based qualitative studies that address the topic of: "How do people with Graves' Disease experience their healthcare journey within the NHS?". This study used a mixed methods design including a short survey of thirty participants' NHS journeys and current quality of life. Online, semi-structured interviews collected detailed NHS experiences from seven female participants. The survey data were descriptively analysed, and the interview data were analysed through Thematic Analysis. Four working themes from the interviews were identified: Lack of Understanding about Graves' Disease, Turning to Dr Google, Treatment Journey, Patient Experiences within the NHS. The themes highlight that many NHS experiences were negative for participants. These highlight ways in which NHS services can be improved to better support patients with Graves' Disease in the future.

The bonds that break us: an exploration into the potential impacts of parental separation on university students' experiences of academic life and emotional wellbeing in early adolescence and young adulthood.

Parental separation (PS) is a significant adverse childhood experience (ACE) associated with immediate and long-term negative outcomes. Despite the prevalence of PS and the extensive research evidencing said outcomes, qualitative studies exploring individuals first-hand accounts remain few-and-far-between. This study intended to address this gap, gathering qualitative accounts from six university students (four females and two males ages 20-22) from the UK about their experiences post-PS. Semi-structured interviews explored how PS impacted participants academic experiences and emotional wellbeing in adolescence and young adulthood. Using thematic analysis three key themes were identified: (1) Differential Responses to Parental Separation Amongst Children, (2) PS' adverse influence on academic life, (3) Adverse emotional symptomology. Both gender and levels of interparental conflict were observed as mediating factors across the eight subthemes identified. Participants characterized by high-conflict separations detailed worse academic experiences relative to their low-conflict counterparts. While emotional dysregulation was evident amongst all participants, gender seemingly influenced participants embodied emotional responses congruent with the literature observed: female-oriented internalizing symptomology (self-introversion, anxiety) versus male-oriented externalizing symptomology (aggression, antisocial behaviour). Most participants detailed chronic stress and somatic stress symptoms as ongoing difficulties, providing insight into the enduring impacts of PS. This research recognizes PS as a critical health concern requiring timely intervention supported by policy, educational practice, and parenting efforts to mitigate the deleterious effects.

Examining Career Aspirations among Final-Year Students: The Impact of Anxiety, Depression, Social Support, and Parental Occupations

Career aspirations play a crucial role in shaping an individual's career trajectory, yet psychosocial factors appear to influence these aspirations, specifically in domains of leadership, achievement and educational goals. This study investigates the impact of anxiety and depression on career aspirations in final-year undergraduate and postgraduate (MSc) students, as well as the effects of social support, parental occupational seniority and gender on career aspirations. Additionally, the study investigated whether social support and gender can moderate the potential effects of anxiety and depression on career aspirations. 98 undergraduate and postgraduate final-year students completed an online questionnaire involving dimensional measures of Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Depression, Career Aspirations (Leadership, Achievement and Educational Aspirations), Perceived Social Support, and Parental Occupational Seniority. Hierarchical Linear Regression analyses were conducted to determine the independent and interactive effects of these variables on overall and domain-specific career aspirations. This research hopes to improve scientific knowledge regarding the potential impact of mental health on career aspirations, underscoring the potential need for mental health assessments in university career counselling whilst emphasising the importance of psychosocial support for students' career progression.

To what extent does neuroticism and extraversion predict depression after adjusting for self-esteem?

This study examined the extent to which neuroticism and extraversion predict depression after adjusting for self-esteem. Despite extensive research linking personality traits to depression, previous studies have rarely controlled for self-esteem as a confounding variable, potentially overestimating the direct effects of personality traits on depression risk. Depression affects approximately 280 million people worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021), imposing substantial personal and economic costs. Understanding psychological predictors of depression is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions. This study used a cross-sectional design with 118 participants (80 females, 38 males, mean age = 22.7 years) recruited through convenience sampling via social media. Participants completed validated measures including the Mini-IPIP for personality assessment, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) for depression, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine the unique contributions of neuroticism and extraversion to depression while controlling for self-esteem. This research addresses a significant methodological gap by simultaneously examining these interconnected variables, providing a more in-depth understanding of their relationships. The findings have important implications for improving depression interventions by targeting specific psychological pathways and identifying those at higher risk based on their personality traits.

