

PERK 2025



Annual Meeting of the
Association for Psychological and Educational Research in Kansas

Benedictine College
November 8, 2025



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WELCOME TO PERK 2025!

Welcome to the 2025 Association for Psychological and Educational Research in Kansas (PERK) conference hosted from Benedictine College on the heights above the Missouri River! We are delighted that you have decided to join in this collegial effort to promote, improve, and share psychological and educational research with college faculty and students from our beautiful state and others across the Midwest.

We look forward to learning from our keynote speaker, Dr. Katie Hoemann, as she examines how our understanding and experiences of human emotion are shaped by the contexts in which we live. We also look forward to engaging all participants in meaningful and intellectually stimulating conversations and exchanges of ideas.

Again, we extend a warm Midwestern welcome and hope that you will enjoy this year's PERK conference! It is sure to be filled with innovative research and rich opportunities for collaboration among all attendees and presenters.

Sincerely,

Amy Posey, Eva Chen, Sharon Marie Houlahan, Hans Stadthagen-Gonzalez

PERK's mission is to promote, improve and disseminate psychological and education research, to encourage collaboration between faculty and students, and to enhance collegiality among college faculty and students in Kansas and other Midwestern states.

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Avila University
Baker University
Benedictine College
Emporia State University
Lindenwood University
MidAmerica Nazarene University
Missouri Western State University
University of Central Missouri
University of Kansas
University of Saint Mary

Thank you all for your support and your presence!

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Preliminaries

7:30 – 10:00	Check-in – FLC 1 st Floor Rotunda
8:30 – 9:15	Business Meeting (for faculty only) – FLC Room 308
8:30 – 10:00	Graduate Programs Information Fair – FLC 3 rd Floor Foyer
8:30 – 10:00	Donuts & Coffee – FLC 3 rd Floor Foyer

Morning Oral Presentations

	Session A - Room 307	Session B - Room 308
9:30 – 9:45	<i>The Relationship between Personality Traits and Emotional Responses to Feedback that is Inconsistent with Previously Acquired Knowledge</i> – Hartshorn, Bugos, & Lewis	<i>Providing a Safe Space for Everyone: The Benefits of Gender and Sexuality Alliances in Schools</i> - MacDonald
9:45 – 10:00	<i>You're Grounded: Does Tactile Grounding Reduce Stress Faster than Other Relaxation Techniques?</i> – Madore, Gerle, & Baker	<i>Government-Funded Applied Behavioral Analysis Training for Special Education Staff</i> - Stone
10:00 – 10:15	<i>The Neuroanatomy of ADHD</i> – Genseal	<i>The effect of land acknowledgments on Environmental Cognitive Alternatives</i> – Corral, Toizer, Lies, & Adams
10:15 – 10:30	<i>Pornography Consumption: The Effects on Growing Minds and Frequent Viewers Calls For Bans</i> - Green & Long	<i>The Importance of Libraries for Disadvantaged Populations</i> - Langford

Mid-Day Activities

10:30 – 11:00	Poster Session – FLC 3 rd Floor Foyer
11:00 – 12:00	Keynote Talk - McAllister Board Room FLC 4 th Floor <i>Katie Hoemann, Ph.D.</i> <i>Around the World and in Every Day: The Contexts that Structure Our Understanding and Experience of Emotion</i>
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch - McAllister Board Room FLC 4 th Floor

Afternoon Oral Presentations

Time	Session A (Room 307)	Session B (Room 308)
1:00 – 1:15	<i>Student Leadership: Personality Correlates and Motivations for Leading</i> – Madore, Gerle, & Maday	<i>Decolonizing National Identity: (Re-)Imagining Communities</i> – Semon
1:15 – 1:30	<i>Do Referees Get in the Way of Female Athletes? Implicit Stereotypes Run Rampant on the Field</i> – Patti	<i>"Bottom line, to feel safe": A Qualitative Exploration of Consent</i> – Painter
1:30 – 1:45	<i>Predicting and Manipulating In-Car Phone Use: The Role of Gender and Attachment</i> – Manchanda, Gillath, Atchley, & Tran	<i>Exploring Pet Attitudes and Gender Perceptions</i> - DeKock
1:45 – 2:00	<i>Meaning of Life Events Predict Changes in Attachment</i> – Zhang & Gillath	

