

BURS 2006 Psychology I

Section Moderator: Dr. Peter Giordano
Room: Beaman Student Life Center Room A
Time: 7:00-9:15

7:00-7:15

“Resident Students vs. Commuter Students: Differences in Social Integration and Institutional Commitment”

Shandus B. Valentine
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

Commitment to the institution is thought to be a key factor in students' decisions to remain enrolled at a particular university. Studies suggest that a high level of integration into the social atmosphere at a university is also a key factor for students' continued enrollment. Most previous studies focus only on students at a two-year community college or only on residential students at a four-year university; this study will go beyond previous research by looking at residential and commuter students at the same four-year university. This study will examine social integration and institutional commitment in resident students versus commuter students. Twenty freshmen students from an introductory psychology course at Belmont University, as well as twenty freshmen students from a first-year seminar course will complete two questionnaires about their social life and their commitment to their university. The hypothesis is that resident students will be more socially integrated and committed to the university than commuter students will be; it seems logical that students who stay on campus outside of class time will be more comfortable socially and more committed. If this study does show that commuter students are less socially integrated and less committed to the university, it will be valuable information for student affairs employees at universities who are interested in high student retention. Special efforts can be made to help commuter students become more integrated and committed.

7:15-7:30

"The Relationship between Self-esteem and Online Community Use"

Avril Copeland, Jared Ezell, Mary Fletcher, Rebecca Guinn, Sandra Indykiewicz, Valerie Loera,
Randon Marks, Brittany Pardue, Joseph Swift
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

College students today frequently engage in online communities, such as Facebook. Eighty five percent of students at Belmont are registered members of Facebook. Approximately 60 students from introductory psychology classes will complete an adapted Generalized Problematic Internet Use Survey and a Rosenberg Self-esteem scale. Participants will also log on to their Facebook account and report how many Facebook friends they have listed. We hypothesize that self-esteem is negatively related to compulsive internet use and to the number of online community friends listed. The findings of this study may help understand how personality is related to addictive tendencies on the internet.

7:30-7:45

“The Effects of Irrelevant Speech and Cell Phone Conversations on Sequential Short-Term Memory Tasks”

Beverly G. Purvis

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

Overheard, public cell phone conversations can serve as unwanted disruptions to tasks that require sustained attention, such as reading, studying, or typing. Many studies have been conducted to analyze the effects of noise on the performance of simple serial recall tasks, which require sustained attention. However, there have been no studies that examine the direct effects of cell phone conversations on performance on these serial recall tasks. The purpose of this study is to investigate if meaningful, but irrelevant speech, such as overheard cell phone conversation, has a more negative effect on serial recall than irrelevant speech, such as a foreign language. Twenty four Belmont undergraduate students were asked to complete 20 trials of a memory task that consisted of 7 letters being flashed on a computer screen in a specific order. The participants were asked to recall and attempt to recreate the correct order that the letters were shown. During the 20 trials they were alternately exposed to noise conditions of a cell phone conversation, quiet, or someone speaking an unknown foreign language. It was expected that performance on the memory tasks would be worse during exposure to the cell phone conversations than when exposed to the unknown foreign language or quiet condition.

7:45-8:00

“Sleep and Dreams: A Summary of Research and Theories”

Maggie Cornwall & Beverly Purvis

Faculty Advisor: Dr. William Bailey

A variety of theories attempting to explain sleeping and dreaming have been offered over the centuries. While sleep has traditionally been thought of as passive, dreaming is often viewed as a much more dynamic experience by the sleeper. Dreams has been associated with a myriad of phenomena such as neurophysical events (both normal and abnormal), psychological processes (such as the unconscious, memory storage, and problem solving) and even supernatural meanings (such as predicting the future). Dreams play a predominate role in the understanding of personality according to theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

Scientific research, while difficult to conduct with sleep and dreaming, has provided an abundance of information on sleep patterns and related behaviors in humans. From physical changes in the body to changes in the brain's state, we now know that sleep is anything but a passive activity. The process of sleeping is thought to be a result of adaptation to the environment. Current research suggests that sleep deprivation is very dangerous and can even be fatal to humans. In a similar fashion, dreaming has also been found to be necessary for survival in both humans and animals. During dreaming, or REM stage, the body may be replenished with energy vital to functioning. Most recent research underscores the importance of sleeping and dreaming and maintaining good physical and mental health.

