16th Annual Laurel Highlands Undergraduate Psychology Conference

Program Schedule

10:00-10:30  Registration and Refreshments (Blackington Hall Lobby)

10:30-11:15  10th Annual William Leitenberger Memorial Lecture (134 Blackington Hall)

Dr. Derek Leben, University of Pittsburgh- Johnstown, “Experimental Philosophy: Tales from the Front Lines”

11:30-12:00 Research Talk Session (134 Blackington Hall)

12:00-1:00  Research Poster Session (Blackington Hall Lobby)

1:15  Lunch* and End of Conference!

*Lunch will be served in the lower level of the Living Learning Center (LLC) on campus.
Acknowledgements

The Laurel Mountain Psychological Association, under the auspices of the William Leitenberger Memorial Lecture Fund, for their support.

The UPJ Psychology Club for their help.

The Natural Sciences Division at UPJ for their support.

Conference Background and History

The Laurel Highlands Undergraduate Psychology Research conference was founded in 1998. The conference provides a forum for undergraduate students in Psychology programs across the regional area to present their research to fellow students and faculty members. Over the years, we have had many people participate from various institutions and we have had a number of respected figures in the field of Psychology provide keynote addresses for the conference. On the next pages are listed the keynote speakers and participating institutions we have had since our founding.
## Past Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Speaker Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Dr. Richard Moreland</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Dr. David Myers</td>
<td>Hope College</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Dr. Julie Fiez</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Dr. Edward S. Shapiro</td>
<td>Lehigh University</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Dr. George Spilich</td>
<td>Washington College</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Dr. Clancy Blair</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State University</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Dr. Peggy Fischer</td>
<td>Office of Inspector General, National Science Foundation</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Dr. Kristen Suthers</td>
<td>Johns Hopkins University</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Dr. Irene Frieze</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Dr. Christopher S. Martin</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Dr. Nicholas DiFonzo</td>
<td>Rochester Institute of Technology</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Dr. Jessica Everly</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Dr. Charles Heyser</td>
<td>Franklin and Marshall College</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Dr. Ellen Frank</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Dr. Stephen Wilson</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State University</td>
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### Past and Present Participating Institutions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carnegie Mellon University</th>
<th>Seton Hill University</th>
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<tr>
<td>U. of Pittsburgh-Oakland</td>
<td>Franciscan University of Steubenville</td>
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<td>U. of Pittsburgh-Bradford</td>
<td>Indiana University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>U. of Pittsburgh-Johnstown</td>
<td>Saint Francis University</td>
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<td>U. of Pittsburgh-Greensburg</td>
<td>Waynesburg University</td>
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<td>Saint Vincent College</td>
<td>Marywood University</td>
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<td>University of Charleston</td>
<td>Dickinson College</td>
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<td>Temple University</td>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
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<td>Otterbein College</td>
<td>West Liberty State College</td>
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<td>Mount Aloysius College</td>
<td>Drexel University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penn State U. at Altoona</td>
<td>Franklin and Marshall College</td>
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<td>Penn State U. at University Park</td>
<td>California U. of Pennsylvania</td>
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Research Talk Session (11:30 - 12:00)

Paper # 1 (11:30)

Title: How Empathy Relates to Cyber Bullying and Perception of Parenting
Authors: Vanessa Malinowski, Angelina Murabito, and Natalie Hooker
Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey Everly

Research in the past has primarily focused on bullying behavior that is physically, emotionally, and verbally aggressive. Due to the abundance of technology, cyber bullying (through text messaging, posting embarrassing pictures, and using social networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace) is emerging. This study utilized 154 self-reports by college students to assess cyber bullying, cognitive and affective empathy, and parental psychological control. Students admitted to cyber bullying to a questionable degree. Of instances admitted, a significant relationship was found between participants high in affective empathy and fewer mean emails sent. Individuals who had a poor relationship with their psychologically controlling mothers also had posted more embarrassing pictures and sent more mean text messages.