Business Meeting for Faculty

**8:30-9:15
FLC Room 308**

All faculty members in attendance at the conference are invited and encouraged to attend the Annual Business Meeting. We will discuss host institutions for future conferences, organizational finances, and share ideas about enhancing the conference experience for all attendees. Please come ready to share your feedback and ideas!

Graduate Programs Information Fair

**8:30-10:00
FLC 3rd Floor Foyer**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the Graduate Programs Fair to learn more about opportunities to further your education at participating universities. Coffee and donuts will be provided!

Morning Oral Presentations

Session A (FLC Room 307)

9:30 – 9:45

The Relationship between Personality Traits and Emotional Responses to Feedback that is Inconsistent with Previously Acquired Knowledge. Ariel Hartshorn, John Paul Bugos, & Christian Lewis. Benedictine College.

Do the "Big 5" personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism) correlate with the strength of emotional responses when receiving false feedback? Participants will complete the 44-item Big-Five Inventory and will be asked to determine whether a series of cards must be sorted according to color, number, or shape. False feedback will be given when the rule unexpectedly changes, and emotional response will be measured through galvanic skin response. We hypothesize that only neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness will correlate with emotional response. This study contributes to a better understanding of personality's relation to task performance and reaction to feedback.

9:45 – 10:00

You're Grounded: Does Tactile Grounding Reduce Stress Faster than Other Relaxation Techniques? Sean Madore, Donald Gerle, & Je'Zhon Baker. Benedictine College.

Can "grounding" techniques help reduce stress faster? We will measure stress using galvanic skin response in college students while exposed to stress-inducing stimuli: listening to audio of a baby's cry, seeing mildly-distressing pictures, and completing arithmetic operations. Participants will then be asked to relax using one of three techniques and compare their stress level 1, 2, and 3 minutes after the relaxation starts. We hypothesize that rubbing a stone in your hand will help participants relax faster than passive relaxation but slower than directed breathing. This study will test the relative usefulness of popular relaxation techniques for stress reduction.

10:00 – 10:15

The Neuroanatomy of ADHD. Chris Genseal. University of Central Missouri.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition linked to distinctive patterns in brain structure and function. This review explores the key neuroanatomical regions associated with ADHD and their interconnected networks that regulate attention, motivation, and impulse control. By examining findings from neural imaging studies, this review will discuss how atypical brain development, reduced gray matter volume, and altered connectivity contribute to ADHD symptoms. Understanding these neuroanatomical differences enhances our insight into the biological foundations of ADHD.

10:15 – 10:30

Pornography Consumption: The Effects on Growing Minds and Frequent Viewers Calls For Bans. Elly Green & Robyn Long. Baker University.

The research examines how pornography is consumed and interpreted across gender and age differences, honing in on adolescent exposure. It explores the negative psychological, behavioral, and social effects of exposure and frequent usage, including distorted sexual expectations and desensitization. The research argues that unrestricted access poses significant developmental and ethical risks. In response, it calls for stronger public policy interventions, including nationwide 18+ verification checkpoints on pornographic websites and the implementation of a public information campaign to promote awareness and digital responsibility.

Session B (FLC Room 308)

9:30 – 9:45

Providing a Safe Space for Everyone: The Benefits of Gender and Sexuality Alliances in Schools. **Morgan MacDonald.** Baker University.

