Analyze This!



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Analyze This

Analyze This is the Providence College Psychology Department's biannual newsletter. It features artides written by psychology majors, as well as faculty announcements and department news. Enjoy as you read the Volume 22: Issue 2, Spring 2021 publication of *Analyze This*!

How To Sleep

by **Jackie Lombardo**



In my kindergarten class, nap time was an infamously dreaded daily activity. For most kids, this dread came from the halt in playtime and the pause on their newfound excitement of learning. However, for me, the fear came from the act of napping itself because I knew that I wouldn't be able to fall asleep. As my classmates fell to their mats, they all closed their eyes and drifted off reasonably quickly. I didn't. My

eyes were closed, and I willed my body to sleep, but instead, I spent the hour lying still, trying not to draw attention to the fact that, unlike everyone else, I wasn't dreaming.

I have had this trouble sleeping since before I can even remember. Besides nap time, some of my first insomnia experiences came in early elementary school when I found myselfafraid of being in the dark by myself. I would lie awake at night, scared. What exactly I was even fearful of, I don't remember, probably monsters, but that's beyond the point. The point is that even back in the early days of my life when sleep was supposed to come easy, it didn't.

As I grew, so did my worries. My sleep only lessened. I spent countless nights tossingand turning in my bed. I would stare at my clock, watching the numbers pass me by and I laid still, consumed by my racing thoughts. In middle school, I would avoid sleepovers for sleeping somewhere other than my own bed never went well. Given all of this, my class camping trip in the sixth grade proved tricky too. I spent those five nights lying in my sleeping bag, restless and in agony. Everyone was exhausted after that trip. However, most kids were worn out from aweek of rock climbing and rope swinging, not lack of sleep.

Of course, even early on, I knew that this was an issue, and so did my parents. I saw a therapist, starting in the first grade, who helped me connect my worries to my lack of sleep. Overtime, through various strategies and techniques, I have alleviated some of my sleeping problems. In fact, once I reached high school, I was confident in my ability to sleep through the night. I started going to sleepovers and no longer dreaded class overnights. It was great. I thought that Ihad beat my issues for good.

However, I was hit with reality when I started college this past fall. Soon after the start ofmy first semester, my old sleeping habits started creeping back into my bedroom. I found myself lying in bed for hours on end, every night, tossing around, unable to drift asleep. This new environment came with new stressors that opened up the previously closed door to my same old slee ping problems. I would walk the halls at night, baffled by the silence. Was I the only one who had this problem? After all, my roommate had the magical ability to fall asleep when her head hit the pillow, and seemingly so did many others.

Those first few months, I tried everything I could think of to fix my sleep. I meditated, I tried yoga, I drank chamomile tea. Eventually, I even tried melatonin, but nothing stuck. I was onthe verge of giving up. I had my bags packed, and I begged my parents to pick me up after onlyabout a month of my new college life. I got back on track in the comfort of my home, but eventually, I was forced to face the noise and return to school. When I did, I spoke to a staff member who told me that I was not isolated in my issues. She explained how typical sleeping troubles were. Her words, no matter how simple, took some weight off my shoulders. I was eventually able to make it work. Now, I still don't sleep perfectly, and I still have restless nights, but ultimately, I learned that this is an issue that will come and go, not temporary, but not permanent either.

This year in my introduction to psychology class, I learned that roughly one in four adults has insomnia. Problems with sleeping are one of the most common issues plaguing humans today. I was also informed that stress and worry are major causes behind the lack of sleep. I could have guessed all of this information, probably, but hearing it laid out factually impacted me differently. It fit my own sleeping woes into a statistic. It made my own issues seem more common. A problem that always made me feel alone suddenly felt a whole lot less lonely, and sometimes that's all that you need.

Resilience Within the Special Needs Community

by **Hope Tiboni**



As a member of the Riccobono Academic Resilience Lab, under the supervision of Dr. O'Keeffe, I have had the opportunity to learn about the power of resilience within populations facing adversity. To date, COVID-19 is arguably one of the most relevant examples of how hardship has challenged the lives of people cross-culturally.

As I began to research and learn more about the field of resilience, I quickly noticed a gap in the literature. Although community lockdowns, quarantines, and school closings have impacted every family, the special needs community has been disproportionately affected by such protocols. As we pass the one-year anniversary of COVID-19 in the United States, many parents and family members of children with disabilities have had to question the quality of at-home education:

Is my child with special needs able to learn and flourish at home? Is my child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) being taken seriously now that they are remote?

It is time that Americans take a moment to learn about the resilience individuals with special needs and their respective families and caretakers have had to build over this past unprecedented year. When schools shut down, working parents had to quickly adapt to finding their child adequate care. Again, more questions spiraled:

Is it safe to welcome a stranger into our home to care for our child during COVID-19? Will my child's disabilities be treated properly during lockdown? Where are the remote resources for children with disabilities?

Consequently, siblings have had to step into bigger shoes and become caretakers. Parents have had to become educators. Therapists have had to get creative in order to support their clients with physical and intellectual disabilities through a screen. Nonetheless, families have had to learn how to build resilience during a time when there was minimal support.

Although COVID-19 related protocols have been mandated with the utmost concern for health, children with special needs have had to succumb to the ableist undertones that are embodied within mandated lockdowns. Remote learning is only accessible to children who know how to navigate a computer. *What about children who cannot read or who cannot manually move a computer mo use?* Additionally, stay at home orders are far more tolerable for families who are able to care for themselves. *What about*

children who rely on physical therapists to help them navigate their home or the children who need Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapists to reach social and learning milestones? Unfortunately, the byproducts of COVID-19 have continuously left the special needs community wondering when their care will matter.

As the theme of inclusion spreads across the country, it is important to remember that people with special needs are faced with adversity on a daily basis—COVID-19 has significantly amplified the ableist society we continue to surrender to. In order to support the special needs community, we must not only rely on their innate resilience.

