LOUISE DILWORTH DAVIS
COLLEGE of SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
Department of Psychology

Experimental Psychologist Monthly Memo

May 2026 - Issue #149



MAY

INTRODUCING DR. XIN ZHAO

The Department of Psychology is pleased to welcome to our faculty, Dr. Xin Zhao! Coming to us from Central China, Dr. Zhao earned his Bachelor's degree in Biotechnology from Henan Agricultural University in China, followed by a Master's degree in Ecology at Beijing Normal University. He came to the U.S. to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology, then continued his training with two postdoctoral positions, first in translational neuroscience and Health Sciences, and later in systems neuroscience.

Dr. Zhao's research seeks to shed light on the neural basis of neuropsychiatric disorders linked to disrupted social environments through animal research.

What really stood out to Dr. Zhao about TCU were the people. Everyone he met was so considerate, warm, and supportive, with a genuine enthusiasm for their colleagues and students. This sense of community stayed with him, and made him want to contribute his own expertise and passion to this community.



In his spare time, Dr. Zhao enjoys running and playing soccer, listening to music and playing guitar, watching movies, and getting outdoors for things like camping and hiking.

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FACULTY NEWS

Dr. Justin Lunningham

Dr. Justin Lunningham gave a presentation at the American Academy of Health Behavior over his project that seeks to tease apart why there is a large mortality gap between Black and White women with breast cancer in the US.

Dr. Cathy Cox

Dr. Cathy Cox published three articles covering different research methods in existential and humanistic psychology, creating a manipulation to induce feelings of existential isolation and inclusion (i.e., I-sharing), and a paper demonstrating that groups of incel men experience existential isolation, which negate self and meta-perceptions of women

PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Justin Lunningham

Luningham JM, Baker EH, Saini G, Bhargava M, Ritu A. (2026, March). Area deprivation and tumor severity mediate racial disparities in mortality among breast cancer patients.

Dr. Cathy Cox

Espinosa, M., & Cox, C. R. (2026). Feedback to video stimuli: A novel paradigm for manipulating existential isolation. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 122, 104837.

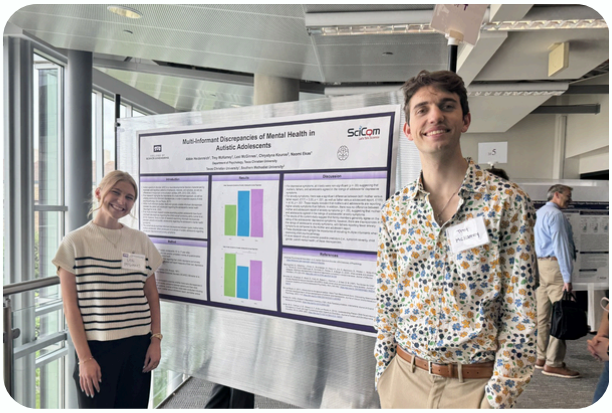
Dr. Cathy Cox

Cox, C. R., Sease, T. B., & Gentea, F. (2026). A quantitative review of select methods in existential and humanistic psychology. In L. Hoffman, L. X. Vallejos, D. Hocoy, P. Tummala-Narra, & E. DeRobertis (Eds.), APA handbook of existential and humanistic psychology. American Psychological Association.

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STUDENT RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

It's that time of year! On April 17, the TCU College of Science & Engineering held the annual Student Research Symposium, showcasing both undergraduate and graduate research in science, technology. engineering and math (STEM) fields in a relaxed, interdisciplinary setting. Any science student involved in STEM related research is encouraged to give a poster presentation at the event. The event provides a professional setting with the ambience of a social event, in which students can gain practical experience both in presenting their own scientific ideas and in learning about research in other departments and disciplines.