As of 2025, Senate Bill 12 has banned schools in Texas from holding Gender and Sexuality Alliance clubs for students, despite LGBTQ+ adolescents being higher at risk for poor mental health and lack of support. This paper examines the benefits of holding GSA clubs in schools for all students. For my argument, the paper draws from empirical and theoretical research to find how GSAs promote mental health, foster belonging, and provide advocacy opportunities for adolescents. Policy makers should promote the inclusion of GSAs in public schools and educators should research how to hold effective meetings that best support LGBTQ+ students.

9:45 – 10:00

Government-Funded Applied Behavioral Analysis Training for Special Education Staff. **Nevaeh Stone.** Baker University.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) rates are increasing, yet evidence-based applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy training is not funded for special education teachers. This paper argues that ABA should be funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in education systems and required in training for special education teachers. IDEA mandates necessary behavioral support, free appropriate public education, and provides legal framework for individualized education programs (IEPs). ABA improves adaptive functioning, communication, and socialization. Policymakers should fund ABA training in schools meet the growing needs of students with ASD.

10:00 – 10:15

The effect of land acknowledgments on Environmental Cognitive Alternatives. **Sol Corral, Barbara Toizer, Trevor Lies, & Glenn Adams.** University of Kansas.

Land acknowledgments are statements recognizing Indigenous peoples who have stewarded the land that one currently occupies. They can act as a liberatory tool through the disruption of colonial knowledge systems. In this study, we test and find support for the hypothesis that exposure to land acknowledgments, compared to historical statements that make no reference to colonization, promote imagination of a sustainable world (i.e., environmental cognitive

alternatives). Research suggests that the imagination of such alternatives can motivate people to support pro-environmental social change and to enhance environmental activism behavior.

10:15 – 10:30

The Importance of Libraries for Disadvantaged Populations. J'Linn Langford. Baker University.

Public libraries continue to face budget cuts, leading to reduced services and access to essential resources. Many disadvantaged populations depend on libraries for free access to books, internet services, and the educational opportunities that it provides. Public library services increase autonomy for elders, allow teenagers a safe space separate from their home, improve literacy of children in low-income families, and provide helpful connections for the unhoused. Investing in libraries promotes equity by guaranteeing that community members have access to essential resources that support safety, learning, and wellbeing.

Poster Presentation Session

10:30-11:00
FLC 3rd Floor Foyer

Self-Regulation and Physiological Stress: Does Regulation of Behavior Correlate with Increased Skin-Conductance? Aubrey Agovino, Myla Cathey, Maggie Durham, & Adam Runyan. University of Central Missouri.

This study explores the relationship between Skin Conductance Reactivity (SCR) and Self-Regulation (SR) to provide explanations on how poor mental health could impact Self-Regulation. Self-Regulation is one's ability to implement and follow planned behavior in order to achieve goals (Kanfer, 1970; Miller & Brown, 1991). Skin Conductance Reactivity is an acute physiological measure of stress (Hanshans et al., 2024). Participants are randomly assigned to Condition 1 or 2. Condition 1 plays Blackjack (low SR task) first, then completes the Stroop Test (high SR task), while Condition 2 completes the Stroop task first, then Blackjack. Our current sample size is 33 participants.

Perceived Trustworthiness as a Function of Background Context. Zach Fry & Adam Runyan. University of Central Missouri.

This study examines whether background context influences how people perceive the trustworthiness of facial expressions. Participants will view 80 faces-half neutral, half emotional-across four background conditions: professional, natural, blurred, and abstract. EEG data will be recorded using a B-Alert system, focusing on the N400 component to assess contextual processing. Participants will rate each face's trustworthiness on a Likert scale. It is expected that professional and natural backgrounds will yield higher trustworthiness ratings and smaller N400 amplitudes than blurred or abstract backgrounds. Findings may reveal how environmental cues shape social judgments, especially in virtual communication settings.

Harm Reduction & Substance Use Disorder. Molly Killion. Missouri Western State University.