University of Exeter, Risk and Protective Factors of Eating Pathology Symptoms in Young Adult Athletes

Background. The research focuses on subclinical eating pathology symptoms (EPS) in young adult athletes within university sports societies, addressing gaps in research on non-elite athletes. Social transitions, athletic pressures, and body shame contribute to EPS risk (Burgon et al., 2023; Walter et al., 2022). This study aims to explore how demographic factors (gender, age, sport type, living arrangements, membership duration), alongside personal variables (shame, guilt), predict EPS. It also examines whether shame and guilt mediate the relationship between sport type (weight-sensitive, non-weight-sensitive) and EPS. **Methods.** Participants (N = 130; Mean age = 4.25, SD = 1.29), female (58.5%) and male (39.2%), excluding those with clinical eating disorders completed validated self-report measures: Eating Pathology Symptoms Inventory, EPSI (Forbush et al., 2013) and State Shame and Guilt Scale, SSGS (Marschall et al., 1994). **Results.** The findings of hierarchical multiple regression indicate that weight-sensitive sport (Figure 1) and SSGS (Figure 2) were significant positive predictors of EPS (Table 1). The results of mediation analysis (Figure 3) show that shame and guilt did not mediate the relationship between sport type and EPS; however, a direct relationship between sport type and EPS remains significant. **Conclusion.** Our findings suggest that weight-sensitive sports and SSGS are significant risk factors for EPS in young adult athletes, while non-weight-sensitive sports serve as protective factor against EPS.

35. Katherine Parking, University of Plymouth

Dementia Friendly Communities in Rural Settings in England

This desk review presents an analysis of Dementia Friendly Communities (DFCs) in rural England, synthesizing insights from existing literature and real-life examples, contributing to the broader conversation of DFCs in rural areas.

A key focus of the review is the magnified stigmas, isolation, and poor quality of life uniquely seen in rural areas, assessing its implications for those living with dementia in rural England. The findings highlight what is needed for a rural DFC to be effective and inclusive, demonstrating how DFCs hosting a variety of activities can reduce these feelings of isolation.

By providing a comprehensive assessment of existing knowledge, identifying critical gaps, and offering recommendations for future rural DFCs. It serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to understand and engage with rural community members living with dementia in a meaningful and informed manner. Furthermore, by consolidating diverse perspectives, this analysis aims to inform decision-making, contribute to strategic planning, and support evidence-based interventions for local councils to take into consideration. The review examines best practices and innovative approaches that have been successful in different contexts, drawing lessons that can be replicated elsewhere.

**Bridging the Generational Divide: The Role of Shared Values and Behaviours in
Encouraging Positive Intergroup Attitudes**

Perceiving shared values fosters social connection and positive intergroup attitudes, with Hanel et al. (2019) finding that emphasising similarity information improves intergroup perceptions. Building on this, this study tested the effects of highlighting shared values on intergroup attitudes within an intergenerational context. This study examined the impact of presenting shared values alone or alongside shared behaviours on Allophilia scores, a measure of positive intergroup attitudes, between younger ($M = 24.59$) and older adults ($M = 66.59$). 261 participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: shared values, shared values and behaviours, or control. Participants in the shared values condition viewed graphs illustrating shared values between the age groups, while those in the shared values and behaviours condition viewed graphs showing both shared values and behaviours. A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of condition on Allophilia scores, $F(2, 255) = 3.747$, $p = .025$, partial $\eta^2 = .029$. Follow-up Bonferroni-corrected independent samples t-tests showed significantly higher Allophilia scores for both the shared values condition ($p = .016$, $d = .323$) and shared values and behaviours condition ($p = .008$, $d = .370$) compared to the control. These findings highlight the potential of shared values in improving intergenerational attitudes.

Understanding Teacher Burnout: The Role of Traditional Classroom Structures in Education

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognises teaching as a highly stressful profession, with education professionals facing considerably higher levels of work-related stress, depression, and anxiety compared to the national average (HSE, 2023). Therefore, this dissertation aims to examine the role of traditional classroom variables, such as class size, standardised curriculum, and administrative support, in contributing to teacher burnout within UK primary and secondary schools. This topic holds significance as it addresses a critical and pervasive issue in education that impacts teacher mental health, job satisfaction, and student outcomes. Data were collected through six semi-structured interviews with teachers, selected through convenience sampling, and the responses were transcribed and subjected to reflexive thematic analysis. The findings highlight how these factors exacerbate stress and dissatisfaction among teachers, leading to burnout and high attrition rates. The study underscores the necessity for targeted, evidence-based interventions to enhance teacher well-being and educational outcomes. These insights inform policy recommendations aimed at fostering supportive practices within the teaching profession, including promoting teacher autonomy, reducing workload, and providing effective support structures.