If you know someone with special needs or someone that is a caretaker for an individual with special needs, ask yourself how you can assist them. Or, even better, ask yourself how you can challenge the ableism that has prospered in the wake of COVID-19. If there has been one takeaway that I have learned from my participation in the Resilience Lab, it is that resilience is far more attainable when communities come together to share resources and support.

An Analysis of the Consequences of American Individualism Displayed During the COVID-19 Pandemic

by **Patrick Kelly and Samantha Sierra**



American individualism contributes to an overall culture of entitlement and reduced empathy that has been clearly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individualism and collectivism breed different societal norms and expectations. For instance, in the U.S, mothers expect and promote in their children verbal assertiveness and a sense of mastery in social communication skills, while collectivist societies, like Japan, focus more on emotional maturity and compliance with authority figures. As a result, the U.S. hold a higher value on personal endeavors and believes in a spirit of competition and personal success (Norma et al. 2000). This competitive drive from Americans often results in overstepping ethical boundaries and highlights selfish tendencies. A recent example of these individualistic values at play come from the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine in predominately poor minority areas. On February 6th, 2021, mostly affluent white Americans, engaged in the unethical practices of cutting the line for the COVID-19 vaccine waiting list in a low-income Dominican community; they disregarded the health and wellbeing of the marginalized community members and took what was allocated for that specific community. University of Pennsylvania professor, Holly Fernandez, stated "it's completely unsurprising, but totally disappointing" and argued that there this mentality of, "if you don't find

loopholes to help yourself, people say, you're the sucker". This article demonstrates how Americans share a frame of mind that is competitive and self-serving, and if one fails to do so, then they are perceived as a "sucker". Americans have been able to rationalize their immoral acts of deception and theft because that mentality of me first has been normalized and even encouraged.

During the initial outbreak of the pandemic the CDC stated that if we all were to wear our masks for 4 to 6 weeks the country would be able to significantly lower the rates of COVID-19 spread. To this advice, Donald trump disagreed. "No. I want people to have a certain freedom, and I don't believe in that, no... and I don't agree with the statement that if everybody would wear a mask, everything disappears" (Gregorian, 2020). Not only this, but a large portion of Americans share a similar mindset and view mask wearing as a violation of their rights. This type of behavior displayed by the President and some Americans is a negative consequence to Americas individualistic culture, and further enables others to act in self-centered ways as well.

Even the hoarding of essential items and sanitary products during the initial months of the pandemic was partly due to American greed. Instead of distributing the wealth and resources to assist others, one man in Tennessee bought nearly 20,000 bottles of hand sanitizer and sold them at almost 20 times more than what he bought them for. It is fair to argue that this sort of egregious selfishness is the embodiment of the American culture that encourages self-promotion, even at the expense of others.

The values or lack of collective values expressed by individualistic societies is problematic in defining a unified front for combating the pandemic. The entitlement expressed has led to the elongation of a closed down and continued selfish nation. If the U.S. could exhibit a decrease in competition and a focus on the greater good, then a greater level of national connectedness could be accomplished.

Social Media and the Stigma behind Mental Health

by **Sam Lewis**



As a student growing up during the rise of technology and smartphones, I have heard the endless comments from older adults and teachers about the destructive nature of social media onteenagers. Of course, I am not denying many of the negative effects that come with social media, but I have recently started to think about my own personal experiences and how social media has played a role in my life.

Besides being entertaining and addicting, from my perspective, social media (or the people behind the accounts) has actually done a service to the reduction of negative mentalhealth stigmas. I grew up in a very small, rural town where there were neither discussions nor awareness of mental health related topics. As a young boy, I was implicitly taught that men should conceal their mental health issues in an effort to fulfill the masculine façade. I got Instagram at a young age—younger than I should have—and never once thought to post anything about mental health and neither did any of my friends or family. I never really thought much of it, but as I started to get older and attend high school, I slowly started to notice people post about their own mental health problems and/or helpful resilience tactics. For me, I first started noticing it on people's private Instagram and Snapchat stories. This still seemed to me as if this was away to share their own thoughts and feelings but in a hidden and exclusive environment.

As time went on and high school turned into college, I really noticed a positive change in the mental health social media atmosphere. The concept of mental health was starting to becomemore normal and ordinary, as it should. I observed fellow students posting their phone numberson their social media stories offering to be a friend or talk to those in need. I saw celebrities, rolemodels, and athletes come out about their struggles with mental health on social media; they even began to provide advice to those struggling with them. I witnessed popular social justice accounts start to incorporate forms of mental health awareness and positivity slideshows into their feeds. The culmination of these events, and those not mentioned, seemed to spark a sort of 'mental health revolution.' This 'revolution' of sorts played a major role in the reduction of negative stigmas of mental health, such as it not being as important as physical health, it being viewed as 'unmanly' or weak, and that it should be hidden behind closed doors. I feel that animportant approach to confronting the stigmas of mental health is to simply talk about it. Addressing mental health and its resources need to be discussed more on college campuses and in the media.

While it is no debate that society is far from perfect, the awareness of mental health that came about through the rise in social media among young adults has greatly reduced its negative stigmas. There is still much work to be done, but this is a great start, and the trend seems to be continuing upwards. After saying all of this, I challenge you, one Friar to another, to text a friend who you think may be struggling and tell them that you are thinking about them and that you are there for them.

There's a Reason We Can't Close TikTok

by **Abbie O'Connell**



More often than I would like to admit, I find myself lying awake in bed hours after I told myself I was going to sleep, scrolling through the most cursed app on my phone: TikTok. Like many people of my age demographic, I used to think TikTok was an app for younger generations, those that never got to experience the peak comedy app of MY heyday – Vine. But after several months of hearing more about it and intense boredom brought about by a year-long pandemic, I downloaded the app. I quickly forgot all the negative things I had said about it. I got it now – there was an unending supply of entertainment at my fingertips, and all I had to do was open the app. Before I knew it, many of my friends and I were spending hours a week scrolling through the app. Now, several months later, the appeal still has not worn off. TikTok has managed to explode at a rate that other social networks have not because of its addictive nature.

