

# Science for Scientists Day

Advancing  
the Science  
of Positive  
Psychology

20  
July  
2023

Vancouver  
Convention  
Centre –  
East Meeting  
Room 8



# Program

**9:00 AM**

**Welcome & Overview**

**9:15 AM**

**Data Blitz - Session 1**

5 presentations

**10:15 AM**

**Coffee Break & Social**

**10:45 AM**

**Rewarding Community  
Partnerships**

Ms. Keri Albert & Dr. John Helliwell

**11:30 AM**

**Lunch**

Around town

**1:00 PM**

**Data Blitz - Session 2**

5 presentations

**2:00 PM**

**Coffee Break & Social**

**2:30 PM**

**Keynote: Dr. Nancy Sin**

*Three surprising insights from  
examining well-being in daily life*

**3:30 PM**

**Closing Remarks**

# Presenters

## **Dr. Nancy Sin**

*University of British Columbia*

*Keynote:*

*Three surprising insights from examining well-being in daily life*

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In this keynote address, I will share insights gained from studying well-being in the context of life's difficulties. My research uses ecological approaches to zoom in on how people maintain positive well-being when faced with minor and major challenges, ranging from daily stressors to the COVID-19 pandemic to social inequity. Throughout the talk, I will offer advice for trainees and early career researchers based on lessons learned along my academic journey.

**Bio:** Dr. Nancy L. Sin (she/her/hers) is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia. She serves on the Antiracism Task Force for the American Psychosomatic Society and previously served on the Executive Committee for the American Psychological Association's Division on Adult Development and Aging. Her work has been supported by grants as PI or Co-I from the U.S. National Institute on Aging, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canada Foundation for Innovation, and the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research.

## **Ms. Keri Albert**

*Lead Teacher, iGen*

## **Dr. John Helliwell**

*University of British Columbia*

*Discussion:*

*Rewarding Community Partnerships*

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Researchers are often encouraged to look beyond the ivory tower and conduct research in the real world, but how? One of the most rewarding and productive ways to do so is through collaboration with a community partner who is an expert on the topic in an applied setting. How can collaborations form? What makes them thrive (or collapse)? And how can we, as scientists, ensure that we give as much as or more than we take in such partnerships? This session will consider these questions and others in a discussion with Ms. Keri Albert and Professor John Helliwell who have collaborated for the past four years on intergenerational school programs.

**Bio:** Keri Albert is the lead teacher of the iGen Intergenerational Classroom at Sherbrooke Community Centre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in partnership with Saskatoon Public Schools. Keri loves people and building relationships and the iGen project is a powerful way to weave an innovative classroom experience with community building in long term care.

John F. Helliwell is in the Vancouver School of Economics at the University of British Columbia, and Distinguished Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. His books include *Well-Being for Public Policy*, *International Differences in Well-Being*, and all editions (2012-2023) of the *World Happiness Report*.

# Data Blitz

**Rachel Yapp** *Simon Fraser University*

*Intergenerational Connections and Familial Well-being: A Qualitative Examination of Parents' Experiences with the Intergenerational Classroom (iGen)*

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Growing evidence suggests that families are experiencing a mental health crisis. As rates of loneliness and depression have risen among youth, parents often struggle to support their children's mental health and, in turn, experience declines in their own well-being. Research suggests that interventions that help youth form meaningful and supportive social connections with people of diverse ages/abilities may enhance youth's social-emotional well-being. But do parents see their children benefiting from these intergenerational programs and do these benefits extend beyond the program and improve parental well-being? We interviewed the parents (N=12) of iGen students—a program wherein 25 Grade 6 students learn from, connect with, and support long-term care residents throughout their school year—to investigate parents' perceptions of iGen and its impact on their child's and their own well-being. Our iterative inductive thematic analyses showed that parents observed iGen nurture their children to form meaningful, supportive, and diverse connections that helped their child flourish and display greater empathy, confidence, and well-being. In turn, parents learned to connect with their children in new, meaningful ways and felt happier in seeing their child flourish. These findings offer practical and theoretical insights into how programs like iGen may bolster familial well-being.

**Nigel Mantou Lou** *University of Victoria*

*Growth mindsets moderate the effect of upward comparison on migrant students' emotions and adaptation*

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This study examines the role of upward social comparison on confidence and adaptation of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students, and how their mindsets are linked to this process. While upward social comparison can inspire and provide information for self-improvement, it can also threaten one's self-confidence. I hypothesize that students' mindsets predict their engagement in and response to upward comparisons. Two studies (n=423) showed that most students tend to compare themselves with others who have superior English proficiency, but those with fixed (vs. growth) mindsets were less likely to do so. In addition, students with fixed (vs. growth) mindsets felt more threatened after upward comparison (vs. control). That is, students with growth mindsets were less anxious about being evaluated and more confident in their ability to adapt to the academic environment. These findings suggest ESL students use their mindsets to navigate linguistic surroundings, and those with growth mindsets are better equipped to adapt.