Empowering the electorate: evaluating a targeted intervention to mobilise young voters.

British 18-24-year-olds low electoral turnout demonstrates political inequality, undermining a fundamental democratic principle, and threatening long-term democratic stability. Despite the implications, no experimental evaluation of an intervention aiming to mobilise this group exists. Abstaining groups lack policy influence, fuelling a vicious cycle of political disengagement, also stimulating young people's self-perceived political powerlessness which significantly motivates their non-voting. However, this perception is misleading: increased youth turnout would enhance their influence. British 18-24-year-olds must realise their collective electoral power to break the vicious cycle. This study evaluates the effectiveness of a scalable intervention aiming to increase voting intention, facilitating this realisation by demonstrating the mutable nature of political power. Using an Empathetic Refutational Interview (ERI) framework, shown to correct misinformed beliefs in other domains, the intervention debunks self-perceived powerlessness, empowering young people to gain influence by voting. Additionally, voting is reframed as a self-actualising form of collective protest, aligning with this group's political participation preferences. Findings demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach in mobilising British 18-24-year-olds, with participants exhibiting a significant increase in voting intention post-intervention. This uncovers the utility of empathetically refuting misconceptions, empowering young people, and reframing voting to increase youth turnout, with practical applications for addressing political inequality.

Exploring Perspectives of Female Safety, From the View of Physically Active Women

Safety concerns play a significant role in how women use public spaces. The perceived risk of certain areas may impact their desire to access spaces for recreational activity. The aim of this phenomenological research was to provide insights into how physically active females subjectively navigate safety concerns within their immediate and surrounding environments during exercise. Participants, who took part in individual semi structured interviews, were 8 physically active females. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed to draw out meaningful themes from the data. Emerging themes include 'emotions', and 'gendered safekeeping', which refers to behaviours carried out by females such as avoiding activities in the dark, and being alert and vigilant, which suggest that female safety perceptions are broadly similar, however, differ in terms of severity of safety concerns. Factors such as personality type, and familiarity of an area were key considerations for the severity in which participants perceived themselves to be at risk. This current research provides a detailed comprehension of the factors shaping women's safety perceptions and highlights the need for further research incorporating male participants to examine gendered differences in safety related behaviours. Understanding these perceptions can inform strategies to enhance women's sense of security while using public spaces.

Unpacking Toxic Masculinity: Perceptions Within the #NotAllMen Discourse

Discussions on masculinity, particularly within the #NotAllMen discourse, have been frequently criticised for reinforcing toxic masculine norms rather than challenging them. Despite growing critiques of defensive discourses like #NotAllMen for diverting attention away from systemic gender inequalities, limited research has explored how individuals conceptualise toxic masculinity when framed through this reactionary lens. Using a social constructionist perspective, the current qualitative study explores how twenty-five university students conceptualise toxic masculinity within the context of #NotAllMen through thematic analysis of focus group discussions. Findings revealed two core themes: firstly, participants perceived traditional masculine norms as burdensome, acknowledging how societal pressures to embody stoicism, dominance, and emotional restraint negatively impact mental health and relationships. Secondly, participants characterised #NotAllMen as a defensive counter-narrative, suggesting that it arises from anxieties surrounding accountability for structural misogyny rather than outright denial. The analysis further indicated a tension; while recognising that #NotAllMen risks reinforcing essentialist views of masculinity, participants also acknowledged its potential in fostering dialogue about men's individual experiences within gendered expectations. These insights highlight the importance of balancing accountability with empathy in gender-related conversations. Future research should explore broader demographic diversity to deepen understanding and develop strategies for engaging men constructively in dismantling harmful societal norms.

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By providing a comprehensive assessment of existing knowledge, identifying critical gaps, and offering recommendations for future rural DFCs. It serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to understand and engage with rural community members living with dementia in a meaningful and informed manner. Furthermore, by consolidating diverse perspectives, this analysis aims to inform decision-making, contribute to strategic planning, and support evidence-based interventions for local councils to take into consideration. The review examines best practices and innovative approaches that have been successful in different contexts, drawing lessons that can be replicated elsewhere.