I think that all social media can be addicting, but TikTok seems to be even more so than most. I believe that the "For You" page the app utilizes has everything to do with its addictive nature. If you are one of the lucky people who have not fallen down the TikTok rabbit-hole, the For You Page (or FYP), is a feed of never-ending videos shaped by the apps algorithm to provide users with TikToks that match their interests. Users don't have to follow other users to access the FYP – they don't have to do anything other than open the app. Unlike other apps like Twitter or Instagram, you can never really be up to date on TikTok. The algorithm constantly refreshes and shows users new videos, making it easy to spend long periods of time scrolling while not even realizing it. While many people joke that they are addicted to TikTok, there is a lot of truth in that statement.

In the coming years, I expect there to be a great deal of research on how technology like TikTok has affected the attention span of Generation Z and beyond. When you view a video that brings you any kind of enjoyment, you experience a hit of dopamine in your brain's pleasure center, similar to the way you would with a drug. After that first "hit," it is incredibly easy to keep scrolling and waiting for the next, then the next, then the next. This habit, shared by many young people, is not only detrimental to sleeping habits, but has other effects as well. For example, getting used to such a constant, fast-paced stream of information can reduce attention spans. This issue is especially serious when the young age of many TikTok users is taken into consideration. Simply put, TikTok operates like a slot machine. Users are randomly reinforced with videos they find enjoyable and the longer they scroll, the more reinforcement they receive. You have no incentive to close the app because you know that there is an endless supply of

content and you know that if you stay on it long enough, you'll receive that dopamine hit. It can be almost impossible to look away; case in point, my mindless midnight scrolling.

Pavlov's Sharks? Ecotourism and Classical Conditioning

by **Lilah Mahan**



Classical conditioning is perhaps one of the most basic ideas in psychology; people completely unfamiliar with the subject may have heard of Pavlov's Dogs theory. What many people do not realize, however, is that this theory is a much more powerful tool – or, potentially, curse – than at first glance. The familiar story goes that Ivan Pavlov, a Russian psychologist, was studying the digestive system of dogs when he noticed that when he entered the room, his dogs would begin to salivate. Dogs do not learn to salivate at the sight of food, it is simply a natural instinct for them. Food naturally caused the dogs to salivate, making it an unconditioned stimulus; Pavlov entering the room, however, should not have elicited any response from the dogs because it was a neutral stimulus. Even if Pavlov had no food with him or any intention of feeding them, the neutral stimulus of walking into the room transformed into a conditioned stimulus, (one that is no longer neutral and begins to evoke a conditioned response, salivation).

Pavlov deduced that the dogs learned through the association of stimuli that when he wal ked into the room, the dogs figured they would be fed. Their conditioned response to this stimuli was to salivate. Realizing this, Pavlov began pairing new neutral stimuli with the food to see if this new stimuli would produce the same conditioned response. To do this, Pavlov began sounding a buzzer within a short period of time of giving the dogs food; this neutral stimulus, (just like him walking into a room), eventually became a conditioned stimulus, eliciting a response from the dogs, causing salivation. Classical conditioning is a process by which a neutral stimulus (in Pavlov's case, the buzzer) is learned to create a conditioned response (the dogs salivating). The neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus through classical conditioning.

While the concept of drooling dogs in a Russian laboratory might seem irrelevant or unimportant to some, what we can learn from this experiment is quite powerful. For example, some environmental theorists claim that shark attacks are on the rise because sharks are being conditioned to associate eating with humans through ecotourism. When one goes on vacation, it is natural to be eager to take in all of the sights of an exotic island or beach town: the food, the culture, the people, and the wildlife. No one wants to come into contact with a shark while surfing far from shore, but seeing a Great White from an underwater cage or from the safety of a large boat feeding mercilessly on buckets of bloody chum is thrilling for many. The industry for shark viewing tours, expeditions, dives has grown

across the globe. As the peering eyes of vacationers and shark enthusiasts peer down at the animals in the water, snapping photographs of the ruthless predator, it is easy to forget that from the surface of the water, a pair of black eyes are staring back at them, as they chomp away on their dinner. Thus, just like Pavlov's dogs associated the buzzer with being fed, many ecologists believe that sharks are learning to associate the sight of humans with a free, easy snack.

A related theory suggests that sharks have learned to associate an area itself with free food: many of these expeditions are not far off the coast of the mainland. The sharks learn that these areas will provide them with easy food, creating higher populations of sharks in areas where many people are swimming, sailing, and surfing. Beyond the effect that ecotourism is having on the human population, it is also affecting sharks' natural ability to hunt and eat food on their own. Human curiosity in animals has allowed us to learn more about ourselves; without Pavlov's curiosity in his dogs salivating, we might not have the same understanding of classical conditioning that is so useful today. At the same time, however, our curious behavior might be detrimental to our own safety and could cause the breakdown of ecosystems.

While theories could be wrong and shark attacks could just be fluke accidents not at all influenced by ecotourism, we might have just found ourselves in open water. Perhaps we need a bigger boat to figure out the true reason behind the rise in attacks – or maybe, we just need to get out of our boats, taking our buckets of chum with us, and leave these apex predators to their unconditioned responses.

What Occurs While You Sleep

by **Cristina Tighe**



In the class Introduction to Psychology, we began the year focusing on the topic of sleep. As sleep is a part of life that almost everyone partakes in, I thought that these lessons were the most interesting as well as that most applicable to everyday lives. While everyone knows at night you fall asleep, few people know what actually goes on during those hours. The information that has been discovered about sleep comes from research done in sleep labs. In these labs, brain movement is tracked by using an electroencephalogram, eye movement is measured, and people are frequently woken up and asked about the dreams that they experience. Through this information gathered in sleep labs, psychologists can better understand what goes on inside someone's brain and their body while they are asleep. What has been seen is that when you are first asleep, you have extremely relaxed muscle tone and slow brain

movements, as you drift into sleep, your breathing slows, and heart rates go down. It also has been discovered that your body goes through a sleep cycle. The body goes through N1, N2, and N3 sleep, these stages can be referred to as Non-Rapid Eye Movement sleep. N3, is an extremely deep sleep that can be challenging to wake up from. You move from N1 to N2 to N3 back to N2 before entering Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep. REM sleep is characterized by rapid eye movements, heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure all return to normal levels as if you were awake, but your muscles are almost paralyzed. REM sleep is the deepest sleep and is often accompanied by the most vivid dreams.