# Data Blitz

**Jelena Brcic** *University of the Fraser Valley*

## *Post-Mission Growth in Extreme and Unusual Environments*

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Suedfeld (1987) identified two dimensions of environments (extreme and unusual). Extremeness of the environment is defined as the presence of physical danger which may result in discomfort or injury; unusualness is defined as the novelty of the environment and is dependent on the person's previous experience within it (Suedfeld, 1987). All environments can be scaled within these two dimensions. For example, outer space and remote weather stations are both highly extreme and unusual as survival is impossible without advanced technology. On the other hand, mountain ranges and valleys around BC, where Search and Rescue teams work to save those lost or injured, are less extreme and unusual. There are some psychological, biological, and sociological constructs that emerge within extreme and unusual environments (EUE) that cannot be studied elsewhere. Post-Experience Change (PEC), which is significantly modelled after Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), is one such aspect. PTG is defined as a positive psychological change as a result of psychological struggle ensuing trauma. Changes can be experienced in perceptions of self, changes in interpersonal relationships, and in the meaningfulness of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Triplett et al., 2012). We believe that prolonged experiences in EUEs, which are not traumatic but are meaningful, can have a positive impact and lead to life changes experienced by expedition members. This presentation will examine PEC in expedition members from three different EUE groups: long-duration astronauts, winter-over crew working on an Environment Canada weather station in Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, and rescue teams from BC Search and Rescue and Royal Canadian Search and Rescue organizations. Discussion will be around the impact of mission duration, the extremeness and uniqueness of the environment, and the type of positive impact the experiences had on expedition members.

**Amy Bidwell** *Oswego State University*

## *Be Well Now: A positive education program for higher education*

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Aims: To identify whether a well-being program effectively augments Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments, and Vitality (PERMA-V). The second aim was to identify narrative accounts of their experiences and perspectives implementing PERMA-V. Method: Twenty-eight students participated in Be Well NOW in Fall 2021 and Fall 2022. A convergent parallel mixed-method design was used. Focus was on learning PERMA-V strategies to thrive. Students completed pre and post quantitative questionnaires and qualitative open-ended questions. Results: Sixty-seven percent of the students either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" the program increased their campus engagement, while 75% "strongly agreed" or "agreed" time management skills improved. Students' social well-being (92%) and sense of belonging (92.8%) were increased. Moreover, 71.4% of students "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the program supported them in overcoming daily stressors. Three themes from the qualitative data were College Experience, Well-Being Tools, and Wellness Journey. The subcategories emerged as (a) sense of belonging, (b) establishing new friendships, (c) adaptability, (d) journaling, (e) pomodoro technique, (f) time management, (g) meditation, (h) flourishing, (i) self-confidence, (j) openness, (k) mindfulness, and (l) balanced living. Conclusion: College students agree that positive psychology was beneficial in enhancing positive emotions, engagement, relationships, academic achievement, and vitality.

# Data Blitz

**Ruoning Li** *University of British Columbia*

Iris Lok *University of British Columbia*

Elizabeth Dunn *University of British Columbia*

*A Scalable Approach to Designing Sociable Spaces*

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Happiness researchers have demonstrated that everyday social interactions lead to greater happiness and well-being. Yet, feelings of loneliness and social isolation are on the rise. Our goal is to address this challenge and promote social interactions among community members by improving the design of physical spaces around them. Harnessing interdisciplinary knowledge from psychology and computer science, we created a model that predicts the frequency of social interactions that occur in physical spaces. Our research is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and already has preliminary applications in the real world. For instance, decision makers of an affordable housing project in Calgary utilized our model to choose between competing designs of a more sociable space for their residents. Our approach can potentially provide a scalable solution to help researchers learn how physical spaces shape social interactions and to help decision makers build more sociable spaces.