8:00-8:15

“A Historical Analysis of Asylums”

Eileen S. Marks, Elizabeth L. Murphy, & Kurt J. Niesner

Faculty Advisor: Dr. William N. Bailey

Throughout the years, there have been several approaches to the treatment of the mentally ill. From villagers' routine acceptance or mere familial neglect of the mentally ill in the Middle Ages, long-term mental care has evolved from the notoriously heinous asylums to the general hospital-based care of today. Several methods of treatment have been utilized, including chained imprisonment, lobotomies, institutionalization in state-supported asylums, and community-based care programs. Society's established method of mental care affects the patient, the patient's family and the community via the governmental appropriation of funds. Through the work of several reformers, such as Pinel and Dix, psychiatric care for the mentally ill has eliminated earlier, inhumane methods and improved treatment to satisfy today's strict ethical standards.

8:15-8:30

"EEG Measurement of Hemispheric Asymmetry during Working Memory"

Eileen Marks

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie R. Yandell

Electroencephalography (EEG) is a non-invasive, electrophysiological technique for recording bioelectric brain activity. In the current study, EEG is used to investigate whether or not there is hemispheric asymmetry (a difference in intensity of activity between the left and right hemispheres) during a working memory task. Fifteen participants will perform a working memory task on computers while their alpha and beta wave EEGs are recorded using a Biopac, a physiological measurement device. The working memory task is comprised of 18 trials which vary in task difficulty. It is expected that there will be right dominance during the initial presentation of the task, followed by left dominance throughout the course and completion of the task. Also, it is expected that alpha activity will decrease in strength as the working memory task becomes more difficult. If the expected results are found, they will provide further insight into localization of brain function as well as help in understanding the link between physiological responses and psychological memory.

8:30-8:45

"The Effects of Initial Leadership Opinion on Small Group Decision-Making"

Elizabeth L. Murphy

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

Groups and individuals often times shift their opinions and preferences following group discussion of an issue. As a result of discussing an issue with others, there is a tendency for individuals' opinions to polarize in the direction of the group consensus. The type of issue discussed, the number of group members, the decision rule, and the social hierarchy in communication have been found to impact this group polarization effect. The present study investigates the effects of the group leader's initial opinion on individual members' polarization. Thirty-six Introduction to Psychological Science students will first rate their individual opinions on a given issue. Then they will discuss the same issue and reach a consensus in assigned groups which will be one of three varieties of groups, an assigned high agreement leader, an assigned low agreement leader, or no assigned leader. After the group discussion, individuals will be asked once again for their personal opinions on the same issue. I hypothesize that individuals' opinions post-discussion will polarize in the direction of the leader's initial opinions. Therefore, through discussion, group members will become more in favor of the leader's initial opinions simply because of their role as the leader. These findings will show the importance of the assigned leader's initial opinions to the results of group discussions and could extend to jury situations, political meetings, or the corporate world. Limitations and suggestions for future research will be discussed.

8:45-9:00

"Long-Term Effects of the Convocation Program on Belmont University Alumni"

Sarah G. Mudd
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mike Sullivan

Belmont's Convocation program was created with the purpose of providing an array of shared experiences that enhance students' life long learning and encouraging the development of well-rounded individuals. Students however see the purpose as one more requirement to complete before graduation. Research indicates that motivation plays a large part of students' ability to learn. Students are intrinsically motivated will learn more than those who are extrinsically motivated. A study conducted on Belmont University's campus during the spring 2005 semester concluded that students were extrinsically motivated to attend Convocation programs. However, because Convocation is intended to have long-term effects those effects need to be studied over time. This study looks at the longitudinal effects of the Convocation program on university alumni by comparing Belmont University alumni's the behaviors of Belmont University alumni who completed the Convocation program, Belmont alumni who did not experience Convocation, and alumni from another institution.

9:00-9:15
"The Psychology of Image in the Music Industry"

Heather N. Buresh
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Sullivan

Within the music industry, the probability of a performer attaining success tends to be based on the performer or artist's overall image, rather than purely the sound of the music or vocal talent. How performers are perceived may play an important role in their chance of achieving success within their field outside of their vocal/musical abilities. This study empirically explored how the perception a woman's image, particularly her physical features interacts with a singer's vocal capabilities to affect music industry professionals' views of her probability of success.