Learning about the sleep cycle can be extremely beneficial to better understand what is going on with your body while asleep, when many would not be sure otherwise what is going on. Along with learn ing about the sleep cycle, learning about the various types of sleep disorders, including insomnia can be important in achieving the best sleep you can. Insomnia is a sleep disorder which can affect your ability to fall asleep. With Insomnia you may also wake up in the middle of the night or wake up early in the morning. Typical causes of Insomnia include physiological arousal, being tensed up or experiencing anxiety or worry. Another cause of insomnia is sleeping in an inappropriate setting, for example ke eping a desk in your room where you do work during the day and attempting to sleep there at night, may be a cause of insomnia. During the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are beginning to work from home. It is important to allow yourself a separation from work and relaxation, so doing work outside of the room in which you sleep could benefit your overall health. Although working from home during COVID-19 may have increased the likelihood of trying to sleep in an inappropriate setting, overall the amount of sleep most American's got improved by twenty percent.

Sleep is an extremely beneficial part of your everyday life. Getting the proper amount of sleep will leave you well rested and energized for the upcoming day. Learning more about the slee p cycle as well as various sleep disorders is not only interesting and allows you to understand more about your body, it also could allow one to sleep better, creating an overall healthier lifestyle.

The Powerful Benefits of Mind Training

by **Ava Dussault**



Ever since the pandemic hit, the word "mindfulness" has been a big buzz word. Professionals were trying to reach large audiences, teaching them that the most important thing they can do during this time is pay attention to the present moment with curiosity and non-judgement. There was nothing we could physically do to change our circumstance, but we did have the power to approach the situation

how we wanted to. It seems simple, but sometimes I find it difficult to approach life mindfully (especially when I am in a situation that really frustrates me). I found mindfulness to be really difficult (despite the multiple teacher trainings I have taken in mindfulness) and didn't know how I could possibly teach this to children when I couldn't even approach life mindfully all the time. It wasn't until I actually watched a video in an ethics class this semester about mind training where everything clicked for me.

Mind Training is when we intentionally train our minds to understand our mental processes and how we react to certain emotions that arise. In life, we tend to look to external sources to fulfill our needs when we experience difficulty. For example, if a person was really looking forward to getting a job in an interview but doesn't land the job, it is easy for that individual to seek some type of external source for comfort and healing, such as going out for an ice cream, shopping, or doing something else pleasurable. This may bring the person momentary happiness, but at the end of the day, they are still up set about not landing the job. It may be easier to seek some type of external good, but it is our internal conditions (mind training) that can actually help us through these difficult situations. When a person starts to mind train, they notice a feeling and understand how they feel when they experience it. When that individual did not land their dream job, they probably felt anger and frustration. This feeling is not pleasurable for most, so as the person begins to recognize this and how it does not serve them to feel this way, they learn to simply notice how they feel and not let it overtake their lives by continuing to feel that way.

In theory, mind training is a much better response to even the smallest inconveniences in life, but in practice, it is difficult to always choose this route and not react. Mind training takes far more time than finding an external source to fulfill a void but is more sustainable. When we learn to train our minds, we can apply it to multiple aspects of our lives, and even improve our mental health. Personally, I have struggled to mind train because it is time consuming, but I have noticed when I look to external sources to make me feel better, it only works for a short period of time and does not make me feel great. It has made me notice I need a change, so I have started forming small habits to help me start training my mind to notice situations differently. If we all start forming small habits during the day when small inconveniences occur, it can help us with the bigger issues that we face in life. This can help us react better to stressors, school, relationships, and the daily struggles we face each day. Mind training may seem intimidating at first, but it does not need to be. Simply noticing how we feel and understanding how that emotions serves us can tell us a lot about ourselves and what constitutes to sustaining happiness and calmness for us.

A Backpack Broke My Brain

by **Anna Ferko**



The school bell rang, enabling the joy and excitement of students as summer break had just begun. Thrilled to be done with my junior year of high school, I ran over to my friend's locker to see what our first day-of-summer plans consisted of. Little did I know, I wouldn't be getting much of a summer this year. As I am walking with my friend, I suddenly find myself on the pavement of my school's parking lot. The color black is all I see as I hear a jumbled mush of voices above me. Slowly, my eyes are able to focus again as I see my friend hovering over me concerned about what just happened. I got hit in the head with a backpack, yes, a backpack. Some immature freshman was swinging their backpack and because of my slow reaction time, I totally got bonked in the head with his 'fifty pound' bag filled with who knows what. Everything near me was spinning when I stood up and my vision was laced with black spots. Thinking I am fine, and obviously embarrassed about what just occurred, I became a track star for a short moment as I spirited out of that area, so no one had the chance to make fun of me. My mom texted me saying she was ready to pick me up, and I was sure happy to leave and not speak of this misfortune again. Well, I was incorrect, because when I got in the car my mom turned to ask me how my day went, but instead she screamed in horror. "What is that bump!" she exclaimed. Of course, me thinking she was just making fun of my acne, I dismissed it, but was curious and looked in the mirror in which I saw a big, red, terrifying, golf-ball sized bump right smack in the middle of my face. She took me to the athletic training where he performed a concussion test on me where I then found out I had a concussion.

