

## Virginia Academy of Academic Psychologists<sup>1</sup>

Each year the Virginia Academy of Academic Psychologists at Spring meeting of the Virginia Psychological Association sponsors student paper and poster presentations. Beginning this year the Virginia Journal of Science has agreed to present the abstracts of a sampling of these papers to encourage sharing of information about the ongoing study of psychology in Virginia. Here is a sample of the thirty student papers representing a dozen Virginia Institutions. They were presented on April 2nd in Wintergreen, Virginia. In addition this year's conference included thirty-five poster presentations from thirteen Virginia schools. The Spring, 1999 student paper sessions will be held in Virginia Beach in April. For more information about the Virginia psychological Association and its activities, contact Virginia Psychological Association, 109 Amherst Street, Winchester, Virginia 22601.

JUST THE FACTS MA'AM: CAN VERBAL DESCRIPTION IMPROVE FACE IDENTIFICATION? Rebecca Abramson\*, Elizabeth Bean\*, Megan Chiasson\*, Erin Higgins\*, Heather Settle\*, Steve Hampton\*, Dept. of Psych., Mary Washington Col., Fredericksburg, VA 22401. When subjects in face recognition experiments are asked to verbally describe a face, subsequent recognition is impaired. This phenomenon is termed the Verbal Overshadowing Effect (VOE). It is hypothesized that the VOE results from transfer inappropriate processing, which can be described as the loss of ability to access holistic information following a written featural description. However, re-presenting the face just before recognition reveals a latent positive effect of verbalization on recognition. This study was designed to determine whether such a re-presentation effect would occur with low-expertise faces, in this case, inverted faces. Participants were shown both an upright and inverted face and were asked to select this face from a slide of six similar faces. Half of the subjects were asked to write a verbal description of the face prior to recognition. Additionally, half of the subjects were re-presented with the face just prior to recognition. The data indicated an interaction between the re-presentation and verbalization variables. Re-presenting the slide improved recognition performance only in the no verbalization condition. Writing a verbal description improved face recognition only in the no re-presentation condition. This improved recognition following verbalization reflects a verbal facilitation effect rather than a verbal overshadowing effect. This effect may have been due to the fact that participants used global, judgmental rather than featural descriptions. These data have implications for eye witness identification because they suggest that the effects of verbal description on face recognition depend on the type of descriptions given.

INFLUENCES ON WOMEN'S CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES: SELF-EFFICACY, POWER, AND SEX. Alison Breland\*, Heather Williams\* and Larry Penwell\*, Dept. of Psych., Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Va. 22401. Conflict management can be measured based on the interaction between the dimensions

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1 The Virginia Academy of Academic Psychologists is an Institutional member of the Virginia Academy of Science

of cooperativeness and assertiveness, creating five conflict management styles: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, collaborating, and competing (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Many factors can influence one's choice of conflict management style; the present study focused on how self-efficacy, power level, and sex of opponent affected women's conflict management styles. One hundred Mary Washington college students were asked to complete Sherer et al.'s (1982) Self-Efficacy Scale. Subjects were then placed in a hypothetical conflict situation in which power level and sex of opponent varied, and were asked to complete Thomas and Kilmann's (1974) Conflict Mode Instrument. Results of a MANOVA suggest that self-efficacy is a major factor influencing women's conflict management styles. The results further suggest that sex of opponent plays a minor role in conflict management.

DEFINING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: A LITERATURE REVIEW. Rachel Calogero, Dept. of Psych., Va. Wesleyan College, Norfolk, Va., 23502. This paper examines social, historical, and psychological attempts at defining adulthood, explores the contradictions embedded in these efforts, and discusses the societal implications of unclear expectations regarding the attainment of adulthood. It concludes by suggesting a redefinition of adulthood in terms of individual, internal markers relevant to today's youth.

DO OUR FAST-PACED LIFESTYLES HINDER OUR ABILITY TO REMEMBER: AN INVESTIGATIVE LOOK INTO HOW SLEEP DEPRIVATION AND STRESS AFFECT MEMORY RETRIEVAL. Alison J. Crumling\*, David Mathes\*, Shauna McCarthy\* and Roy Smith\*, Dept. of Psych., Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Va. 22401. Past research indicates that both rapid eye movement (REM) sleep deprivation (Smith, 1984) and stress (Sapolsky, 1996) negatively affect memory retrieval. We expected that a combination of REM deprivation and stress would interact to produce a greater decrement in performance on a maze task using hue discrimination than will either source variable alone. Pendulum apparatus deprived rat subjects of REM sleep and forced swimming elicited stress. We did not find that REM deprivation affected memory retrieval. We did find, however, that stress led to longer decision-making time on the T-maze. This finding indicates both impaired concentration and physical fatigue. We also found that subjects took longer to make a decision on the first day of testing as compared to the second and third days. This finding suggests that subjects adapted to the stressor over time.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL, GENDER, AND AGE PREJUDICE IN 6-9 YEAR OLDS. Thompson E. Davis and Dan Mossler, Department of Psychology, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, Va. 23943. Fourteen first grade and nineteen third/fourth grade children were administered modified versions of the Multi-Response Racial Attitude Measure to determine their levels of racial, gender, and age prejudice. They were also administered two kinds of Piagetian conservation tasks to assess their level of cognitive development. Initial correlational analyses revealed that racial, gender, and age prejudice were all positively correlated, though only racial and age prejudice significantly so. Analyses of Variance indicated that prejudice, as measured by our composite index, declined significantly between first and third grades. Older children demonstrated less racial, gender, and age prejudice