Individuals who either (1) teach in the College of Entertainment and Music Business at Belmont University, or (2) are currently employed in the area of Artist Development, Management, or Marketing in the Music Industry were recruited to participate. Those who chose to participate listened to a compilation of three songs performed by one vocalist, were asked to evaluate 2 different images in association with the audio, and completed a structured interview that revealed their perceptions of the images and their beliefs about how one can succeed in the industry.

Data collected in the study and interview were examined to how listeners' perceptions of a musical performing vocalist, based on a first impression or physical appearance, is related to the success that may be attained throughout their career in the music business. Physical appearance tends to be the one aspect of a first impression that is perceived to be the most important in relation to success for their target audience. Implications of image for the development (or not) of talented musicians is addressed.

BURS 2006 Psychology II

Section Moderator: Dr. Linda Jones
Room: Beaman Student Life Center Room B
Time: 7:00-9:00

7:00-7:15

"Validity of Measuring Procrastination Using Self Assessment Scales"

Barbara A. Hutchinson
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

The delayed completion of a task under one's own control is known as procrastination or task aversion (Tuckman & Sexton, 1989). Further studies have shown that as many as 50% of all college students procrastinate on academic assignments (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984) and that procrastination is correlated to poor academic performance (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986). Past studies have relied on self-assessment scales to measure procrastination (Solomon, & Rothblum, 1994). This study will test the validity of measuring procrastination using self-assessment scales. A sample of 60 undergraduate students enrolled in a general psychology class at Belmont University will take The Procrastination Scale (Tuckman, 1991), a 35-item self-assessment scale used to measure the participants perceived degree of procrastination. Data on how close to a deadline participants submit their assignments will be collected from WebCT, an online program in which students submit their general psychology assignments, and each participant will be given a mean procrastination time. A correlational analysis will be conducted between scores on the 35-item self-assessment scale and mean procrastination time. I predict that self-assessment scales will not accurately measure procrastination in the participants due to participant inaccuracy in reporting their procrastination behavior. Determining the validity of self-assessment scales in measuring procrastination will prove useful in establishing valid procedures to measure procrastination.

7:15-7:30

"The Effect of Everyday Stress on Eating"

Chegameh Korvandi-Geledar (Chey)
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael P. Sullivan

In a college setting there are many stressors, leaving the student looking for an outlet. Not having enough time to deal with stress in a healthy way students turn to eating. It was hypothesized that people under stressful conditions would eat more than people in non-stressful conditions. Participants were given the opportunity to eat while completing word problems. Some participants faced with a more difficult problem than others, to evoke greater levels of stress. We will find out if people are using food as a coping mechanism for stress. When people realize their unhealthy habit they can come up with a healthier way of dealing with it.

7:30-7:45

“Relationship Between Life Experiences and Alcohol Attitudes: Finding Regional Differences”

Molly K. Smith

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

People who have experienced traumatic life experiences have been linked to problems with alcoholism. Such life experiences may also contribute to shaping the attitudes people have towards consuming alcohol. Values and beliefs about alcohol may show regional differences due to the surroundings, climate, and the character of that particular region. Fifty undergraduate introductory psychology students from Belmont University-completed three surveys which included a biographical information section, adapted from the Student Alcohol Questionnaire (Engs, 1975), a section on life experiences, adapted from the Adult Trauma History Questionnaire,(Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, 2006), and an attitude towards alcohol drinking scale, (Perry, 1973). This study expects to find a relationship between negative life events and attitudes toward alcohol. How regional differences effects attitudes toward alcohol will also be explored. More information on the relationship between life experiences, regional differences, and attitudes toward alcohol might help to better understand alcohol abuse.

7:45-8:00

“Inattentional Blindness or Inattentional Amnesia?”

Brett R. Petersen

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie R. Yandell

Inattentional blindness occurs when one’s attention is extremely focused on some event or object, such as a visual search task, rendering the individual oblivious to a noticeable object. According to this view, without attention there is no conscious awareness. Another explanation for this effect is inattentional amnesia, where events are attended to but at a non-conscious level so that vision exists only in the present tense. The object’s existence is instantly forgotten. This study is attempting to draw further distinctions between inattentional blindness and inattentional amnesia. Approximately 30 introductory psychology students will perform a visual search task consisting of detecting events in video footage. The experimental group will see footage containing an obvious yet unexpected object while the control group will see the same footage without the appearance of the object. Both groups will be given an explicit and implicit memory test. It is expected that the experimental group will show no advantage for explicit recall but will show evidence of unconscious memory on the implicit memory task. The findings will be discussed in how these tasks help understand distinctions between inattentional blindness and inattentional amnesia.

