



2021/22 Faculty and Students

Anxiety Studies Division Annual Newsletter

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Focus On: Recent Work by
Anxiety Studies Faculty and Students

New in the Anxiety Studies Division

In the twelfth year of our operation, we are pleased to share the fifth edition of the Anxiety Studies Division (ASD) Newsletter. The ASD has undergone many changes since our last newsletter: most significantly, our switch to virtual operation in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

In this issue, our faculty and students introduce themselves and provide insight into their educational and training background, along with their research interests and highlights of their findings. Recent research topics include social exclusion and social anxiety, fear of compassion and friendship satisfaction in people with anxiety, the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on people with anxiety and much more.

Our work depends upon the generous donation of your time. We are sincerely grateful for your continued support! If you would like to suggest the ASD to a friend or family member, please invite them to email us at anxiety@uwaterloo.ca or call us at **519-888-4567 ext. 45920** - we always welcome new members of our research participant pool.

Please also follow us on our website (www.uwaterloo.ca/anxiety-studies) and Facebook page (**Anxiety Studies at the University of Waterloo**) to access treatment resources and keep up with the latest anxiety-related news!

David Moscovitch

Ph.D., C.Psych, Professor

Who am I?

I am a Professor of Psychology at the University of Waterloo, and one of the founders of the Anxiety Studies Division. I am actively involved in the clinical supervision and training of graduate students in Clinical Psychology within our Centre for Mental Health Research and Treatment (CMHRT). I am a registered clinical psychologist with the College of Psychologists of Ontario and maintain a small private practice. My specialization is in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and I am certified as such by The Canadian Association of Cognitive and Behavioural Therapies.

What are my research interests?

My research is geared toward answering theory-driven questions about the nature and treatment of social anxiety. Studies in my lab seek to identify and understand how social anxiety affects people's psychological, behavioural, and emotional responses to social stress and reward within interpersonal contexts. Our work is guided by clinical models of social anxiety disorder and geared toward developing and disseminating more effective psychological interventions.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

1. Saint, S., & Moscovitch, D.A. (2021). Effects of mask-wearing on social anxiety: An exploratory review. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*. DOI: 10.1080/10615806.2021.1929936
2. Barber, K., Michaelis, M., & Moscovitch, D.A. (2021). Social anxiety and the generation of positivity during dyadic interaction: Curiosity and authenticity are the keys to success. *Behavior Therapy*. DOI: 10.1016/j.beth.2021.03.011

Christine Purdon

Ph.D., C.Psych, Professor

Who am I?

I am a Professor of Psychology at the University of Waterloo, and one of the founders of the Anxiety Studies Division. I am also the Director of Clinical Training in the Department of Psychology, so I oversee our PhD program. I am a Registered Psychologist with the College of Psychologists of Ontario and have expertise in the assessment and treatment of mood and anxiety disorders in adults. I have practiced and taught cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) for over 20 years and am certified by the Canadian Association of Cognitive and Behavioural Therapies (CABCT).

What are my research interests?

I am interested in the persistence of anxiety and its cognitive manifestations, such as obsessions, worry, rumination, doubt, and behavioural manifestations, such as compulsions and escape/avoidance behaviours. I am also interested in how anxiety influences attentional and memory processes. I am extremely grateful to people from the community with and without anxiety difficulties who have assisted us with our research through the Anxiety Studies Division of the Centre for Mental Health Research and Treatment.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

1. Dean, J., & Purdon, C. (2021). An in vivo study of compulsions. *Journal of Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders*, 30, 100648. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jocrd.2021.100648>
2. Dean, J. & Purdon, C. (2021). An experimental investigation of hand washing in people with high and normative contamination fears. *Journal of Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders*, 28, 100618. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jocrd.2020.100616>

Taylor Hudd

Graduate student

Supervised by: David Moscovitch

Who am I?

I am currently completing my PhD in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at the University of Winnipeg.

What are my research interests?