Fast forward a couple months, I am seeing an Occupational and Physical Therapist twice a week and practically living in a rehabilitation/concussion center for more than just the summer. Almost every day I was having headaches, had difficulty remembering certain events that occurred, wasn't sleeping, and started to develop a level of irritability I had never reached before. I had fallen into a deep, dark hole that I thought I could never escape. This distressing event caused me to face low self-esteem challenges and depression. I couldn't participate in my normal activities and was barely allowed time to hang out with my friends since most of my time was now spent with doctors. After a cortisone injection to my optic nerve, my concussion was not getting better in the slightest; I was recommended to a neuro-ophthalmologist for vision therapy where my concussion was now pronounced as a traumatic brain injury. A traumatic brain injury, or T.B.I. is "caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain" (Mayo Clinic, *Traumatic Brain Injury*). Yes, it might sound crazy, but I received a T.B.I. from a blow to the head due to a backpack. It took me time to acknowledge the facts,

that my brain had literally slammed against my skull which caused a mountain of effects that I would still be living with years later.

Years later, and I am a freshman in college taking an introductory psychology class fascinated with the science behind a human's mindset and behaviors. Learning about the negative correlation between self-esteem and depression, our nervous system, cognition, and much more. I can relate this back to everything I dealt with and am still dealing with as having a T.B.I. Even though I have adapted as a student living with a T.B.I. that I haven't fully recovered from, there are still challenges with learning that I still have to manage. The cognitive consequences of a T.B.I. I endure include, difficulty focusing, slowed process time, anxiety, and double vision. It is intriguing to me because with this class, I have found ways in which I am able to overcome some of these problems. I am able to take a closer look at how powerful our brain really is.

The cruelty of a head injury has the possibility to end the dreams of many of its victims. The rebuilding of mental and emotional strength is a vulnerable process for all but is successful with hope. Our brain is a network of neurons that allows us to be human. Without our brain we wouldn't be who we are today, we have to protect what makes us, us, even from an insignificant backpack.

Practicing Mindfulness Amidst COVID-19

by **Joemari Javier Pulido**



There is no question that COVID-19 has brought on difficult and stressful times. Despite all the negatives this pandemic has brought, however, it has presented some unique opportunities. Opportunities to spend quality time with family, more time to acquire a new ability or hone an already acquired skill, and the opportunity that this article will discuss - the opportunity to cultivate our mindfulness. (I'm in no way trying to invalidate or downplay the immense pain and trouble COVID-19 has brought. However, I choose to present the little good it has presented as an opportunity for self-discovery and personal growth.)

Mindfulness can be subjective and be described in more than one way, however, I would define it as being fully present in the moment and being considerate to ourselves. What do you mean by being considerate to ourselves, you may ask? To be aware of the present moment, one must focus on the "right now" rather than reminiscing on one's messy past or worrying about the uncontrollable future. When practicing mindfulness we allow ourselves to focus on ourselves, more specifically our inner

thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, it is essential that we be considerate to ourselves when focusing on our thoughts and feelings as whatever it is in our heads and in our hearts is totally valid. Moreover, it is totally okay to just take a moment for ourselves and pay attention to those thoughts and feelings that we usually overlook.

As human beings we often have many obligations which may include school, work, family obligations and so on. These obligations can be overwhelming at times and may not allow us to take even a second to ponder over our thoughts or emotions. However, with all the bad COVID-19 has brought, there is at least one good - more time for ourselves, which can be used to focus on the emotions and thoughts that we usually push to the side due to other commitments.

Mindfulness may seem like a new idea to many people, however, it is something that everyone is capable of. Although practicing mindfulness requires some thought and effort, it is relatively simple as it is easy to learn and anyone can do it!

Now, you may ask why practice mindfulness? Practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress, increasing our awareness of not just ourselves but our surroundings and others, and can foster positive emotions and a more positive outlook on life.

Many have felt the negative impacts this pandemic has brought on our mental health and practicing mindfulness may help to relieve that. Some mindfulness practices I recommend are the following:

1. Yoga: Yoga is a great mindfulness practice for those that love physical fitness. Yoga enables one to not only sweat it out but to also re center oneself and to take a few minutes to take a breath. Listed below are some titles of video tutorials with mindful yoga exercises:

5-Minute Yoga/Meditation: Calm Your Anxiety

Meditation For Inner Peace - Yoga With Adriene

Gentle Mindful Yoga for Meditation

Calming Yoga for Anxiety and Stress Relief /

Mindful Movement

2. Mindful Breathing: Taking a breath before an exam or a stressful event has been shown to be helpful in reducing anxiety. Mindfulness breathing takes it a step further and enables us to focus solely on ourselves, more specifically our breath, which ultimately leads one to become more relaxed and calm. Here are some titles of mindfulness breathing techniques online:

Mindful Breathing

A BUDDHIST monk teaches you the FIRST 3 BREATHING TECHNIQUES of mindfulness

Mindful Breathing Meditation: Five-Finger

Breathing | CHOC

Short Mindful Breathing Exercise

3. The Self Compassion Pause: Taking a moment to solely focus on ourselves can help to improve our well-being and confidence. The Self-Compassion pause allows us to show the kindness we show to others, to ourselves. This short break can be helpful in preventing burn out and keeping us staying productive. The following are some guided self-compassion pauses:

Self Compassion Pause

5 Minute Self-Compassion Break

The Self-Compassion Break

Audio Meditation - Self-Compassion

Kristin Neff: The Three Components of Self-Compassion

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

by **Anthony Dispena**



One of the most interesting aspects of my Intro to Psychology course this semester would have to be learning about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The hierarchy, usually depicted in a pyramid, begins with an individual's basic needs (water, food, oxygen, etc.) and transcends to abstract needs (transcendence, self-actualization, providing services to others). The lower a need is on the hierarchy, the more influence it has on a person's behavior. For example, a hiker who is parched will focus more on their need for water rather than their desire to appreciate the beauty of the trail they are walking. Learning this concept, I came to wonder if the theory suffices during the 'unprecedented times' of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Levels one and two of the pyramid align perfectly with the behavior of many Americans during the pandemic. First, physiological needs do have the most influence on peoples' behavior; people constantly make sure to secure enough food and water for themselves while at home. This is why we have seen news broadcasts of customers fighting over items in overcrowded Wal-Marts - their priority is to ensure that their physiological needs are maintained.