8:00-8:15

“The Effects of Speech Pitch, Volume, and Rhythm in Auditory Attention Capture”

Clayton D. Rothwell

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

In everyday situations, such as conversations at a party, some spoken information is attended to and other auditory information in the background is not attended to. To some extent, the features, both semantic (meaningful) and non-semantic (acoustical), of the unattended speech are processed with little attention. Some information that is not attended to may capture or “grab” our attention. This is typically called distraction. This study will look at three different non-semantic aspects of speech that influence attention capture; pitch, volume, and rhythm. Participants will be asked to listen to a text passage in the right ear of headphones and repeat out loud, or shadow, what they hear. At the same time, a different text passage will

be presented to the left ear of headphones which participants are instructed to ignore. The left ear, or unattended message, will be manipulated in three different sections in each of three different ways (pitch, volume, or rhythm). The shadowing response of repeating the right ear out loud will be recorded and used as a measure of distraction. In addition, participants will complete a questionnaire about information that was presented in the unattended ear. Based on past research, it is hypothesized that rhythm will be more distracting than pitch or volume, but that all three will be more distracting than no manipulation.

8:15-8:30

“Perceived Stress in Active, Passive and Non-Procrastinating College Students”

Dannelle Rohrbaugh
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

Procrastination, defined as a behavioral postponement of accomplishing a task due to the absence or lack of self-regulation (Chu & Choi, 2005), is a common problem among college students. Traditionally, procrastinators have been seen as individuals coping with stress and anxiety using the method of avoidance (Haycock, McCarthy & Skay, 1998). In a 2005 study, Chu and Choi made a distinction between active and passive procrastinators. Elaborating on the work of Chu and Choi (2005), this study examines the relationship between active, passive and non-procrastination and an individual's perceived stress, which is defined as how one appraises a situation as stressful (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983). It was hypothesized that active procrastinators, individuals who prefer to work under pressure but still complete their assignments, would have higher levels of perceived stress than passive procrastinators, people who procrastinate as an avoidance coping technique, while non-procrastinators would have the lowest perception of their individual stress. Approximately sixty students, enrolled in an introductory psychology course will be asked to complete three questionnaires: the Academic Procrastination Scale (Chu & Choi, 2005), the Active Procrastination Scale (Chu & Choi, 2005), and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The findings could be used to support Chu and Choi (2005) distinction between two types of procrastinators and increase understanding of procrastination. This could be helpful to counselors, parents and teachers, who want to help, inspire and encourage these procrastinating individuals.

8:30-8:45

“Extroversion-Optimism, Introversion-Pessimism and Coping Methods”

Carrie A. Brown
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lonnie Yandell

People have different ways of coping with stress. Studies have shown that different personalities handle stress differently. It has been found that extroverts are more likely to seek social support than introverts and optimists are more likely to seek social support than pessimists. Those who seek social support are less likely to use alcohol as away of coping. Based on these findings I hypothesized that those who have optimistic-extraverted personalities will be more likely to cope with stress by seeking social support than those with pessimist-introverted personalities and pessimist-introverted personalities will be more likely to use alcohol as way of coping than optimistic-extroverted personalities. Sixty students from Belmont University will complete three questionnaires measuring optimism/pessimism, introversion/extraversion, and coping strategies. If we can understand how different personalities deal with their stress we can help people cope with stress in a better way if they use negative coping strategies.

8:45-9:00

“Psychosurgery: From Ice Pick to Radiation”

Melinda Baker, Laura Bear, & Kelly Witherbee
Faculty Advisor: Dr. William N. Bailey

Throughout history people have tried to treat different mental illnesses by performing psychosurgery. Archeological digs all over the world have found the ancient remains of patients who underwent a type of psychosurgery called trepanning. In the later half of the 1930s, Dr. Walter Freeman, the most famous psychosurgeon of the time, popularized psychosurgery with the help of the media. By 1955, over 40,000 men, women, and children in the United States had undergone psychosurgery (Sabbatini, 1997). However, psychosurgery soon became virtually extinct with the introduction of antidepressants and other psychotropic drugs. Psychosurgery has evolved from the use of hand drills or ice-picks to modern methods, such as radiosurgery, which does not require the opening of the skull. This literature review describes the interesting history and contemporary nature of psychosurgery.