My research examines the impact of painful social events, such as rejection and ostracism. In particular, I seek to understand how high levels of social anxiety impact the ways we cope with such painful events, and the different motivational forces underlying unique coping responses.

Interesting findings:

My research thus far has found that many people increase their efforts to approach others in the face of painful social exclusion with the hopes of re-fulfilling their self-worth and belongingness. However, not everyone responds to exclusion in this way: those with high social anxiety often remain cautious and withdraw from others. I discovered evidence to suggest those with high social anxiety may respond this way not only because they feel threatened, but because they find it difficult to appreciate the rewarding aspects of social encounters that would propel them towards new social opportunities.

CITATION

Hudd, T., & Moscovitch, D.A. (2021). Reconnecting in the face of exclusion: individuals with high social anxiety may feel the push of social pain, but not the pull of social rewards. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-021-10263-z>

Olivia Merritt

Graduate student

Supervised by: Christine Purdon

Who am I?

I am a senior PhD student in Clinical Psychology at UWaterloo. I received an Honours Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour, with a mental health specialization from McMaster University.

What are my research interests?

My current PhD research explores how one's social environment (for example, family members or romantic partners) may impact their decision about whether or not to enter treatment for anxiety.

Interesting findings:

I recently published a paper about how one's orientation towards compassion is related to their feelings about therapy, and we found that for people with anxiety disorders, fear of receiving compassion and fear of self-compassion were both associated with treatment ambivalence.

CITATION

Merritt, O. A., Purdon, C. (2021). Fear of compassion is associated with treatment ambivalence and negative expectations for treatment in people with anxiety. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 60(4), 546–555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12313>

Vanja Vidovic

Graduate student

Supervised by: David Moscovitch

Who am I?

I am a PhD student and member of the Anxiety Studies Division, entering the fifth year of University of Waterloo's Clinical Psychology program. I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo in Biomedical Sciences and Psychology.

What are my research interests?

I am primarily interested in studying factors that maintain symptoms of social anxiety across different contexts. Specifically, I am interested in increasing our understanding of socially anxious individuals' close friendships. Friendships are known to be important for both mental and physical health, yet early research on the topic of friendships and social anxiety has suggested that people with higher levels of social anxiety tend to experience less friendship satisfaction and more interpersonal conflict.

Interesting findings:

My master's research examined factors that may contribute to differences in friendship quality (e.g., friendship behaviours and communication patterns) among people with different levels of social anxiety. Results revealed that, among both undergraduate students and community adults, social anxiety was consistently associated with lower ratings of friendship satisfaction, which was in turn associated with lower scores on several measures of well-being. My doctoral dissertation is designed to follow up on these findings. I hope that this line of research will ultimately inform treatment interventions designed to help people with higher levels of social anxiety make and maintain satisfying close friendships.

CITATION

Vidovic, V. (2019). What's behind the link between social anxiety and low friendship satisfaction? Exploring the role of perceived closeness, self-disclosure, friendship maintenance behaviours, and relational reciprocity (Master's thesis, University of Waterloo). <https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/handle/10012/14920>

Tyler Eschenwecker

Graduate student

Supervised by: Christine Purdon

Who am I?

I am entering my first year of a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Manitoba and my Master of Arts degree at the University of Waterloo.

What are my research interests?

My master's research examined what people say to themselves in response to thoughts that cause them anxiety. For example, someone might experience an anxious thought such as, "you sounded so stupid when you said that," to which they might respond, "I am so embarrassed."

I conducted my master's research with undergraduate students, and I plan to conduct similar research in the future with participants from the Anxiety Studies Division. In particular, my future research will further examine people's relationships with their anxious thoughts or doubts.

Interesting findings:

In my master's research, we found that people with different levels of anxiety often experience anxious thoughts as cold and critical, and these thoughts are often accompanied by less dominant and warmer thoughts, and both of these types of thoughts were often internal representations of family members.