Second, safety needs are peoples' second priority during the pandemic. Wearing masks, frantically washing your hands, and social distancing are all examples of how humans try their best to keep

themselves safe from the coronavirus. What is interesting is that these actions simultaneously provide the safety of others – which is part of the highest level of Maslow's diagram, Transcendence. Promoting the safety of others gains priority over the other needs. People glance over their need to see loved ones in order to keep them safe. They also skip their aesthetic needs like getting a haircut in order to keep strangers from becoming infected. Transcendence, in the form of making sure others are healthy, becomes crucial during a global pandemic.

This phenomenon is positive in terms of the health of a community but has the potential to negatively affect an individual. When people cut off others from their lives or stop going to the gym or hair stylist in order to keep loved ones healthy, their self-esteem can take a great decline. Without seeing loved ones, individuals are unable to obtain necessary reassurance, support, or appreciation when in times of crisis. Some of these crises may root from a person's self-image (I.e., body image, beauty standards, etc.). If one is unable to pursue their aesthetic needs, they will lose self-esteem. And without necessary support from trusted individuals, one can obtain long lasting psychological or physical deficiencies.

Does this mean that people should avoid safety protocols in order to ensure their own well-being? No. In the grand scheme of things, the collective safety of others is more important. However, this does not mean that people should completely stop assessing their lower needs. Esteem and aesthetic needs can still be supported during the pandemic. One can go for a run outside, do at-home workouts, or take up an online hair-styling course in order to work on their beauty. Secondly, due to technological advances of the 21st century, engaging with loved ones safely is easily accessible. Furthermore, many therapists now hold virtual appointments for their clients. There are many behaviors one can enact in order to suffice lower needs, while also keeping others safe.

Although it may seem like it, no one is truly alone during the pandemic. We are all affected by the coronavirus, some more than others. Most importantly, we are all in this together. Everyone can do their part to make sure that normalcy comes back sooner than later. Despite esteem and aesthetic needs have been put on the backburner in the name of collective well-being and other transcendent needs, these two lower categories are still achievable during the pandemic. Overall, safety is always a priority, but that does not mean that mental health should be disregarded.

Mindset

by **Carl Trethewey**



All my life I've been told my behaviors will determine my future and I wanted to understand human behavior. The study of human existence and behaviors is known as psychology, which is also known as "behavioral research." Taking this course, I was especially interested in learning more about the mind and why some people are better at controlling their emotions than others. I've learned about the study of one's conscious thoughts and emotions, known as reflection. In psychology, reflection refers solely to the observation of one's mental state, although it may also refer to the evaluation of one's soul in a spiritual sense. As a kid, I grew up with a negative attitude towards my teachers and coaches. I couldn't seem to control my emotions in sports practice and class. My parents tried everything but nothing worked. At the end of the day, my attitude wasn't going to get any better without any effort or reflection. Growing up, going to therapy helped with my mental disorders and emotional problems. I had gained so much from everything I learned in therapy, but later on in my life when my dad passed away, it was like everything I learned just vanished. I became an angry kid again with a chip on my shoulder everywhere I went. It wasn't until I had a breakdown moment during a basketball game where I wanted to better myself and get back to enjoying my everyday life.

Psychology has aided me in comprehending human behavior and mental processes. It has helped me comprehend how we think, behave, and feel. When we're willing to learn from others, we benefit from both their and our own experiences, and we can inherit their wisdom and expertise. Students studying psychology learn why people behave the way they do, how they react to the world around them, and what factors influence this. I have been able to take these learnings and apply them to myself and my own experiences, to better understand my own thoughts and behavioral patterns.

One thing that came as a surprise to me through learning about psychology was that the majority of our best memories are incorrect. Now, I have a lot of memories and for them to be so vivid and to learn most are not fully correct is mindblowing. I believe that memories as a child can be tough to put all the parts together but I feel most of the memories I've gained through my life I can remember all of them to my knowledge. When I asked my mom about my best basketball memory she corrected me in a lot of spots and I became discouraged and started to believe that the majority of our best memories are incorrect. Mostly all things you learn in psychology seem false or hard to believe and that's what makes it that much more interesting to learn about.

Overall, learning about psychology has improved my mindset and outlook on the world. I have the knowledge to better understand myself and why I think or act the way I do. With this understanding, along with self-reflection, I have the ability to control myself and make changes in my thinking that benefit me.

The Benefits & Wonders of Joining a Research Lab

by **Michael Pettinato and Katherine Mandarakas**



As seniors here at Providence College, we both have begun to look back at both our academic memories and our social ones. Being Psychology majors, we share many experiences and have taken many of the same classes together. More importantly, we both made a similar decision the first semester of our junior year, which was joining the Social Perceptions and Attitudes Lab. This lab gave us the opportunity to delve deeper into psychology, using a critical lens to better understand people and the way they interact. This lab gives students the chance to challenge each other and be the voices for the Providence College community. This is because we are able to use our personal experiences at Providence College to determine what topics are most important to us to research. We see the way students interact first-hand and can use that information to shape our research questions and broaden our understanding of the topics.

After working with Dr. Mendoza in the Research Design and Statistical Analysis course, we both joined the lab with hopes of furthering our scientific knowledge, expanding upon our research skills, and solidifying our interpersonal skills. Before joining the lab, we found ourselves to be a bit lost among the field of Psychology, unsure of what we truly wanted to do. We just knew that we wanted a deeper understanding of psychology, specifically how people perceive each other. Once we joined, we were able to dive deeper into Social Psychology while also learning more about what other types of work may be available. Not only were we exploring the possibilities, but we began to feel more immersed in the community here at PC, more than just taking classes and doing homework. We ultimately joined a smaller community of students passionate about social attitudes, which gave us our niche in the world of psychology.