**Norberto Eiji Nawa** *Advanced ICT Research Institute, NICT*

Noriko Yamagishi *Ritsumeikan University*

*Assessing how trait gratitude, self-esteem, and optimism relate to subjective and psychological well-being among Japanese individuals*

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A growing body of evidence indicates that the effectiveness of positive psychological interventions is contingent on a diverse set of individual characteristics, chiefly among them, one's cultural context and background. Building an evidence base to support the selection of parameters most likely to promote individual well-being under such boundary conditions is a crucial step in the design of viable interventions. Towards that goal, we examined how gratitude disposition, self-esteem, and optimism relate to subjective (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB) among Japanese individuals. Results revealed that while self-esteem was predominantly more strongly associated with SWB, gratitude disposition was more strongly associated with the PWB dimensions, in particular, personal growth, positive relations with others and purpose in life. These results suggest that though gratitude disposition and self-esteem can influence individual well-being at large, they likely play complementary roles as enablers of SWB and PWB in the examined cohort.

# Data Blitz

**Janaki Patel** *Simon Fraser University*

Lara Aknin *Simon Fraser University*

Anurada Amarasekera *Simon Fraser University*

*Exploring the content and potential impact of prosocial fantasies*

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Many people hold cynical views of humanity, which are associated with negative outcomes such as lower trust and cooperation. Can cynical beliefs be altered? While some long-term strategies seem effective, new research shows that anticipating changes in others' behaviour may be influential in altering people's perceptions/actions. Capitalizing on this insight, we introduce the idea of prosocial fantasies: instances where a person daydreams, fantasizes or imagines themselves helping others in the future. Studies 1a-b explored the prevalence, frequency and content of undergraduates' (pre-registered; N=488) and ex-offenders' (N=25) prosocial fantasies, and Study 2 (pre-registered; N=637) examined if presenting prosocial fantasy rates to a nationally representative panel of Americans can lower cynicism. Results indicated that a majority of people have prosocial fantasies, involving a range of targets from family to distant others, however, learning about prosocial fantasy rates does not reduce cynicism. Findings suggest that cynicism may not be altered by shorter interventions.

**Charul Maheshka** *University of British Columbia*

Elizabeth Dunn *University of British Columbia*

*The link between gratitude and prosocial spending in the real world*

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Receiving generosity can evoke feelings of gratitude, which can in turn promote prosocial behaviour. However, past research on the link between gratitude and generosity has been limited to low-stakes economic games in labs. Do feelings of gratitude predict more prosocial spending in real-world settings? We took advantage of a one-of-a-kind study, where 200 individuals across 7 countries were unexpectedly given \$10,000 USD to spend as they liked within 3 months. We asked participants how they felt on receiving the money, and coded the responses. Shock or joy were most commonly expressed, but around 15% of participants spontaneously reported gratitude as well. We then tracked how participants spent the money. We found that those who spontaneously reported gratitude spent more money on others compared to those who didn't. This suggests that generosity can become 'infectious' through the medium of gratitude, which enhances generous spending decisions in real world, high-stakes situations.

# Data Blitz

Lahnna I Catalino *Scripps College*

William Tov *Singapore Management University*

*Daily variation in prioritizing positivity and well-being*

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The tendency to use positive emotions as a key criterion to structure daily life is prioritizing positivity (e.g., “What I decide to do outside of work is influenced by the positive emotions I may feel”). Research shows that people who tend to prioritize positivity experience more well-being. However, a separate question remains: on days people prioritize positivity, relative to their own baseline, do they experience more well-being? This question is important, because it tests whether the well-being benefits associated with prioritizing positivity extend to the act of prioritizing positivity (within-person effect). We evaluated this hypothesis in a sample of Southeast Asian college students (n = 301), who completed a daily diary study resulting in 3,894 reports. Results showed that daily variation in prioritizing positivity predicted more daily well-being, and exploratory analyses revealed that these within-person effects were stronger for people who scored higher on mean daily prioritizing positivity.

Sarah Wellan *Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin*

Anna Daniels *Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin*

Henrik Walter *Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin*

*Facets of anhedonia - differentiating anticipatory pleasure, consummatory pleasure and hedonic domains as prospective resilience factors*

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Healthy reward processing is an interplay of several components such as anticipation and consummation. On the self-report level, only few scales have supported this distinction, most have found the hedonic domain (e. g. social or physical) to determine the factor structure. We evaluate the distinction of hedonic components and domains through their differential effects on prospective resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. A six-month longitudinal survey-study was conducted during April and November 2020 (n = 3300, convenience sample, mostly German). The Temporal Experience of Pleasure Scale (TEPS), the Anticipatory and Consummatory Interpersonal Pleasure Scale (ACIPS) and the Dimensional Anhedonia Rating Scale (DARS) were applied. We adopted a normative modelling approach to measure resilience through stressor reactivity. Our results support the differentiation of anticipation, consummation and hedonic domains and highlight the relevance of hobbies and joyful anticipation for resilience during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.