Trey McKamey and Lexi McGinnes
Multi Informant Discrepancies of Mental Health in Autistic Adolescents



Jessica Suarez
Diet-induced Peripheral Tissue Changes Associated with Risk Factors for Alzheimer's disease

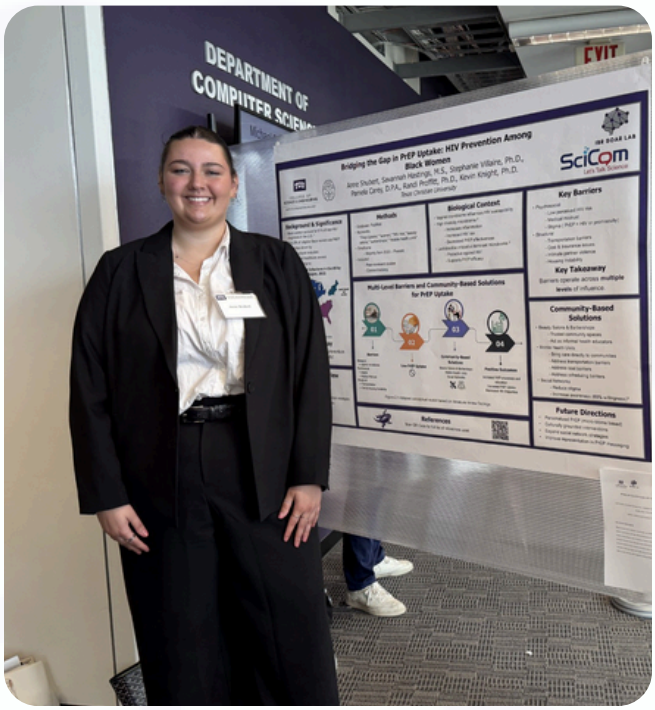
Students see the event as a great opportunity to practice skills they'll need for presenting at professional conferences and sharing their research in more formal settings. It gives them a chance to organize their work in a clear, engaging way and get comfortable explaining their ideas to a wider audience, learning how to discuss their research with people from different fields.

Talia Chachkes, a graduate student working under Dr. Sarah Hill, sees the SRS as a helpful stepping stone for students thinking about grad school. She points out that it's a low-pressure way to start getting presentation experience and polishing your resume for graduate applications, helping students feel confident going into the next stage of their academic careers.

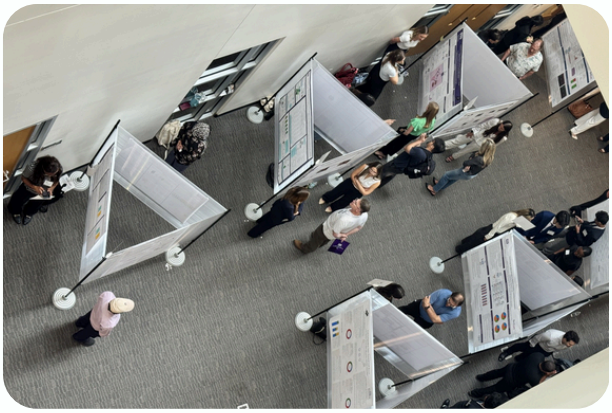
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STUDENT RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Faculty are also thrilled to have to opportunity to see their students presenting their progress, both graduate and undergraduate alike, while also getting a rounded look at what other majors have managed to accomplish. Dr. Mauricio Papini of Psychology, who's area of focus is in Comparative Neuroscience of Emotion and Learning, believes the event is a good time to see what the rest of the college is studying and presenting, in subjects such as engineering, chemistry, and more.



Anne Shubert
Bridging the Gap in PrEP Uptake: HIV Prevention Among Black Women



When asked for her opinion on SRS, Dr. Naomi Ekas, Chair of the Department of Psychology, has a glowing review,
"SRS is an amazing opportunity to see the culmination of students' hard work in their research labs across one or more years. It's fun to see how excited the students get, seeing their parents and friends coming to see their research."

Dr. Javier Granados Samayoa, a recent addition to our research faculty, says he enjoyed seeing how energized the Psychology students were about their research, and believes every presenter did a fantastic job communicating their projects, speaking to their training and hard work. He's hopeful that events like SRS will encourage future involvement from students of all standings.

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IMPORTANT DATES

SERC PURCHASING DEADLINE

May 31st (must already be processed)

ALL UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

May 8th

CSE CONVOCATION

May 8th

Enjoy Your Summer!