By joining a lab, you are able to work closely with a professor and alongside a select group of other students. By doing so, it provides a sense of belonging and closeness, along with people to be there by your side to help you navigate through your college experience. Within the lab, we have a safe space to

critically discuss tough and controversial topics, like the recent increase in anti-Asian sentiment. While we are able to openly discuss these topics, most importantly we go a step further to analyze how we can use psychological studies in order to better understand them. Using SPSS, we can comprehend and analyze our collected data. We became proficient in understanding how to collect the necessary data and then use SPSS to understand how that data translates into our understanding of psychology. Despite simply enjoying the data collection and analysis, we also were chosen to share our findings. In fact, within just a short period of time, our lab had worked together with a specific set of data and had even been accepted to a conference in Denver, Colorado! We are grateful to know that this lab opens the door to leadership experiences like that conference and set a strong foundation for our understanding of data and social perceptions as a whole. This lab highlights the current-day issues and topics that are shaping our world and we are looking forward to using our research to educate ourselves on these topics.

Unpacking 2020 Through a Psychological Lens

by **Alex Baker**



The previous year has unfortunately acquainted us all with the phrase "in these unprecedented times". From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, to a polarized nation, to a nearly universal uptick in mental health difficulties, 2020 and now 2021 have tested our resiliency and spirit in unforeseen ways. In order to assess the impact of this previous year and learn from it, we need to concretely analyze what trends have emerged throughout this time on both a systemic and personal level.

In late June of 2020, the Center for Disease Control compiled data on the mental health challenges associated with COVID-19's morbidity, mortality, and safety protocols. They found that adults were reporting far greater mental health difficulties this year than in recent history. According to their data, 40% of respondents were struggling with mental health challenges and/or substance abuse, and these trends were exacerbated for people of color, young adults, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers. Thus, not only is humanity as a whole struggling this year, but specific and oftentimes marginalized populations are at an even greater risk. I have brought up these specific populations in order to draw attention to how other people's suffering may be different than our own or our ingroup's. Engaging in activities such as educating oneself about issues which impact different populations, practicing empathy, and checking in on one another are great ways to begin to make a change. Coping with these various challenges has been an ongoing battle, but it is important to remember that there are

always small and concrete ways we can try to improve our own mental health status, as well as the world around us.

It is especially important to unpack the many ways that race, racial tensions, and racism have evolved over the previous year. A prominent uptick in anti-Asian racism has unfolded since the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, showcasing that even though Asian individuals have historically been regarded as a "model minority," they still remain susceptible to the bias, discrimination, and animosity associated with non-whiteness. Racism's impact on other groups within the BIPOC community is incredibly prevalent as well, ranging from the mass-incarceration of Black men, to police brutality, to the continuation of infringing upon the rights of indigenous peoples, to disproportionate harm caused by COVID-19 on minorities. These topics, though difficult to grasp or reconcile one's worldview with, are necessary to learn more about. Documentaries such as "The 13th," and texts such as *How to be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi and *The Conversation* by Robert Livingston are incredible resources where one can learn more about why racism is so incredibly harmful, how to identify it, and potential remedies for checking one's own biases and privilege.

On a personal level, it is likely that whoever is reading this article has struggled this past year with feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and a loss of control. A helpful tool to combat these overwhelming feelings is practicing mindful acceptance. Practicing acceptance is an active process during which individuals need to assess the present facts of a situation without adding emotions or interpretations. Simply accepting one's current situation is an incredibly helpful first step to learn to regain some of the control which this past year has stripped us of. By accepting the things which upset us or cause discomfort, we can begin to work towards solutions in unbiased and more even-keeled ways. Lastly, it is important to remember that many resources are there to help those struggling with mental health challenges, and that seeking assistance is an important and brave action. Hopefully, the world will brighten up in these coming months, but until then, it is necessary to continue to show up for one another, be the change you wish to see, and above all, be kind.

Faculty Notes

Dr. Caple has been teaching and conducting research remotely for the past year. She misses seeing her students in person but has enjoyed the ability to meet via Zoom. This past semester, Dr. Caple taught Psychology of Misinformation for the first time and had an absolute blast hearing student input on a range of topics from vaccine hesitancy to conspiratorial thinking! She will spend most of her summer analyzing her COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy research data and writing up manuscripts. On a personal note, Dr. Caple is grateful for the ways in which people have still been able to connect while social distancing. She hopes everyone has a safe and wonderful summer!

Fr. Guido addressed the issues of loss, resilience and spirituality in the wake of the pandemic in articles for the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame and in America: The Jesuit Journal of Faith and Culture, and as part of a panel discussion sponsored by Ambassadors for PC Wellness.

Dr. Mendoza taught his seminar on Stereotypes and Prejudice this spring semester and thoroughly enjoyed the critical thinking that took place in his class. Students had respectful and sometimes heavy conversations on various social issues from a psychological lens and read Ibram X. Kendi's book, How to

be an Antiracist. He also taught two synchronous online sections of Social Psychology and looks forward to having many of those students in the experimental lab course next fall. Members of his Social Perception & Attitudes Lab discussed "The Conversation: How Seeking and Speaking the Truth about Racism can Radically Transform Individuals and Organizations" by Robert Livingston. Samantha Matzerath developed an independent study examining gender bias in the music industry, a career path she is looking to explore. Dr. Mendoza is very sad to see his senior students, Alex Baker, Katherine Mandarakas, Samantha Matzerath, Michael Pettinato, and Taylor Tristine, graduate from PC, but is so excited to see their future success. Next year, Patrick Kelly and Samantha Sierra will be working with new lab members, Nicole Borowiec, Kate Evangeline, Rosie Morford, and Elyse Pereira, to conduct experiments on intergroup bias. Tiffany Berry and Hope Tiboni will also be conducting summer research to design a STEM-based intervention for elementary school children. Lastly, Dr. Mendoza is thrilled to announce that he has been granted tenure by the College and will be promoted to associate professor next academic year!