Cultural Influences on the Relationship Between Materialism and Well-Being: A Qualitative Study

Materialism, defined as a value system emphasising material possessions, has been widely associated with lower well-being. However, limited research explores how cultural influences shape this relationship, particularly in multicultural societies like the UK. This study investigates how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds perceive materialism and its impact on well-being, considering cultural orientations such as individualism and collectivism.

Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a diverse sample to explore the subjective experiences of materialism within different cultural contexts. The interpretivist paradigm will guide the analysis, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how cultural values influence materialistic attitudes and well-being. Thematic analysis will identify key patterns in participants' perceptions, shedding light on the complex interplay between culture, materialism, and psychological outcomes.

Findings from this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of materialism in multicultural societies, particularly in the UK. By recognising the role of cultural diversity in shaping materialistic values, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the materialism-well-being relationship and provide insights into how cultural backgrounds influence perceptions of materialism and its psychological effects.

Discounting Behaviour in the Wild: Measuring Discounting Behaviour in Wild Squirrels and the Factors that Influence it.

Discounting is a crucial mechanism in decision-making in humans and other animals, allowing us to determine which choice will lead to the greatest net positive regarding our goals. In humans, steep discounting (those quicker to choose smaller, more immediate rewards than larger rewards later) has been associated with a myriad of negative consequences, including drug, alcohol, and gambling addiction. However, discounting research on animals have found them to be consistently very steep discounters across species and factors. This conflicts with human research and an array of established survival theories positing that natural selection favours choices resulting in the largest net gain. We propose the problem lies within the methodology, namely animal studies being conducted in a lab, animals performing tasks unrelated to their natural behaviours, and tasks designed around binary choices - all of which diminishes the study's ecological validity. We designed a new method where we study discounting in the wild, use tasks that reflect natural behaviour, and observe the effect that naturally occurring factors (e.g. sex, dominance and experience) have on discounting. We aim observe discounting behaviour in wild squirrels that aligns with theories of survival and to identify factors that affect it.

45. Qinxuan Li, University of Bristol

Analysing the influence of humanism on sentencing for murder and assault: A multiverse analysis

Multiverse Analysis makes full use of the flexibility of the researcher's decision freedom (RDF) to systematically test the impact of different analytical decisions to assess the robustness of the effect and improve research transparency.

Based on the public dataset of Øyvind Jørgensen & Nilsson (2024), this study uses multiverse analysis to examine the impact of humanism on sentencing for murder and assault. The original study found that individuals with stronger humanistic tendencies tend to impose harsher punishments for these two types of crimes.

This study systematically changes the cultural background, sample size power estimation, data analysis method (correlation vs. robust regression), control variables, Bootstrap and Holm-Bonferroni corrections, and additional Bayesian analysis. The results show that about 60% of the analysis paths produced statistical significance ($p < .05$), and the overall effect was small. The conclusion of the Bayesian analysis is similar to that of the frequency analysis, indicating that the impact of humanism on murder sentencing is more stable, while the impact on assault sentencing is smaller.

This study proves that multiverse analysis can provide a more transparent and reliable analytical framework for psychological research by constructing multiple analytical paths to more comprehensively evaluate the robustness of research conclusions.

Is the desirability bias in personality-relevant syllogistic reasoning robust? A multiverse analysis

Within psychology, many published effects fail to replicate, constituting a burgeoning ‘replicability crisis’. This has been attributed to questionable research practices (QRP) such as undisclosed analytic flexibility and p-hacking. Multiverse analysis aims to mitigate this by performing multiple reasonable analytic choices during data analysis. This project examined Hadizahmetovic’s et al (2024) finding that personality-related syllogistic reasoning performance is qualified by a significant interaction between syllogism validity and desirability. To investigate the robustness of the effect, equally defensible alternative analytic decisions were performed, resulting in 60 pathways (frequentist versus Bayesian statistics, A priori-determined versus original sample size, operationalisation of validity, data transformation, outlier handling and Bonferroni corrections). Multiverse findings were highly variable, with 66.7% of frequentist and 16.7% of Bayesian pathways supporting the original effect. Of the frequentist results, a larger sample and validity operationalised with both modus ponens (MP) and modus tollens (MT) syllogisms achieved more significant p-values on average. In contrast, Bayesian results only supported our hypothesis when MP only validity and a larger sample size was used. While multiverse analysis holds great promise for assessing the sensitivity of effects to analytic decisions, a formalised framework for interpretation is needed, particularly when pathway outcomes are highly variable.