This literature review examines the efficacy of harm reduction policy as a strategy for minimizing the negative consequences of drug use, framed in the context of a practicum experience at an addiction services clinic. It explores different examples of harm reduction services including needle exchange programs, drug checking, and medication assisted treatment. The review explores the efficacy of these programs across the nation as well as barriers to access to these programs, especially in high-risk communities. The review highlights evidence supporting harm reduction as a pragmatic, evidence-based approach that improves health outcomes and reduces stigma associated with drug use.

Prayer and Meditation: Differential Impacts on Stress and Stress Recovery
McKulla Paszkiewicz & Adam Runyan. University of Central Missouri.

People have long used prayer and meditation to ease fear, stress, and seek comfort. This study will analyze the physiological effects of these practices on stress and stress recovery among 120 undergraduate participants. Heart rate (HR) will be measured using BIOPAC HR sensors as participants complete a mock U.S. Civics exam, aimed at stressing participants. The intervention group will self-select to pray or meditate for five minutes, while the control group rests, and HR will be assessed during the study duration. We hypothesize participants engaging in prayer or meditation will exhibit lower HR compared to those in passive rest.

Psychological Skills Training: The Importance of Mental Health and Stress Awareness of Student Athletes. **Jackson Rooney & Adam Runyan.** University of Central Missouri.

This poster reviews research on psychological skills training, emphasizing stress management, mindset, and social identity in student-athletes. Findings show that cognitive-behavioral strategies, sport participation, and a strong student-athlete identity reduce stress and improve performance. The project highlights evidence-based approaches to enhance mental health and resilience in collegiate athletes.

Keynote Talk

11:00-12:00
McAllister Board Room FLC 4th Floor

Around the World and in Every Day: The Contexts that Structure Our Understanding and Experience of Emotion

Katie Hoemann, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor and Dale J. Weary Faculty Fellow of Social Psychology
University of Kansas*



Katie Hoemann studies how people experience emotion, and how the ways they make meaning of these experiences can shape motivations, behaviors, and social interactions in each moment. She also looks at how these momentary processes map on to individual and cultural differences in emotion, and how they are predictive of health and well-being. Katie brings an interdisciplinary background, a unique set of tools, and multiple sociocultural perspectives to bear on these questions. The hallmark of her research is studying emotion in the real-world contexts people navigate in their daily lives.

Afternoon Oral Presentations

Session A (FLC Room 307)

1:00 – 1:15

Student Leadership: Personality Correlates and Motivations for Leading.

Sean Madore, Donald Gerle, & Gabriel Maday. Benedictine College.

College students aspire to leadership roles on campus for a variety of reasons, such as resume enhancement and personal fulfillment. Previous research shows that individual differences in personality might also predict leadership aspirations. In this study, we measured levels of narcissism, volunteer motivations, and self-esteem, and compared leaders versus non-leaders. We hypothesized that student leaders will score higher on narcissism, and students that score higher on self-serving volunteer motivations will score higher on narcissism, and students with more selfless motivations would score lower. In addition to sharing our findings, we will discuss future directions for research into students' leadership motivations.

1:15 – 1:30

Do Referees Get in the Way of Female Athletes? Implicit Stereotypes Run Rampant on the Field. Lucia Patti. Benedictine College.

Stereotype threat can be activated by a male examiner's presence in female sports, negatively affecting athletic performance (Cardozo et al., 2020). These effects are potentially critical to high-performing female athletes and warrant evaluation. I am proposing research that will explore whether questioning implicit stereotypes mitigates the effects of stereotype threat in the presence of a male referee. In this presentation, I will share details of the proposed research and discuss the relevant theoretical and empirical foundations for my hypotheses.

1:30 – 1:45

Predicting and Manipulating In-Car Phone Use: The Role of Gender and Attachment.

Niva Manchanda, Omri Gillath, Paul Atchley, & Ashleigh Victoria Tran. University of Kansas.