Paper #2 (11:45)

Title: Empathy as a Moderator of Violent versus Non-Violent Movie Choice
Authors: Joseph Kromer
Affiliation: Waynesburg University
Advisor: Dr. Jenny Jellison

Current research suggests a relationship exists between aggression and movie choice, such that aggressive people most often choose to watch violent movies. Research also suggests that those who are aggressive score lower on empathy scales. Given these findings, the current study predicted that empathy and movie choice would also correlate. In other words, those who score high on an empathy scale would be least likely to choose a violent movie. Multiple data collections were conducted in which subjects (n=35) completed an abbreviated version of the Basic Empathy Scale followed by exposure to 6 movie previews, and were then asked to list the movies in order of personal preference. Results revealed no correlation between empathy and movie choice.
Research Poster Session (12:00 – 1:00)

Poster # 1

Title: The Influence of Color on the Processing of Artistic Photographs
Authors: Chi H. Chan, Lisa M. Polaski, and Zach E. Mickey
Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
Advisor: Dr. John W. Mullennix

Some research suggests that color has a minor effect on visual object identification and preference, while other research supports that color facilitates faster and more efficient cognitive processing of visual scenes. In previous research, Mullennix et al. (in press) found that preferences for black and white artistic photographs were mediated via automatic cognitive processes, rather than controlled cognitive processes. In the present study, we examined whether the added dimension of color affects the type of cognitive processes used when viewing artistic photographs. A cognitive load task was used to assess whether controlled or automatic processing was used during preference judgment and whether the mode of processing varied as a function of color. For the preference rating data, there was an absence of an interaction between photograph and preload condition, with regards to both color and black and white photographs. This result is consistent with the idea that automatic cognitive processing is used when viewing and classifying visual art. The data also indicated that participants rated color photographs as more appealing than black and white photographs. There is additional evidence that images considered familiar and concrete, rather than unfamiliar and abstract, were preferred.

Poster # 2

Title: Where have all the Inhibitions Gone?
Authors: Nicole L. Snyder, Allyson M. Weekley, and Wendy M. Wilkins
Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey Everly

The tendency for organism to choose smaller immediate reinforcers over larger delayed reinforcers is referred to as delay discounting. Previous research has shown that discounting can predict high-risk behaviors, such as cigarette smoking and drug abuse. The relationship between discounting rates and high-risk behavior via the internet and mobile devices is the focus of the present study. The participants, consisting of 142 college undergraduate students, completed a survey comprised of 15 questions used to measure participants’ discounting rates and six questions regarding past risk-taking behaviors over mobile devices and on social networking sites. Contrary to predictions, there were no significant differences between those with higher discounting rates and the reported instances of high-risk internet behaviors. Results did indicate that the amount of the monetary reinforcer did affect the rate of discounting. Limitations include the lack of privacy for answering personal survey questions and difficulty understanding the survey questions.
**Poster # 3**

**Title:** Computer Synthesized Speech Preferred over the Natural Speech of Physically Disabled Speakers  
**Authors:** Chelsea M. Chobany, Disha V. Patel, and Justin J. Tressler  
**Affiliation:** University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown  
**Advisor:** Dr. Steven Stern

People with a speech disability have a stigmatized condition (Weitzel, 2000) that non-disabled people feel uncomfortable around (Anderson & Antonak, 1992). Using computerized text-to-speech (TTS) systems can help mitigate the disability, although research shows that human speech is rated more favorably than synthetic speech (Stern et al., 1999). This submission reports on research in which we examined reactions to disabled persons either using their own voice or using synthetic speech as an assistive technology. We also examined whether or not participants perceived that the disabled person had chosen whether or not to use computer synthesized speech.

**Poster # 4**

**Title:** Computer Synthesized Speech versus Natural Speech of Physically Disabled Speakers  
**Authors:** Chelsea M. Chobany, Disha V. Patel, and Justin J. Tressler  
**Affiliation:** University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown  
**Advisor:** Dr. Steven Stern

People with a speech disability have a stigmatized condition (Weitzel, 2000) that non-disabled people feel uncomfortable around (Anderson & Antonak, 1992). Using computerized text-to-speech (TTS) systems can help mitigate the disability, although research shows that human speech is rated more favorably than synthetic speech (Stern et al., 1999). This submission reports on research in which we examined reactions to disabled persons using both their own voice and using synthetic speech as an assistive technology.
Poster # 5

Title: Spiritual/Transcendent Experiences and Religious Coping
Authors: Leon L. Kosker
Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
Advisor: Dr. Russell Phillips

Recent research has found spiritual experiences to predict general forms of positive and negative religious coping, but not specific spiritual methods of dealing with stress. The present study hypothesizes that specific religious coping strategies will be predicted by different types of transcendent experiences and one's interpretations of those experiences. Participants included 548 predominantly Protestant/Catholic students at three universities. Transcendent experiences, as measured through a mysticism scale and a daily spiritual experiences scale, was positively related to marking religious boundaries and spiritual connection, and inversely related to reappraisals of God’s powers. Forward regression analyses revealed a religious interpretation of spiritual experiences as the most consistent predictor. Limits and implications of the study are discussed.