CITATION

Eschenwecker, T (2021). When my anxiety speaks to me, what does it sound like? [Master's thesis]. UWSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/10012/17255>

Jolie Ho

Graduate student

Supervised by: David Moscovitch

Who am I?

I am a 3rd year MA/PhD student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Biology and Psychology at Washington University in St. Louis, and I have a background in applied health behaviour research.

What are my research interests?

My research focuses on potential ways for socially anxious individuals to seek close connections with others, and their experiences of social reward. My MA thesis focused on social anxiety in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with participants recruited online across North America. I recently conducted a one-year follow-up study to investigate the longitudinal effects of the pandemic on socially anxious individuals, and data analyses are currently underway.

Interesting findings:

My research unexpectedly found that individuals with higher levels of pre-pandemic social anxiety symptoms made greater efforts to reach out and connect socially with others; however, these participants simultaneously reported feeling lonelier and more fearful of negative evaluation during the pandemic. These findings reflect a heightened desire for social support within the isolating context of the pandemic.

CITATION

Ho, J.T.K., & Moscovitch, D. A. (2021). The moderating effects of reported pre-pandemic social anxiety, symptom impairment, and current stressors on mental health and affiliative adjustment during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Anxiety, stress, and coping*, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2021.1946518>

Taylor Crawford

Graduate student

Supervised by: Christine Purdon

Who am I?

I am a first year PhD student in the Clinical Psychology Program at the University of Waterloo. I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Trent University, and I also have a background in education.

What are my research interests?

For my PhD series of studies, I will broadly be investigating OCD with a focus on the compulsions that individuals engage in and the goals of those compulsions. I plan to recruit participants from the ASD participant pool for these studies.

Interesting findings:

My Master's research focused on test anxiety. More specifically, I explored how anxiety symptoms differed in students with low, moderate, and high levels of test anxiety. We found that many similarities existed among the anxiety groups (e.g., thinking about their grade, feeling guilty, experiencing a racing heart). However, some differences were also discovered (e.g., students in the high anxiety group did not report any calming thoughts to counter their anxious thoughts during the test). This study was conducted with undergraduate students at the university.

CITATION

Crawford, T. (2021). Distinguishing low, moderate, and high test anxiety [Master's thesis]. UWSpace.
<http://hdl.handle.net/10012/17265>

Van Bui

Graduate student

Supervised by: David Moscovitch

Who am I?

I am a first year MA student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. I completed my Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Psychology at the University of Manitoba.

What are my research interests?

My master's research will focus on topics around social anxiety, social support seeking/receiving, and memory. Specifically, I am interested in exploring whether seeking reassurance is effective for those with social anxiety in reducing uncertainty and distress.

Aliya McNeil

Graduate student

Supervised by: Christine Purdon

Who am I?

I am a first year student in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Waterloo. I completed my Bachelor of Science in Health Studies and Psychology at the University of Waterloo.

What are my research interests?

I recently completed a study with participants from our Anxiety Studies Division database that examined COVID-19 fear and vaccine hesitancy. We found that anxious and non-anxious people did not differ in vaccine hesitancy, and that hesitancy was predicted in both groups by individualistic worldviews and conspiracy beliefs. I hope to focus my master's research on the role of shame in maintaining obsessive-compulsive disorder symptoms.

Michaela Young

Research Coordinator

Who am I?

I am the research coordinator for the Anxiety Studies Division, and I assist with recruitment and screening of our participants along with other administrative duties. I completed my Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Psychology at Queen's University.

What are my research interests?

My research interests are varied, with my past experience including my honours thesis in the Pain Affect and Cognition Lab at Queen's University as well as skills in research assistantship through the Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) and Queen's University's Sexual Health Research Lab. I am also the current Lab Manager for the Whole Family Lab at the University of Waterloo. I am thrilled to be working in the Anxiety Studies Division and learning about all aspects of anxiety research.



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ANXIETY STUDIES