Technological distractions, particularly phone use, pose a critical risk to driving safety, yet little is known about the psychological dispositions that predict such behaviors. In this study, a simulated driving task was used to examine whether real-time indicators of driver distraction (e.g., phone touches, off-road glances) could be predicted by participants' attachment styles, gender, and attachment security priming. Results revealed that looking at one's phone was negatively associated with looking at the road the whole time and maintaining hands on the steering wheel. Regression analyses further revealed gender differences such that female drivers demonstrated significantly safer driving profiles relative to male counterparts. Attachment anxiety interacted with gender to predict off-road glances, such that gender differences were more pronounced among individuals high in attachment anxiety. Finally, security priming reduced speeding, but primarily for those low in attachment anxiety. Together, these findings

suggest that attachment-related dispositions, in combination with dynamic in-drive behaviors, contribute to distracted driving, and that attachment security priming may offer a promising strategy to help mitigate driving risks for certain individuals.

1:45 – 2:00

Meaning of Life Events Predict Changes in Attachment. **Qi Zhang & Omri Gillath.**

University of Kansas.

The current research examined whether people's subjective interpretations of 10 life events predict changes in attachment over time. We tracked attachment style monthly in a large sample of 6,566 adults across a two-year period. Results indicated that within-person variation in event meaning accounted for more of the change. In addition, interpreting life events more positively—at both the between- and within-person levels—was associated with higher state security and lower anxiety and avoidance. Overall, these findings provide strong evidence that how people construe their life events, rather than the mere occurrence of those events, is more informative for predicting changes in attachment. |

Session B (FLC Room 308)

1:00 – 1:15

Decolonizing National Identity: (Re-)Imagining Communities. **Matthew Semon.**

University of Kansas.

In this critical review of the literature on national identity, I begin with Kosterman and Feshbach's (1989) separation of national identity into two constructs: nationalism and patriotism. Psychological literature labels patriotism as the ideal, welcoming version of national identity, thereby obscuring the white defaults that exist in American identity (Castro-Gómez, 2021). I use epistemological ignorance to highlight what Mills (2007) labels the ""truths"" in a racialized national identity that modern psychology dismisses as primitive. I finish by using Martin-Baró's concept of "utilizing the people's virtues" (1994) to offer a reframing of national identity that centers the truths within minoritized perspectives.

1:15 – 1:30

"Bottom line, to feel safe": A Qualitative Exploration of Consent. **Naomi Painter.**

University of Kansas.

Consent literature has been primarily grounded in discussion alongside sexual education and sexual violence. I expand consent research by examining how participants perceive and understand consent. Through a qualitative study of 150 participants, I utilized thematic analysis to identify harm prevention and communication as consistent themes on how consent functions and provides value to social relationships. Findings ground consent within explicit constructions of property (e.g., land, money) and expand on how consent literature necessitates a lay perspective on the operation of consent. I offer a critique of how participants' view of consent manifests assumptions of consent instigated in academic spaces.

1:30 – 1:45

Exploring Pet Attitudes and Gender Perceptions. Kay DeKock. Lindenwood University.

Negative biases may be expressed implicitly, such as through animal symbolism (Gruen & Probyn-Rapsey, 2018). Women and cats are especially likened in American culture (Alex, 2024). My proposed study aims to establish if cat-hate is positively correlated with negative attitudes toward women. I propose to use a modified Pet Attitude Scale (PAS-M; Munsell et al., 2004) to measure cat-hate and an Implicit Association Test (IAT) I created to measure gender bias. I will also be asking survey questions to determine whether participants do liken cats to women, as the literature suggests.

Great Plains Psychology Convention

March 27-28th, 2026
College of the Ozarks

Great Plains Psychology Convention 2026

At this conference, undergraduate and graduate students will present their research and/or research proposals. Registrations and submissions will tentatively be accepted from late February to early March. The registration fee will be \$30 per student. See the site above for information about Keynote speaker Dr. Tim Sisemore, Ph.D. and convention-rate lodging.

Dr. Jeff Elliott (Professor of Psychology and Division Chair, Human and Social Services) and his colleagues will send more details as they approach these dates.