Poster # 6

Title: Effect of Past Brain Trauma on Memory and Learning
Authors: Nicholas E. Tedeschi
Affiliation: Saint Francis University
Advisor: Dr. Marnie Moist

Differences in cognitive function in capacity to learn a new task, measured by performing a complex task with their non-dominant hand, verbal working memory skills, measured by an auditory verbal recall test, and visual and spatial working memory skills, measured by a picture recall task were examined in a population of students from a small rural college campus. They were divided based on the self-reported presence of past brain trauma. Those who had experienced brain trauma were expected to perform worse than those who did not in all three tests. Neither group showed any significant difference in the means of the scores of the participants.
Poster # 7

Title: Visual Preferences in Relation to Cognitive Flexibility
Authors: Chelsea L. Fallier and Kyle M. Mansueto
Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
Advisor: Dr. John W. Mullennix

Participants viewed black and white photographs. They rated the photos on a visual scale to indicate their preferences for the photos. They also rated the photos using five different scales: abstract, simple, familiar, pleasant and interesting. Following this task the participants performed the stroop task on the computer. The word red or green would appear in either red or green font. Participants responded by hitting the appropriate key indicating the color of the word. It is believed that participants with greater cognitive flexibility will prefer more abstract and complex photographs.

Poster # 8

Title: The Personality Traits of the 21st Century Geek
Authors: Eugene F. Olaiya
Affiliation: University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
Advisor: Dr. Russell Phillips

Recently, the popularity of geek and nerd subculture has grown substantially. Research on geek culture has only examined those that engage in a supposedly geeky behavior without assessing their level of geekiness. The present study addresses this limitation by creating a Geek Performance Test (GPT) that measures one’s knowledge of geek culture. We compared the upper and lower quartile of GPT participants on their level of geek and nerd identification and the big five personality traits, using a two-way MANOVA (the second independent variable being university attended). Significant main effects were found for university and GPT. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated that participants with high GPT scores were more open to experience, identified more as geeks and nerds, and were less conscientious than those with low GPT scores. Future research should correlate the different geek subcultures assessed on the GPT with personality variables.
**Poster # 9**

**Title:** 2D:4D and Participation in STEM Fields  
**Authors:** Nathan D. Omasta and Alex L. Trevorrow  
**Affiliation:** University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown  
**Advisor:** Dr. Sharon Bertsch

The ratio between an individual’s second and fourth digits (2D:4D) is influenced by exposure to prenatal androgens. Using a new measurement technique, we found that individuals in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) professions tend to have smaller 2D:4D ratios than those in other academic fields (music, philosophy).

**Poster # 10**

**Title:** Territoriality and the Savannah-IQ Hypothesis  
**Authors:** Alexander L. Trevorrow, Katarzyna Wojnas, and Melynne Sciranko  
**Affiliation:** University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown  
**Advisor:** Dr. Sharon Bertsch

The current study looks at the relationship between intelligence and certain behaviors that appear to be genetically predisposed (such as the human male predisposition to have many children with multiple partners). When cultural norms make these behaviors less acceptable, the Savannah-IQ Hypothesis (Kanazawa, 2010) predicts higher-intelligence individuals will be more successful in these new situations. We tested this hypothesis by measuring the relationship between territoriality and several types of mental ability. The hypothesis predicts that those with higher mental test scores are less likely to be upset when asked to violate established territory boundaries. While people’s assessment of their own territoriality did not follow this pattern, the degree to which they were upset when asked to move was consistent with the hypothesis.
1:15 Lunch and End of the Conference!

A buffet lunch will be served in the Living Learning Center (LLC) at 1:15. The LLC is a short 5-minute walk or a short drive from Blackington Hall. On the map below, Blackington Hall (where we are now) is at the bottom of the map (circled) and the LLC is at the top (circled). **Lunch will be served in the lower level.**