compared with younger children. We also found a significant gender difference. Females demonstrated significantly more gender prejudice than did males. Regression analyses revealed that the ability to conserve did not predict prejudice. Overall, results point to a developmental trajectory in which prejudice decreases between 6 and 9 years of age and is unrelated to the kind of logical ability that is measured by conservation tasks.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT. Randy A. Holley, Dept. of Psychology, Liberty Univ., Lynchburg, Va. 24502. This study focused on the interaction between academic scores and the perceptions of child behavior by the teachers, parents, and children's perspective. Using a sample of 15 elementary students, their parents, and four teachers, this study has examined behavioral perceptions based on the Child Behavior Checklist, Teacher Report Form, and Youth Self-Report Form. These perceptions were then correlated with GPA and Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores. Multiple linear and stepwise regressions were also used. Conclusions are made regarding the implications of these results for the current educational system. Overall, the children's perceptions of their own behavior played a major role in their achievement both on GPA and Iowa Test scores.

STRESS AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN EXPLANATORY STYLE AND PHYSICAL ILLNESS. Brian Horne and Robert T. Herdegen, Dept. of Psychology, Hampden-Sydney Col., Hampden-Sydney, VA 23943. The present research explored the possibility that stress and explanatory style (ES) jointly determine health problems. It was hypothesized that stress plus a pessimistic ES would lead to increased incidence of physical illness. Eighty-five college students completed questionnaires to measure health, stress, and ES on two separate occasions, separated by five weeks. A multiple regression analysis did not yield evidence that pessimistic ES and stress are predictors of subsequent illness. Further, earlier measures of poor health were found to be correlated with later measures of higher stress, but earlier measures of stress and pessimistic ES were not correlated with later measures of health. ES was not significantly correlated with illness at any time. The results are interpreted as a failure of the explanatory style hypothesis to predict short-term health consequences of stress, though long-term effects may occur.

THE EFFECT OF THE COMPUTER GAMING ENVIRONMENT AND EXPERIENCE LEVELS ON ANGER IN COLLEGE MALES. Thomas C. Inkel, Dept. of Psychology, Liberty Univ., Lynchburg, Va. 24502. Previous efforts to correlate anger and computer violence have been confounded by the complex factors involved. Multiplayer computer games have exploded in popularity in the last ten years, adding to the complexity of the debate over the effects of violent computer games. This study sought to better investigate effects of violent computer games and determine the relationship of multiplayer competition and anger levels to state and trait anger. Thirty-four college males played a violent computer game in single and multiplayer modes, then participated in a STAXI anger exam. No significant difference was found between single and multiplayer state anger levels. The mean of the post-game state anger scores for all subjects was significantly lower than that of college males in

general. Interestingly, the mean state anger for those with higher previous experience levels was significantly lower than that of those with lower experience levels. Subjects with higher experience also had significantly lower trait anger scores than the population.

SELF-ESTEEM, SAFE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, AND PEER GROUP PRESSURE IN COLLEGE WOMEN. Brooke Seaman, Amanda Lovejoy, Mindy Berry, Mary Baldwin Col., Staunton, Va. 24401. Researchers surveyed 81 female students at a liberal arts college in the southeastern U.S. to examine self-esteem in relation to safe sexual behavior and peer pressure. The hypotheses were not supported. There was a significant negative relationship between peer pressure and low safe sexual behavior among juniors.

SPATIAL INEFFICACY: A FORM OF GENDER HANDICAPPING USED BY FEMININE FEMALES. Deborah M. Warshaw, Va. Wesleyan Col., Norfolk, VA 23504. Surprising results from a Pearson product moment correlation suggest that both masculine and feminine females handicap themselves by lowering their sense of self-efficacy when faced with a masculine task. Forty volunteer female college students who self-reported as either high in masculine or feminine sex-role characteristics as determined by the BSRI (Bem Sex-Role Inventory) were divided by their sex-role characteristics and then randomly assigned to either the designated masculine or feminine task. Only the task name differed. The actual task for all participants was the GAT (General Abilities Test, Spatial Test by NFER-Nelson Publishing Co., Ltd.) Though no significant differences in efficacy score means or spatial test score means existed, correlational data showed a significant positive correlation between pre-test efficacy scores and actual spatial test outcome scores only for females receiving the designated feminine task while showing no significant correlation for females receiving the masculine task. When faced with a task in which little self-efficacy is present a person often gives up or avoids the task before utilizing their full potential. This may mean that many women, without realizing it, are keeping themselves from pursuing careers or tasks they judge to be masculine in nature.

THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL CONFLICT AND EXPLANATORY STYLE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. C. Baker Wright and Dan Mossler, Department of Psychology, Hampden-Sydney Col., Hampden-Sydney, Va. 23943. This study investigated the effects of marital status, parental acceptance, parental conflict, and explanatory style on the academic performance of college students. Contrary to the findings of previous research (i.e., Brubeck & Beer, 1992), we found no significant differences between the grade point averages of students from intact and divorced families. Grade point averages were, however, significantly related to gender and to the amount of resolved conflict in parental relationships. Parental acceptance was also related to grade point averages, but not significantly so. Surprisingly, we found no relationship between explanatory style and grade point averages. This research represents a first step in the identification of some of the variables that mediate the effects of divorce on academic performance.

