Sample Research Conference Abstracts

With over 600 presentations to see at the Undergraduate Research Conference, there are a lot of amazing things to see. Here are a select few to give you an idea of the range of things you will be able to see at the conference.

Nunca mais: Media Resistance and Reaction to Military Dictatorship in Argentina and Brazil

Daniel McDonald - Oral Presentation

Mass media played a critical role in abetting and resisting military dictatorships in Brazil and Argentina. Their influence on the popular conscience drew from experiences during their respective dictatorships and affected their action in the post-dictatorship accordingly. Using scholarly material accessed through the University of Massachusetts library database, the Archivo de la Memoria in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Skidmore collection at Brown University, and archived newspapers, this essay examines how media resistance or compliance with the military dictatorship affected its tenor with regards to the newly deposed military juntas. Brazilian media in all forms operated with varying states of impunity during the military regime. While many media outlets did abet military efforts, significant portions successfully defied military censorship. Argentine media of the period faced harsh repression while resistance centered on publications by fringe or violent groups. Brazil’s media response to the end of the dictatorship did not attain the level of politicization of its Argentine counterpart. Rather, the participation of moderate media outlets with broad bases of support kept the agendas of radical or violent groups from gaining significant traction in the national dialogue. These groups typically called for greater punishment with regards to the crimes of the members of the deposed military governments. In sum, the distinct experiences of the Brazilian and Argentine medias illustrate the effects of government repression has on their treatment by those sources once their government has fallen.

The Role of BdNAM-B1 in Senescence and Nutrient Remobilization in Brachypodium distachyon

Gopalsamy Srinivasa Nithin - Poster Presentation
The role of BdNAM-B1 in senescence and nutrient remobilization in Brachypodium distachyon

Malnutrition is a major epidemic that presents a multitude of problems for a large portion of the global population. It affects 20% of the population in the developing world and has been found to be the cause of 49% of child mortality worldwide. One avenue by which malnutrition is being combated is the biofortification of staple foods, which is the genetic engineering of crops to accumulate a greater amount of nutrients such as metals and proteins in the edible portions of the plants. As part of biofortification research, BdNAM-B1 has been identified as an ortholog to TtNAM-B1, a gene present in the common wheat, Triticum aestivum. TtNAM-B1 has been found to act in the regulation of senescence in wheat, and as senescence is the stage of the life cycle during which nutrients are transported from the main body of the plant to its seeds, the nutrient content in the grain is impacted. More specifically, plants with reduced TtNAM-B1 expression are delayed in their senescence and thus maintain a younger and greener appearance for more time, which is likely why the gene was artificially selected out of the wheat cultivar during domestication. The cost of this delayed senescence, though, is that the grains of these plants contain significantly reduced nitrogen (protein), Zn and Fe.

Physical and Mental Health and Leisure-Time PA Among Women

Rebecca Slate - Poster Presentation

ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: Currently the majority of subjective and objective measures being used to assess physical activity (PA) are able to provide information about the volume, duration, and intensity of the activity, however they do not provide information about the location where the activity is being done. Measurement of PA completed at specific locations could help our understanding of where leisure-time PA occurs. The Movement and Activity in Physical Space Score (MAPS), combines accelerometer (PA) and geospatial (GPS/GIS) data to quantify a person’s movement within their environment, providing objective measurement of leisure-time PA. The purpose of this project is to examine the relationship between leisure-time PA and the physical and mental health of normal (Body Mass Index [BMI] 18.5-24.9), overweight (25-29.9) and obese (>30) women.

METHODS: Women (20-50 years; groups of n=10 normal, overweight and obese) attended two testing sessions. During Session 1 participants completed an informed consent, a packet of questionnaires (demographics, SF-36, Beck Depression Inventory) and a 6-minute walk. Participants were given an accelerometer and GPS unit to wear
for 5 days. During Session 2, participants’ data were downloaded and processed to obtain MAPS scores.

RESULTS: Women with higher BMIs had lower MAPS scores, indicating they did less leisure-time PA than those with lower BMIs. Worse physical and mental health were also seen in women with higher BMIs.

CONCLUSION: MAPS scores provided detailed information about the women's leisure-time PA and higher scores were associated with better physical and mental health. The ability to determine where and how much activity is done could be very useful for developing individualized interventions to increase leisure-time PA.

Congruence between Spouses’ Perceptions and Observers’ Ratings of Support: The Moderating Role of Attachment Style

Boyle Alysia - Poster Presentation

Positive perceptions of spousal support have been linked to a variety of health benefits, such as lower mortality rates and improved emotional well-being (Cohen, 2004; Uchino, 2009). Past research has suggested that perceptions of support may vary due to individuals’ attachment style, which guides their expectations and behaviors in close relationships. Although previous work has examined the connection between attachment style and perceptions of support, few studies have examined how the perceptions of people with more secure or insecure attachment styles align with observers’ ratings of actual behavior. The present research investigated this question with a sample of 225 newlywed couples who attempted to resolve a marital conflict. We predicted that newlyweds’ attachment style would contribute to differences in their subjective perceptions of support and their supportive behaviors. Both partners’ behaviors were rated by third-party observers regarding how supportive they were of their spouse during the conflict discussion. Partners also reported their own perceptions of how supportive they were of their spouse and how supportive their spouse was of them. Results revealed that husbands higher in avoidance (i.e., uncomfortable with intimacy) perceived both themselves and their spouse as less supportive, although neither they nor their spouse were rated as less supportive by third-party observers compared to husbands lower in avoidance. Wives higher in avoidance also perceived both themselves and their spouse to be less supportive compared to wives low in avoidance, but only the wives were rated as behaving less supportively by third-party observers. The reverse effect was seen in wives high in anxiety. Anxious wives perceived both themselves and their spouse as less supportive as compared to wives lower in anxiety, but only their husbands were rated as less supportive by third-party observers.

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