Dr. O'Keeffe wrote: I am honored to be among the School of Arts and Sciences' 2021 Summer Scholar Award recipients. The awarded project will support the development and validation of the GREAT Academic Resilience Scale. Along with the Resilience Ecosystem lab team (Junielly Vargas, Hanna Johnston, Patrick Fuller, Hope Tiboni, Patrick Kelly, and Samuel Lewis), I will be facilitating an interactive workshop on promoting student well-being through curricular infusion. The workshop will be presented at the Higher Education Innovative Summit that will be held virtually, June 3–4, 2021 and is hosted by the University of Minnesota, Rochester— "Curricular Infusion: Promoting Academic Resilience and Student Well-Being through Faculty Fellowship Mini-Grants." I look forward to a restorative and productive sabbatical during the fall 2021 semester. The sabbatical will include ongoing scholarship related to promoting academic resilience, student wellbeing, and exploring the links between human and ecosystem health.

Dr. Spiegler wrote: This spring semester presented me with the biggest teaching challenge in my career as I learned to present what I hope was a quality learning experience for my students in asynchronous classes. So, that's my present news. Looking ahead, it is with considerable ambivalence that I have decided to retire at the end of this semester. As a full time professor for 50 years, 5 years at UT Austin and 45 at PC, I've been blessed with a profession that has made the dichotomy between work and play virtually meaningless. I am not going to stop playing as I intend to continue my scholarship —I have two professional books that are partially written as a good starting point—and also look forward to having more time to play in other ways, such as flying in my Skycatcher, traveling, and spending time with family, including with my granddaughter Amelia who will be attending college in RI. A significant piece of the bitter part of my retirement that I hope will be predominantly sweet is that I will sorely miss teaching and interacting face-to face with students in and out of the classroom which have been the most rewarding aspects of my career. To the many students I have taught, learned from, and had the pleasure of knowing at PC, I want you to know that you have made all the difference. Thank you.

Dr. Templer has been busy working with her lab students analyzing data, reading scientific papers, and planning future experiments that answer questions about the role the posterior parietal cortex plays in attention and memory. She is also enjoying finally teaching Experimental Biopsychology in person again the end of this semester (after getting fully vaccinated!). She served as a mentor at a Mentoring Event for graduate students and post-doctoral researchers at the virtual Conference on Comparative Cognition in April. In January, she and her collaborators and student Annie Dankert '21 presented their original

research at the virtual Society for Neuroscience Conference. She has also been busy working on a chapter about metacognition for a book on primate cognition. She spends more of her time cleaning up “forts” in the living room created by a 2- and 5-year-old and washing sippy cups. She does not enjoy being woken up by her 2-year-old at 5:30 AM. Most importantly, she is tremendously grateful that her kindergartener has been able to be safely be in school in person this whole year!

Dr. Van Reet wrote: It was nice to see a paper on the roles of play and guidance in early science education that Dr. Lin Zhang from Elementary/Special Education and I have been working on for a long time finally come out in print in the journal Research in Science Education. In addition, I've been working hard on a chapter that I was invited to write for the Encyclopedia of Child and Adolescent Health on "Imagination, Pretense, and Fantasy." I was happy to be involved in writing our course proposal for our new course PSY 260 Methods and Statistics in Psychology, and I'm so excited to get to teach it in the fall.

Dr. Warmuth has continued to teach and conduct research remotely this semester. Since January, Dr. Warmuth has had three peer-reviewed journal articles published and presented a roundtable on using Zoom to collect data with families at the Society for Research in Child Development's Virtual Biennial Meeting. She is looking forward to the summer when she plans to finish up a few more research projects, compose her tenure dossier, and spend time with her family.

Letter from the Editors

We hope you enjoyed reading the creative articles and psychology department updates in this semester's issue of *Analyze This.* As we have continued to experience the COVID-19 pandemic this semester and the added obstacles placed on students and faculty as they navigate online learning and changing social restrictions, we hope to have provided an opportunity to slip away for a while as you read this newsletter. We would like to thank all of the student writers who took the time to create such compelling, one-of-a-kind articles and our faculty advisors, Dr. Spiegler and Mrs. Mullen, for their advice and assistance. We are grateful for your dedication to preserving some sense of normalcy through the unprecedented circumstances we face. We wish students the best of luck on finals! To the seniors, best wishes on all of your future endeavors. We will miss you dearly.

Have a very happy and safe summer vacation!

God Bless & Go Friars

Samantha Matzerath, Marisa Marino, Marley Herard, Sophie Riddick & Allie Eurell

Letter from the Faculty Advisor

I am back after my sabbatical leave this past fall and have resumed being Faculty Advisor to Analyze This (thank you, Dr. Mendoza, for filling in for me). Our Psi Chi chapter president, Samantha Matzerath, and her executive board members—Allie Eurell, Marley Herard, Marisa Marino, and Sophie Riddick—worked

hard to select 14 of more than 50 submissions of articles (a record number, I believe) for this issue. Thanks to them and to the many student writers who contributed their thoughtful articles about a topic we all care about—psychology!

Michael D. Spiegler

Helpful Mental Health Resources



The COVID-19 pandemic has created several mental health challenges for many, leaving people feeling socially isolated, stressed, and overwhelmed. Do not hesitate to reach out and ask for help if you need it, especially during this time.

On-Campus Resources:

Personal Counseling Center

Lower Bedford Hall

401-865-2343

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm

After-Hours Mental Health Support (through Personal Counseling Center)

401-865-2343

Dial "2" for a Crisis Counselor

Public Safety/On-Campus Emergency

401-865-2222

Off-Campus Resources:

Off-Campus Emergency

911 or local emergency contact

National Suicide Hotline

1-800-273-8255

Free and available 24/7

Day One Helpline (Sexual Assault and Trauma Resource)

1-800-494-8100

Free and available 24/7

Crisis Textline

Text "Hello" to 741-741

Free and available 24/7

Trevor Project Helplines (for LGBTQ+ mental health concerns)

TrevorLifeline: Call 1-866-488-7386

TrevorText: Text START to 678-678

Please contact Allie Eurell, the Psi Chi "Help Helped Me" Officer for Mental Health Outreach, at aeurell@friars.providence.edu with any questions or to learn more about any of the above resources, as well as to learn about potential alternative resources.