Department of Communication
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Senior Honors Student Presentations

UCSB

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Attitudes Towards Online Privacy

Jakob Edson

Abstract: The legality of government data collection online has been at the forefront of the debate on how secure Americans feel when communicating over the internet. According to recent Gallup and Pew research, a majority of Americans disagree with and disapprove of government surveillance and data collection on citizens. This current study attempts to understand how UCSB students feel about online privacy and government surveillance as a function of political affiliation and the frequency with which they visit websites such as Facebook. An online survey was administered which measured approval or disapproval of government data collection programs, authoritarianism, political party affiliation, and willingness to disclose personal information. Individual attitudes, political affiliation and online behavior were examined as predictors of approval or disapproval of government surveillance and data collection.

Long Distance Relationships and Academic Success in First Year University Students

Jennifer Reinus

Abstract: There is a large literature on college students' transition to a university from junior college and high school. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how long distance romantic relationships among first-year students affect this transition. this study examines the impact of the management of the long distance relationship on academic success and the overall transition to university life. using the relational turbulence model, this study aims to pinpoint specific coping mechanisms that students in long distance relationships can utilize to ameliorate these potentially negative effects on their academic success. the analysis focuses on students' perceptions of long distance, levels of relational uncertainty and satisfaction, use of coping mechanisms, and relational maintenance behaviors, to explain the relationship between participation in long distance relationships and subsequent academic success. results were analyzed within the framework of self expansion theory and indicated that levels of relational certainty and satisfaction within a long distance relationship are predictors of academic success.

Gender Differences in Risk Perceptions of Online Shopping and Effects of Friend Recommendations

Angel Li

Abstract: This study examines how men and women differ in both their perceptions of the risks associated with shopping online and the effect of receiving friend recommendations. Previous research has shown that males are more likely to make purchases online. Females shop less online presumably because they perceive a greater risk in online shopping. Past research examining "friend recommendations" has found that these recommendations are effective in reducing risks for females but not for males. Based on this research, it was predicted that

compared to males females will: 1) perceive greater risks in online shopping, and 2) be more influenced by friend recommendations. For females, friend recommendations will reduce their feelings of risk and increase their willingness to make online purchases.

Dominance and Enhancement in Social Hierarchies

Anthony Correia

Abstract: When considering social hierarchies, there are two primary theories of reason that determine how human beings compete for position. The first field of theories suggests that physical characteristics, such as size and strength, determine position within a hierarchy. The second field of theories suggests that task ability and status allocation determine positioning. We have considerable evidence to suggest that human beings use both physical characteristics and task ability in determining position within a social hierarchy. While using steady measures (i.e. a questionnaire and physical measurements) to gauge physical character, this between-subjects experiment examined high versus low status, on the frequency of dominant and submissive acts, a key determinant of hierarchy positioning. This experiment also delved into how personality trait dominance and enhancement of self-characteristics operated within social hierarchies. The results allowed us to examine the circumstances which physical characteristics interact and/or cooperate with task ability, how trait dominance influences relative positioning, and why we self-enhance our characteristics within a social hierarchy.

Stigma and Pathogen Avoidance Associated with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Rachel Cansler

Abstract: Although research suggests that disabled individuals routinely suffer stigmatization and discrimination, little research has been conducted regarding public stigma and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This study addresses public perceptions and attitudes about individuals with ASD. Specifically, this study measured and compared the effects of three interventions based on recent advances on intergroup contact theory: (1) increasing knowledge, (2) enhancing empathy, and (3) reducing anxiety. In addition this project assessed people's initial negative prejudices towards individuals with ASD and examined the association between their attitudes and pathogen avoidance. The implications for the results are discussed in terms of intervention methods, individual differences, and implications for reducing stigma towards individuals with ASD.

Emotional Intelligence, Relationship Satisfaction and Gender Differences

Sarah Bertolli

Abstract: This study investigates the effects Emotional Intelligence has on relationship satisfaction with gender differences. Emotional Intelligence may be divided into four subdomains: Emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding, and emotional management (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). In this study emotional management was further subdivided into two types – self-management and relationship (other) management. These two sub dimensions of emotional management may have important consequences for relationship satisfaction. Stereotypically males are thought to be more self-oriented and therefore more likely to have higher levels of self- rather than other-management. In contrast, females are often assumed to be more attuned to other people. Females therefore should have higher levels of other-management than males. This study explored gender differences and the levels of self and other management with relationship satisfaction. Finally, it concludes with predictions about relationship satisfaction as an outcome of emotional management.

Gender Differences in Pro-environmentalism

Hanna Dijkstra

Abstract: Men and women have been found to have significant differences in environmental attitudes and behaviors, however less conclusive evidence has defined the reasons for this difference. Past research has suggested that variation in altruism or social responsibility may be responsible. Other scholars posit that variation in social networks and therefore social pressure between genders may contribute to this phenomenon. Risk perception has also been proposed as a factor influencing gender differences in environmentalism. This research analyzes the gender disparities in regards to these variables and can help communicators formulate the most effective messages for specific audiences. The results lend insight into how gender, environmentalism and communication are linked and shed light on why women have been found to be more environmentally concerned and active.